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Exploring the Cyclical Pattern of Oppression on the Manor Farm

George Orwell's novel *Animal Farm* depicts how every revolution, even that with the noblest of intentions, can become corrupted with time. It shows a cyclical pattern of oppression, with those in power using lies and propaganda to maintain their status.

“We know that no one ever seizes power with the intention of relinquishing it” (Orwell, 1984 266). Under the right circumstances, even the best of intentions can become corrupted. In the beginning of the novel, *Animal Farm*, it is shown how Mr. Jones is an abusive and irresponsible owner, even forgetting to feed the animals of the, at that time, Manor Farm. After this extreme event, the animals have had enough, and, through a chaotic series of events, manage to evict Mr. Jones, his men, and his wife through brute force. When the animals finally have control over their own lives, they begin to become more and more productive, as the animals' combined abilities are far superior to those of humans alone. It is declared that anything with two legs is considered an enemy, while anything with four legs, or wings, is considered a friend. Towards the middle of the novella, however, it is seen that the sheep, who were originally taught to say “Four legs good, two legs bad” (Orwell 21) upon their inability to learn the seven commandments, have been trained to change their maxim to “Four legs good, two legs better” (Orwell 89) as the pigs have now taught themselves how to walk on their hind legs, exactly like the humans they swore never to imitate. Just like in the *Divergent* series, where the characters are told that they are the only humans left on Earth, the pigs have started spreading misinformation

through the means of Squealer, and have taken to all the vices adopted by humans such as drinking, sleeping in beds, and perhaps the most shocking of all, murdering other animals, violating nearly all of the original seven commandments, completely corrupting the ideals of their uprising against Mr. Jones.

“History is cyclical, and it would be foolhardy to assume that the culture wars will never return” (Rich, *The Greatest Story Ever Sold* 298). *Animal Farm* displays a cyclical pattern of oppression, with the revolution carried out in the beginning leading only to the same type of tyranny in the end. After the revolution is carried out in the beginning of the novel, the animals of the newly renamed Animal Farm create seven commandments which include not adopting any of the vices of man such as drinking, trading, and sleeping in beds, and also not killing any of their fellow animals. In the beginning, everyone follows all of these commandments, and the animals happily follow the joint rule of Snowball and Napoleon. After some time, the two leading pigs begin to argue with each other more and more, with Napoleon eventually ousting Snowball through the means of the dogs he has trained, just as the Dauntless overthrew the Abnegation in the first book of the *Divergent* series. With no strong opposing force remaining, Napoleon and his pigs begin to do as they please, drinking beer, sleeping in beds, wearing clothes, walking on their hind legs, and eventually even murdering the animals who have “gone against the interests of the farm”, conveniently including the four pigs who attempted to stand against Napoleon after Snowball’s dramatic exit from the farm. Napoleon and his pigs dive irreversibly further into their increasingly human-like lives and begin to exploit the animals just as Mr. Jones had. They keep all the best food for themselves, needing it as they were “the smartest”, begin drinking beer on a daily basis, trading through the means of Mr. Whymper, and even begin gambling. In the end of the story, the animals on the farm overhear Napoleon once

again name the farm, “The Manor Farm,” and “they looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again: but already it was impossible to say which was which.” (Orwell 95).

As the novel progressed, the pigs, led by Napoleon, began to spread complete and utter lies through the means of Squealer, going so far as to tell the other animals that they were misremembering. Napoleon and his pigs began to adopt human vices such as drinking, gambling, walking on two feet, and sleeping in beds, and simply changed the commandments as it suited them. They went so far as to say that Snowball had been on the farmers’ side during the first battle that took place in the story, and later went on to add that he had been leading the attack and had lied about his achieving “Animal Hero, First Class”. After Snowball had left the farm over the construction of a windmill, Napoleon began to claim that its construction had been his own idea since the very beginning. Every problem on the farm was blamed on Snowball, the destruction of the windmill, stolen corn, broken eggs, and more. The pigs began to change the commandments as it suited them, simply adding words such as “without reason”, “to excess”, and more. Squealer used his incredible methods of persuasion to convince the animals that they had misremembered, and that the commandments remained unchanged. Due to Squealer’s ability to persuade them, he convinced the other animals that the commandments they had memorized just some time before were still the same, even though they obviously were not. In the end of the story, the seven commandments have been changed to only one: “All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others” (Orwell 90). The insane suggestion that this was the original spirit of animalism was even more unbelievable than the lies that had been spread relating to Boxer’s hospitalization, but the animals had no choice but to believe it.

Throughout the story, Napoleon continued to gain power and adopt vices, until in the end, both he and his pigs became indistinguishable from the humans that had abused them so many years ago. They used the means of propaganda and manipulation to spread misinformation through Squealer, and, in the end, reverted back to inflicting the exact forms of abuse that had been inflicted on them and their animal “comrades”, on the latter. By the end of the story, the ideals of the animals’ revolution, represented by the seven commandments presented near the beginning of the story, had become so corrupted that they had morphed into only one phrase: “All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others” (Orwell 90), a self-contradictory statement. While the animals of the Animal Farm may have had the best of intentions with their revolution and handing over the reins of control to the pigs, by the end it was clear that none of their efforts had come to fruition, with the pigs having become exactly like the humans they swore never to be like.

Works Cited

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