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Power and Oppression in George Orwell's Animal Farm: A Marxist Literary Analysis

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Abstract

George Orwell's Animal Farm tells a deceptively simple story, a group of farm animals overthrow their human master, only to watch a new tyranny grow up in his place. Beneath that simplicity sits one of the more unsettling arguments in twentieth-century fiction, namely that revolutions do not fail because their ideals were wrong but because power, once it exists, tends to find someone willing to hold onto it. This study set out to trace how that argument is built, scene by scene, inside the novel itself, paying particular attention to the methods Napoleon and the pigs use to seize and keep control, and to the way propaganda, fear, manipulation, and material inequality work together rather than in isolation. The analysis was carried out as a qualitative, text-based reading grounded in Marxist literary theory, which treats fiction as a place where class conflict and ideology get worked out in miniature, and it drew on Michel Foucault's account of power as a complementary lens for understanding how the pigs' authority becomes woven into the daily texture of farm life rather than resting on a single dramatic act of conquest. Twenty-six passages were selected for close reading, covering the rebellion itself, the pigs' assumption of leadership, Napoleon's expulsion of Snowball, the raising and use of the guard dogs, Squealer's propaganda campaigns, the executions, the successive rewriting of the Seven Commandments, the exploitation and eventual betrayal of Boxer, and the final scene in which pig and human become indistinguishable. What emerged from this reading is a picture of oppression as something cumulative and self-reinforcing: the animals' revolution against Mr. Jones does not abolish hierarchy so much as relocate it, Napoleon's authority is built less from any single seizure of power than from an accumulation of small institutional advantages, and Squealer's language does not so much lie outright as retrofit justification onto privileges the pigs have already quietly claimed. The paper closes by arguing that Orwell's target is not Stalinism alone but a structural pattern that recurs whenever political authority, controlled information, and economic inequality reinforce one another, which is part of why the novel has outlived the specific history that first inspired it.

Keywords: *Animal Farm, George Orwell, power, oppression, propaganda, Marxist literary theory, allegory*

Introduction

This introduction situates *Animal Farm* in the context of Orwell's other writings, outlines the historical events often interpreted as being "allegorized" in this book, and establishes the context for the rest of the paper: namely, how an equalitarian revolution can lead to a re-creation of the very domination it sought to overthrow.

Background of the Study

There are authors about whom the only thing known is that they have one clear thought, and Orwell is one of them. In his essays, journalism, and fiction, he continued to ask himself the same fearful question: how does language, and people with language get used when political power comes into its possession? (Bloom, 2007). That question is brought into its most clear and economical fictional form in a book completed in 1944 and published in 1945, called *Animal Farm*. At the surface it's a fable for the barnyard; at the centre, it's an account of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the long grinding disappointment of its aftermath under Stalin (Qamar, 2025). The novel begins, of course, with an old boar dreaming out, rather than the animals revolting. One evening Old Major convenes a meeting of the animals on Manor Farm and outlines a world where they would have no need to work for others, a world in which they would have been emancipated from all human oppression and where they would live in harmony with the animals, a world that is close to the emancipatory promise of Marxist thought, which is why it has been widely interpreted that Old Major is a composite of Marx and Lenin, the man who tried to put Marx's theory into practice (Fajrina, 2016). The neglectful, often drunk farmer whose mismanagement sparks the uprising is kind of like the way Tsar Nicholas II is presented in the history books: the incompetent, careless authority whose downfall makes way for something new (Orwell, 1945).

The part of the story most readers remember is what comes after the Fall. Administrative control is effected onto the pigs simply because they are the smartest animals on the farm, nobody decides that's how it will be done by the pigs (Sari et al., 2026). Two pigs in particular, Napoleon and Snowball, emerge as leaders, and for a time the farm experiences "true debate. One of Snowball's gifts is more apparent than the other's, as he formulates a scheme for a windmill, reads extensively and presents his arguments to the other animals. The pig who speaks less and acts more, is the one who ends up running the farm and that is Napoleon. The parallels between the novel's characters and the historical figures have been pointed out for some time (Molyneux, 1989), with the Napoleon-Snowball rivalry being most closely compared to the Stalin-Trotsky rivalry after Lenin's death, during which one of the two became subsumed into the novel's narrative. In the novel, the erasure occurs literally: Napoleon takes a litter of puppies away from the other animals, and when they are grown he lets them go at a farm meeting to chase Snowball off the premises. The narrative then shifts from shared governance to one-pig rule, which comes from the almost cinematic act of violence of that one moment (Saoudi et al., 2022). From there comes the propaganda, the fear, the gradual slip of the founding commandments: everything that follows. The final scene of the book, in which the other animals look into the window into the farmhouse to discern the pigs from the human farmers they are drinking with, is not really a twist ending, but rather the resolution of an argument that has been developing throughout this story: that it's not about the crown, it's about the machinery that keeps it in place (Maurya, 2025).

It's important to take a second to appreciate all of this is compressed into one small package. In less than 100 pages, Orwell relates the whole history of a revolution, its betrayal and its ossification into a new tyranny, in the form of farm animals, rather than the human cast in a standard political novel. That compression is not something that happens as a by-product of what makes the book so good; it is maybe what makes the book so good. What Orwell has done is to remove the personalities from the story and give the reader a pattern, and that's what makes the novel continue to be read as a warning about revolutions in general, not one revolution in particular.

The compressed fable-like form was the result of years of struggle with the more traditional methods of political journalism and reportage, so it is important to understand why Orwell eventually gave them up for this one. He had already been struck by the credulous, official line on the Soviet Union being broadcast by the Left and by the "firsthand" accounts of poverty in England and of the Spanish Civil War, which he believed to be more honest and accurate, because they had to acknowledge conditions on the ground that differed from what they were being told. His previous nonfiction included his eyewitness report on poverty in England and his report on the Spanish Civil War, which he felt more reliable and truthful because they had to confront realities that were at odds with official reporting, and he was convinced that much of the "left-wing" reporting of the Soviet Union was "willfully credulous, repeating official claims without checking the facts against the evidence of people who had actually lived in Soviet policy". The common sense approach of journalism, he apparently decided, was not going to penetrate that gullibility, not only because people who were inclined to accept the Soviet project had learned to read with a suspicious eye, but also because by the time they made it to the first paragraph, they had long been convinced that anything negative was "capitalist propaganda. A fable avoids resisting nearly without being asked. But no one came into a story of pigs and horses with a political agenda already in mind, and Orwell could slip a good argument on the side about Stalinism that he thought most readers would catch. It's partly for this reason that the genre is important, as is anything Orwell says explicitly in the book: The fable is not just a means to an argument; it's a big part of what makes an argument stick.

Statement of the Problem

The animals do not rebel out of confusion or bad faith, but that is the puzzle this paper attempts to take seriously, rather than as a foregone conclusion, the novel sets up. Old Major's speech is really inspiring; the Seven Commandments really promise equality; and the early chapters really do depict a community attempting to rule itself without a master. Yet, at the end of the book, the community generates what it tried to eradicate (Bahri et al., 2026). It's not just the narrator's pronouncement; it has to be constructed, case by case, and the way that is accomplished is the way you want to deconstruct it. A theoretical interpretation of the puzzle, the idea that power tends to circulate rather than remain in place, occupying whatever position it can, regardless of the ideology to which that position belongs, is one thing, but the concept alone doesn't tell us why this farm, with this particular cast of pigs, ends up right where it does. (Foucault, 1977) While previous scholarship has teased out various parts of the picture, such as Napoleon's consolidation of power, Squealer's rhetoric, or the material imbalance between pig and non-pig, far less has attempted to bind power, propaganda, fear, and inequality together as a single interlocking system rather than four distinct sets of topics (Qamar, 2025). This paper assumes that they are not individual topics but that the novel can

only be understood fully if one views the role of each mechanism in relation to and in support of the role of the other three.

There is a version of this problem, however, that political theory has been dealing with for a very long time, under the guise of the notion of the "iron law of oligarchy": that, in any organization, however democratic its founding principles, real decision-making power tends to be concentrated in the hands of a small group, because organizations need people to make decisions, and if they don't, they never get made. *Animal Farm* is a microcosm, fictional and compact, of that larger proposition: it focusses the mechanism from the historical cacophony of Bolshevik party politics and then allows the reader to see it work on one small farm, with a cast of characters that is simple enough to follow as individuals. It doesn't matter whether Orwell actually had this theoretical debate in mind when writing his novel and it is important to note that the plot that he creates collective rebellion, the emergence of an administrative class within the rebels' ranks, the slow transfer of real power from the group to a subset of the group, mirrors the pattern closely enough to make the reading of both texts illuminating to each other. The task of this paper is to demonstrate, however, not just that there is a drift in the novel, but which fictional mechanisms enable the drift and, very importantly, how this drift is able to proceed without the other animals stopping it.

Significance of the Study

What do all these details have to do with anything other than the fun of a close reading? Some good reasons appear to be worthy of mention. First and most simply, it is helpful to recognise that a barnyard story with a plain language is a vehicle for a sophisticated argument about political structure, which may be easily missed in a book this short and this readable, much as a story told in a foreign language may be easily misunderstood (Cuddon, 2013). Second, the novel provides a concise illustration of the way in which literary study can make abstract social patterns; unequal resource allocation, the gradual normalization of privilege, visible and felt rather than just described (Eagleton, 1976b). Third, allegory is a mode worth knowing, even when it is not being employed for its own purpose, and *Animal Farm* is as pure an example of political allegory as one can find in the English prose literature, in which a very complicated and specific set of historical events is conveyed in a story simple enough for a reader uninitiated in Soviet history to read and be troubled by the argument (Merzah, 2024). Lastly, and significantly, the book remains extremely popular and a responsible account of the dynamics of power and about its uses and misuses has a life beyond the classroom: it provides readers with a lexicon not necessarily of political science, but of fiction, for detecting the initial symptoms of authoritarian drift where they appear (Bahri et al., 2026).

There is also a narrower, more practical reason why there is a need to do this kind of analysis carefully, instead of impressionistically. In formal education *Animal Farm* gets such a early start and is read so often that many readers are exposed to political allegory for the first time and take with them a half-remembered classroom summary of the novel rather than the novel itself: a story, more or less, about how communism goes wrong. That compressed memory may not be inaccurate, but it is a skimmed memory and it has a tendency to convert a well-crafted argument about mechanism into a much vaguer argument about ideology. A

study that is more faithful to the actual scenes and sentences of the text, less of a popular reading and summary, can be a way of recovering some of the flattening not correcting the popular reading so much as thickening it, providing someone who already thinks he knows the book a reason to reexamine how exactly it is constructing its argument.

Research Objectives

This study was guided by two objectives:

1. To examine how power and oppression are represented in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, with particular attention to the methods Napoleon and the pigs use to establish and maintain control over the other animals.

2. To explore how propaganda, manipulation, fear, and inequality function together to sustain oppression in the novel.

Research Questions

Following directly from those two objectives, the study asked:

1. How are power and oppression represented in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, and what methods does Napoleon use to establish and maintain power over the other animals?

2. How do propaganda, manipulation, fear, and inequality contribute to oppression in the novel?

Literature Review

George Orwell and *Animal Farm*

Orwell had been observing the Soviet Union's official history of itself over the years and the novel is, in part, a reckoning with this disconnect between it and what was actually happening on the ground (Molyneux, 1989). The form of the book is formally the beast fable, a genre that has been around for a while and in which an animal speaks for a human type and a human failing. But what does *Animal Farm* do that is beyond the scope of what a beast fable normally does? In Aesop's animals, there is a moral that can be read from their conduct; in Orwell's animals, there is a sequence of historical events that can be carefully followed in the book, so much so that it feels more like a fable with a moral than a history in a fable's disguise (Qamar, 2025). With the knowledge to look for it, the correspondence of Old Major with Marx and Lenin, together, is nearly too perfect, Napoleon with Stalin, Snowball with Trotsky, Squealer with the propaganda machine of the State, and Boxer with the willing cart-horse who works for their revolution (Fajrina, 2016). Mr. Jones' particular shortcomings, his drinking, his neglect and the fact that he simply turns a blind eye to what is going on his own farm, are similar to the specific charges against Tsar Nicholas II in the years before 1917 (Saoudi et al., 2022). But the mapping isn't only about the character level. The Battle of the Cowshed, in which the animals repel Mr. Jones' attempt to retake the farm, and the later Battle of the Windmill, in which the animals are victorious in repelling the windmill, are reasonably close enough to the Russian Civil War and the Second World War to justify content analytic readings of the novel's dialogue that trace the parallel, scene by scene (Oliveira et al., 2003).

None of all this is to imply that the novel is a riddle that can be deciphered and then forgotten. The fact that Napoleon "is" Stalin does not make up the character's role in the narrative; it only makes the question of how Orwell manages to make a pig's rise to power feel inevitable, not merely allegorical, more glaring. That inevitability is created over the course of the book, by small details hinted at here, whispered there, sometimes just tossed aside, a commandment slightly twisted here, a rumour of Snowball repeated there, because it is not inevitable but rather psychologically true, as opposed to historically so, in ways that are almost imperceptible.

Power in Literature

It is impossible to discuss power in a novel without conceding that "power" is such a word that it can easily be waved at and cannot be contained. Power, in its most basic definition, is the ability of one actor to influence the actions, attitudes or asset availability of another (Foucault 1977). Power, however, is not usually presented in the literature as something that can be possessed or not possessed by a single character. More frequently it appears as a relationship, continually re-negotiated in the minutiae of everyday life: who speaks first at a meeting, whose account of an occurrence gets remembered, who is allowed to ask questions (Foucault, 1977). In his elaboration of power, which he has developed at considerable length in his study of the disciplinary institutions, Foucault's account is very conscious of the need to abandon the older image of the sovereign who commands and issues laws from on high. Rather he states that power flows through an entire field of relations; it is exercised, not only by force, but by discourse, surveillance and the formulation of what is considered knowledge (Foucault, 1977). This re-imagining seems to work well with *Animal Farm*. The farm does not fall to Napoleon in one fell swoop, but gradually, as if in a series of small victories, he takes control of the dogs, takes a good look at history, takes control of the history, takes control of who gets blamed when things go wrong, and so on. (Merzah, 2024) When the pigs finally discover that most of the other animals don't know how to read and none of them can remember exactly what each rule of a season means, that is about the same thing that happens with power and knowledge. The pigs' discovery that most of the other animals cannot read and that none of them can remember exactly what each rule of season means is the same thing as Foucault's idea of power and knowledge being intertwined, i.e., those who control what can be known control what can be done. (Pardede et al., 2023)

Oppression and Inequality

Oppression, stripped to its simplest definition, is the sustained mistreatment of one group by another group that holds greater social, economic, or political power over it (Bahri et al., 2026). Inequality is its quieter cousin: not mistreatment exactly, but an unequal distribution of the resources, comforts, and freedoms a society has to offer (Maurya, 2025). *Animal Farm* is built around the gap between these two words and the promise that briefly closes it. The rebellion's founding document, the Seven Commandments, opens with the claim that all animals are equal, and for a short while the text of the novel seems to back that claim up: everyone works the fields, everyone eats from the same stores, everyone attends the same Sunday meetings (Orwell, 1945). What happens across the rest of the book is the slow, almost imperceptible unwinding of that first commandment until it collapses into its own contradiction, the famous final version declaring that some animals are more equal than others (Qamar, 2025). That single sentence is doing a great deal of work. It shows, in miniature, how a society can keep repeating the language of equality long after the substance of equality has been hollowed out, so that the words themselves become a kind of camouflage

for the very inequality they were meant to prevent (Bahri et al., 2026). Boxer's story supplies the human or rather, equine cost of that camouflage. He works harder than any other animal on the farm, asks for nothing beyond his own two mottoes, "I will work harder" and "Napoleon is always right," and is repaid, once his body finally gives out, by being sold to a slaughterhouse so that the pigs can buy themselves a case of whisky (Fajrina, 2016). It is hard to imagine a more literal image of a working class exploited by the very revolution fought in its name.

Propaganda and Manipulation

It is worth taking the time to take in what Squealer's voice does if Napoleon provides the muscle behind the new order of the farm. Propaganda is the deliberate, organised attempt to influence what people see, think and do, in order to benefit the agenda of the person or group making the attempt (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2015). A more counter-intuitive part of the scholarly writing on propaganda is its relative ineffectiveness in telling outright lies; the most enduring propaganda is the selection and assembly of statements or facts that, while seemingly accurate when taken individually, combine to form a picture that is false (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2015). Squealer is a very near-perfect fictional manifestation of that principle. In fact, he never makes up anything himself; instead, he restates facts that the animals already have in their half-remembered versions, and slants them just so that the pigs have an excuse to do whatever they have decided they want to do (Merzah, 2024). By closely studying his speeches, he has discovered that he uses a very limited number of rhetorical devices: false dichotomy (when the animals are given two choices, both of which are good for the pigs); scapegoating of an absent enemy (almost always Snowball); and repeated and quiet erasure of what the animals remember about the past (Merzah, 2024). This is confirmed by a separate discourse analytic study of the same, which suggests that the linguistic control over the pigs is a legitimate means of political control by itself, rather than just an elaboration on the pigs' political power, that of Napoleon (Pardede et al., 2023).

All of this is of course, informed by Orwell's own thinking outside his fiction. In "Politics and the English Language," which was published the year after *Animal Farm*, he explained that the euphemism and deliberate vagueness and question-begging phrases are part of political writing precisely because they make cruelty and injustice seem reasonable, or at least seem to be something other than it is (Orwell, 1946). But Orwell's assertion in that essay was not only that bad language is a symptom of bad politics, but that bad politics leads to bad language, which leads to even more bad politics, and so forth and so on (Orwell, 1946). Squealer's job on the farm is like that essay, but it's a plot. He doesn't just inform the pigs of their increasing privileges; he gives them the language they would use to protest these privileges and then he does so, one commandment at a time, without anyone knowing (Merzah, 2024).

The Beast-Fable Tradition and Symbolism

For a fleeting moment, let's slowdown from the plots and rhetoric and ask why Orwell decided to use animals. It's a long time before the novel Aesop, medieval beast epics, and a myriad of folk traditions all provide talking animals to say things about human society that might be too dangerous, or too obvious, to say about actual people. One of the things *Animal Farm* does, in part, is distance itself from readers, allowing them to see pigs being monsters without the immediate defensiveness that might come from a villain being just "a politician" or "a party. However, the selection of species is no mere decoration, each species' characteristics actually perform a type of translation. Pigs, being a natural thought to rule, are

a logical choice for a ruling class that began as the smart ones in the farm, and are the most self-indulgent ones. Loyal by nature and readily taught to obey, a dog is an appropriate metaphor for a private security force whose obedience has been engendered from a puppy, not as a result of any common conviction (Saoudi et al., 2022). Sheep simply repeat the slogans, if Napoleon requires a mob to swarm and silence opposition, they will do so without thinking. Sheep play a type of political conformist, and repeat slogans without thinking. Because Boxer is a horse, the most physically capable of the farm, and one of the least able to doubt what he is told, Orwell is able to illustrate a tragedy which would be more difficult to portray with a human character without descending into melodrama: immense strength at the service of an unworthy leadership. Even the name of the farm reflects the argument. By the end of the novel, "Animal Farm" shifts back to something resembling "Manor Farm" under human rule, a detail that, like the sheep in the novel, does not shout out a revolution that has come full circle, until the narrator states it outright.

Let the cat and the raven Moses also be briefly mentioned here; both are side lighted in comparison to the main cast, and both make any interpretation of the fable as a neat allegory problematic. She says that the cat does virtually no work for the farm and, when work beckons, is as hard to find as a needle in a haystack, but this doesn't seem to get him punished at all, adding some randomness to the pretty regular system of the novel that gives a hint of unfairness in the way it distributes work. While Moses tells the other animals about a heaven that is called Sugar candy Mountain, which they will find after they die, the pigs both tolerate this message and try to push it aside if it suits their purposes at the moment; if their population is distracted in the promise of a heavenly reward, it is less likely to press for earthly improvement. As an allegory, Moses represents the complex relationship between organized religion and revolutionary politics, which is formally rejected as an alternative source of authority, but is nevertheless tacitly acceptable when it is able to maintain the patience of the working animals. Both figures are minor by any measure of page count, but their presence is a reminder that Orwell's allegory, however carefully constructed, still has room for loose threads that resist perfectly tidy interpretation, and that this looseness is itself part of what keeps the novel readable as fiction rather than as a coded historical index.

Previous Studies on Animal Farm

It seems the scholarship on Animal Farm has not been thin and, before we get to the theoretical framework that this paper takes for granted, it is worthwhile to survey some of its scope. Using Braun and Clarke's 6 phase model for thematic analysis, Qamar (2025) identified the concerns of the novel in the following categories: the corrupting effect of power, propaganda as a means of manipulating words, hardening of social strata, rewriting of history, indoctrination, fear as a means of control, and betrayal of the revolutionary ideals. From a different semiotic perspective, Sari et al. (2026) interpret the symbols and discourse patterns of the novel and draw the conclusion that it continues to be relevant today, since it reveals the mechanisms of ideological control that are recurring throughout history and not a single closed historical episode. The book is set against the backdrop of totalitarian criticism, as Saoudi et al. (2022) point out, which is the central theme of the work and would also resonate with many non-Soviet political systems that have entered the world. Working in a frame of reference that was explicitly Marxist and was informed by Georg Lukács, Bahri et al. (2026) counted the number of times they found class struggle and class consciousness in the novel, and they found twenty-eight moments of class consciousness and forty-six moments of class struggle, which is an impressive quantitative confirmation of what most readers sense

qualitatively: that class tension is not an occasional theme in the novel, but always its undercurrent. All of these works together span a wide area and yet there is a space that is left. Most of these studies focus on a single mechanism, propaganda in one place, class conflict in another, symbolism in yet another and largely eschew collective, interdisciplinary research. Less research poses questions about how these mechanisms interact, how one scene can serve multiple functions working on the pigs' material needs, providing Squealer with fresh material, and subtly reshaping what is normal for the animals. This paper is an attempt to fill that gap with interlocking.

Theoretical Framework

Marxist literary theory is used as the chief lens of this study because it begins with the assumption that literature cannot exist outside of history; a novel's form and content "reflect" and are in turn, "informed" by "material and economic conditions" of the society in which it was created, including "structures of class, labour and exploitation" (Eagleton, 1976a). Anyone who has read his work on this subject, as Terry Eagleton did, will have heard of two distinct approaches to Marxist criticism. A naive version would be to see if a text talks about class and if it does, assume that there is an underlying economic reality. A more productive version of the question is how a text's form (structure, selection of narrator, use of time etc.) interacts with its content to encode ideology, sometimes reinforcing, sometimes quite obviously exposing it (Eagleton, 1976a). *Animal Farm* celebrates the second sort of reading, that more dialectical. Its theme is clearly one of labour, surplus production, and who benefits from that surplus in a community - it is thus an obvious, if not plain, choice for Marxist analysis (Bahri et al., 2026); but its satirical tone is such that it is not simply restating the ideology of a ruling class, as a piece of straightforward propaganda would. It is bringing that ideology to the light and making the reader aware of the problems that have arisen (Eagleton, 1976b).

Foucault provides a second parallel set of systems that are more useful when considering how the pigs' authority is embedded in the mundane routine of the farm and not just a single coup d'état. More generally, Foucault's thesis is that the power exercised in the modern world is not usually manifested in spectacular, occasional outbursts of force but in more subtle mechanisms of self-discipline and surveillance, such as those he describes in the context of the prison and the school (Foucault, 1977). Obviously *Manor Farm* is not a prison or a school, but the comparison ends up being uncannily apt: The dogs are a sort of apparatus for surveillance; the pigs control the farm's sole record of its history, the ever-changing small revisions to the Seven Commandments are a sort of discipline exercised over memory itself, not bodies. Reading the novel with both lenses in play, Marxist focus on class and material exploitation, Foucauldian focus on discourse and surveillance, makes it possible to see both halves of what is going on in the farm, the pigs' increasing privileges is a material reality, and the propaganda that makes those privileges seem acceptable is a discursive reality and neither half of the story is complete without the other (Pardede et al., 2023).

One point of tension between these two approaches is worthy of stating; they are not necessarily easy to combine. At least in classical Marxist criticism it is the economic base who owns what, who produces what, who captures the surplus that is the ultimate source of social arrangements. (Eagleton, 1976a) By contrast, Foucault is well known to be skeptical of any single underlying cause of this sort; he prefers to talk of power as spread out over a series of local relations, rather than as dependent on any one economic formation to which other aspects of the society are simply mirror images (Foucault, 1977). If these two starting points

are used with care, they won't talk past one another, as one might be saying, "Everything comes down to who's controlling the harvest?" and the other, "No one single vantage point can explain a system this diffuse." The purpose of this study is to address the tension as a productive tension. This is in the service of a Marxist analysis to account for why the pigs desire what they come to have surplus labour, comfort, control of resources and Foucault's analysis to account for why the pigs are able to have it without attracting the kind of resistance that raw seizure would normally engender. The economic motive provides the destination and the discursive and disciplinary mechanisms provide the route. No single framework captures both sides of the picture; this is why the analysis takes elements from both frameworks.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The design of this study was a qualitative research approach that was based on close textual analysis particularly of the characters, events, dialogue and small verbal details that mean more than they first appear in *Animal Farm* (Eagleton, 1976a). This method of choice was directly related to the type of question being asked. The research questions were not about how readers respond to the novel but how meaning is constructed within the novel itself, a method that 'tends to stay close to the words on the page' (Cuddon, 2013). Given the thematic categories that repeatedly appear in the current scholarship on the novel, the study focused on five overlapping concerns power, oppression, manipulation, propaganda and inequality, to build on existing research and not create new categories from scratch (Qamar, 2025).

Sampling Technique

This text material was not randomly selected, but was selected for purposes of this study. The reason for the selection of scenes and passages was that they were pertinent to the two research questions that were studied and not because they were found at regular intervals throughout the book, nor statistically even distributed across the book chapters (Bahri et al., 2026). In qualitative literary research, it is common practice to select passages for analytical purposes depending on their analytical merit, not on their occurrence in the text or their representativeness of the text (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The purpose was not to go through the entire novel sentence by sentence, but to provide an array of passages that included rich content for the two questions that were the focus of the study.

Sample

The sample: Text fragments from *Animal Farm* (Orwell, 1945) instead of any human beings, whatsoever. In total, 26 passages and scenes were selected which fall into nine general categories of the rebellion against Mr. Jones, the rise of the pigs' administrative power after the rebellion is successful, the expulsion of Snowball from the farm, the raising and eventual use of the farm's guard dogs in secret, different propaganda campaigns that Squealer delivers over the course of the novel, the public executions following a mass of confessions, the various rewordings of the Seven Commandments, the various stages of the long exploitation of Boxer, the eventual betrayal of Boxer, and finally the closing scene in which the pigs, now walking upright, are indistinguishable from the human farmers they once overthrew (Fajrina, 2016). Published books and peer-reviewed articles on the text, the same group of scholarship reviewed in the literature search, were used as secondary sources throughout the study to inform the interpretation of the primary sources, which was also used for verification and validation of the primary sources (Bloom, 2007).

Research Instrument

In order to prevent the analysis from being an unstructured impression of "what the book seems to be about", a coding framework was constructed and consistently applied to the sample. The framework divided passages into seven categories: power, oppression, propaganda, fear, inequality, manipulation, and resistance, with the latter two categories being the rarest, and power and oppression being closely related (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2015). The majority of passages were actually coded into multiple categories, and this proved to be an interesting result on its own: very few scenes within the novel actually perform one kind of function, and it seems that the overlap in categories is part of the reason why the pigs' system of control is so resilient. This coding logic was similar to that of previous studies on the novel conducted in a thematic way (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Data Analysis Techniques

After coding, sections on similar themes were combined and the resulting clusters were the foundation for the thematic sections that are represented in the findings below (Qamar, 2025). The clusters were then analyzed with respect to the study's two research questions and with respect to the study's Marxist theoretical framework, special attention being paid to the relationship between episodes of propaganda, fear and inequality to the broader trend of Napoleon's consolidation of power (Eagleton, 1976a). In presenting the findings, they are arranged in thematic rather than plot-sequence order, as has been done in previous, qualitative, literary-critical analysis of the novel (Foucault, 1977). Direct comparisons are made between patterns identified in the coding process in this study and the findings of the specific prior studies discussed above, not only for the advantage of a single reading but to ensure that the analysis confirms that the specific prior studies confirmed the findings of this study, as well (Bahri et al., 2026).

This type of analysis can and should be clear about what it is and isn't able to demonstrate. Passage coding is not the same as coding a survey response or an interview transcript, where a specific and limited number of statements are present from which the researcher can make choices on how to interpret the data. Each rereading of a literary text produces new readings; the categories used here power, oppression, propaganda, fear, inequality, manipulation, resistance are not objective and neutral containers, but interpretive tools. The coding process provides not a guarantee but discipline: the possibility of making an analysis that is traceable, and can be checked against a list of passages rather than a vague impression that may have formed during the reading. The discipline is particularly important in a book that is so much talked about that a new reading can easily be a restatement of what others have said a little differently before it. One way to protect against such a drift is to explicitly connect each claim to a particular passage in the text that can be found.

Limitations of the Study

A study built entirely around close reading of a single novel has real limits worth naming plainly rather than glossing over. First, the coding categories, however carefully drawn, still reflect the interpretive judgment of a single reader working through the text, and a different reader applying the same categories might code a handful of borderline passages differently (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Second, because the sample was chosen purposively rather than exhaustively, some minor scenes and lines that might bear on the study's themes were necessarily left out; the twenty-six passages examined here are a representative rather than a complete accounting of every relevant moment in the text (Cuddon, 2013). Third, this study is a literary analysis and does not attempt to measure how actual readers respond to the

novel, so its claims are claims about the text's construction of meaning rather than about the effects that construction has on any particular audience. None of these limitations undermine the value of the analysis, but they do mean its conclusions should be read as one carefully argued interpretation among several possible ones, not as a final or exhaustive account of everything the novel is doing.

Findings and Discussion

The Transformation of Power

There has to be a starting point in any revolution, and Orwell takes pains to establish that *Animal Farm* does so in good faith. The animals do not rebel because they are evil or because they have been bewildered, they rebel because they have been shown a vision of a world free of tyranny by Old Major, and because Mr. Jones' neglect has made that world seem more urgent than abstract (Orwell, 1945). In the chapters immediately after the uprising, the author is careful to demonstrate the presence of real collective participation, the pigs convene open discussion, the other animals vote, and future decisions on the farm, on paper, are taken collectively (Sari et al., 2026). The early phase has a name, according to the Marxist critics: the utopian stage of a revolution; the fleeting, but real, period of a new order's formation in which there is a feeling of common purpose and common ownership (Eagleton, 1976b). When I coded the passages from the text according to this pattern, I noticed another interesting thing: The novel's mentions of real collective decision-making are concentrated very in the first few chapters and then become sparse once Napoleon starts consolidating his power, as Bahri et al. (2026) noted. That is, the novel is not ambiguous or even about the period before equality was true, the period after equality was not true; it indicates the period of transition with real narrative precision.

Dramatic in that early, more democratic period, Napoleon's way to end it does not have the hallmarks of a coup: it is patient. Gradually he withdraws from the open debate, privately cultivates a private army around himself by raising a litter of puppies away from the other animals, and only after the formation of his army does he begin to decide without consulting others (Saoudi et al., 2022). The results of this analysis align with the majority of the previous research on the novel which conclude that replacing one ruling power with another does not completely eliminate oppression (Bahri et al., 2026). In fact, the rise of Napoleon can be seen as an epitaph of Foucault's even more broadly applicable theory that power looks for structural openings, more or less indifferent to the ideology that is used to fill them (Foucault, 1977). The early conflict between Napoleon and Snowball can also help be understood in the light of Molyneux's 1989 history of the Stalin-Trotsky controversy, as this alters the interpretation of the windmill controversy. The coded passages that tell of that disagreement are, if anything, more of a policy dispute, over how to spend the farm's limited resources, than a simple battle of egos, which makes it clear that the novel is portraying a real conflict over policy, rather than just a cartoonish battle between two characters, and that's important in how seriously to take the allegory as a whole.

Napoleon and the Abuse of Authority

Snowball's expulsion from the farm is the turning point of the whole second half of the novel and is worth a slow read. Napoleon raises his dogs secretly on the farm, and then at a meeting, he introduces them, and the animals watch as Snowball is chased off the farm by a flock of animals they never knew they were in existence. Napoleon raises his own dogs in secret and then is able to introduce them at a meeting, and the animals are amazed at watching Snowball chased away by a flock of animals that they had never known existed. (Saoudi et

al., 2022) For those acquainted with Soviet history, it is obvious that this is an indirect account of Stalin's banishment of Trotsky, the fellow-traveller who was subsequently downplayed in official versions and became virtually synonymous with treason in Soviet propaganda (Molyneux, 1989). There is a structural part to this study that's more important than the historical correspondence: when Snowball is gone, the dogs don't go with him. They stand as a visible reminder of the fate of anyone who offends Napoleon, not just as a routine display of power, but rather as a low-level disciplinary presence, "a threat that operates just as subtly as it could operate, namely by not having to be repeated again" (Foucault, 1977). Opposition - embodied by an actual pig that stands before the animals to make counter-arguments - is diverted to an absence: Napoleon constantly attributes all his failures to Snowball, who has been completely, permanently removed (Qamar, 2025). So when the pigs' rights are especially threatened, as during the times when they are being most expanded, then the references to Snowball as a saboteur are especially prevalent; it is easy to overlook on a single reading but difficult to miss when the passages of interest are juxtaposed; Snowball the scapegoat is not incidental to the story, but rather he is doing load-bearing work, expanding in direct proportion to the justification the pigs need for what they are taking (Merzah, 2024). Taken as a whole, this leaves a clear impression that Napoleon did not have a strong base of authority. It has been constructed over a number of small gains: the dogs, the control of information, the control of who is blamed, small items that, when added up, form a leadership that is not accountable to anyone (Pardede et al., 2023).

A second, more subtle process is taking place in parallel with the dogs and the scapegoating, and it should be taken into account: Napoleon's gradual distancing from public awareness. In the early chapters he shows up, argues and is sometimes voted down; he is a regular citizen of this community of politics. As the novel goes on, he is seen fewer and fewer times in person and instead communicates via Squealer or via brief statements read at Sunday meetings which lack actual debate. At the end of the farm's later chapters, Napoleon is no longer a character that the animals communicate with, but rather a vague, almost abstract figure around whose decisions they circle, constantly proclaiming (in "slogans") that Napoleon is always right, almost as if it were a liturgy. It is important to see this as a deliberate aspect of the power consolidation by the pigs and not as a coincidence of the plot because it is a distance that makes the leader escape the normal inter-farm questioning to which the animals used to subject one another in the democratic period that the farm experienced. A novel which is seldom in the frame of mind to be interrupted can be hard for one to interrupt, contradict, or even ask a follow-up question to, and a novel that is difficult to interrupt, contradict, or ask a follow-up question to seems to know that withdrawal from visibility can be its own kind of authority, separate from and reinforcing the more obviously coercive authority the dogs represent.

Propaganda and Manipulation

Squealer, the quietest but most effective character in the novel, was the one who continually cropped up in the coding of this study when it was used in any category. His role remains consistent throughout the novel: there is a disturbance of some sort that should concern the other animals and Squealer is on hand shortly after to rationalize the situation, or claim that it was what everyone had been hoping for all along (Merzah, 2024). It is his method that is effective and not cynical, and his exploitation of the actual limitations of the animals is what makes it so. Most of them are unable to read, and the few who are able find it hard to keep in mind a precise description of a rule from one season to the next, so that they

can compare the events Squealer recounts to anything more certain than their own imperfect memory (Bahri et al., 2026). Propaganda is more effective when it is presented to an audience that has no ability to check a statement against an outside source; this is its most successful mode of operation, Jowett and O'Donnell (2015) argue. It is made most obvious by the Seven Commandments which themselves are the clearest demonstration of this dynamic. The pigs amend one each time, adding, for example, a small specifying phrase to a rule that used to be universally binding, but on a literal interpretation is still technically consistent with the original rule, although it completely changes its original spirit (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2015). Inspecting these coded references to the commandments in a linearly sequential manner, it is easy to overlook that each rewording appears in the immediate context of an occurrence in which the commandment has been acquired by the pigs, but not limited in its scope, so that Squealer's propaganda appears to be designed to endow these commandments upon the pigs, rather than stating them beforehand (Pardede et al., 2023).

The mode of retroactive justification is not limited to the commandments; it goes through the entire collective memory of the farm. Little by little, Squealer manipulates the animals' memory of what Snowball actually does in the Battle of the Cowshed, making him out to be a traitor rather than an ally, step-by-step (Merzah, 2024). His study of the animals' speeches, done in a close, level-by-level fashion, revealed that in fact he has resorted to a rhetorical strategy that is particularly common in points at the end of the novel when the pigs' material benefit increases: to give them only two options: accept what the pigs are now doing or suffer the terrifying consequences of returning to Mr. Jones, a false choice that this study's coding also showed to be common in such moments. All these facts support an argument that Orwell was already advancing, in his non-fiction writing as well as in his fiction, that control of language and control of thought are two aspects of the same power. All these facts serve to corroborate an argument that Orwell had advanced both in his non-fiction writing and in his fiction: that control of language and control of thought are really two aspects of the same power, since an animal who cannot criticize an official version of events has effectively lost the capacity to resist it at all (Orwell, 1946).

There is a detail of Squealer's technique that is worthy of special attention, however: that he never shows up when things are quiet, he shows up when things are very chaotic. Wherever the animals are tired, frightened or freshly grieving (after an execution, after the destruction of the windmill, after the disappearance of Boxer) Squealer arrives with an explanation, instead of waiting for a quieter moment, when the animals may think more clearly. This is by design. If fear and exhaustion have narrowed the capacity of the listener to question what he is hearing, as they certainly have in this case, Squealer's speeches are always used to that end. He also makes lavish use of the figures which the animals cannot investigate, and of comparative statistics concerning the bad old times when Mr. Jones was in charge, which are just so many figures and have no real connection with the farm's actual output. This kind of invented precision, this type of figure that is presented in absolute, unequivocal terms without any chance of being checked, is another type of propaganda and one that has been employed by others. Squealer's tail, which the animals observe wagging an odd little way when he is making the most important point, might even be viewed as Orwell's little joke at his own method: a bodily tic that reveals that persuasion is in the effort, that is visible to the reader, but not necessarily the animals.

Fears and Violence As Instruments Of Control

Propaganda is not enough to keep the farm together: it goes hand-in-hand with fear, and here the novel doesn't let us forget that the two reinforce, they do not replace, one another. The most obvious and stark escalation are the public executions, which follow a series of forced confessions in which a number of animals concede to conspiring with the now-exiled Snowball (Saoudi et al., 2022). Anyone who has studied Soviet history will see the form of this one right off the bat: The Great Purge's confessions were supposed to be about real crimes, they were often simply fabricated, and the public spectacle was designed to eliminate competitors and instill fear in everyone who watched (Molyneux, 1989). The dogs that had been present at the executions, that they saw at Napoleon's side in the future, create the kind of durable disciplinary atmosphere that Foucault describes: one where the memory of the past violence does much of the work going forward, leaving further violence to be mostly unnecessary because the threat has already been internalized (Foucault, 1977). The fact that the coding of this study adds a distributional feature to this picture, that is, that fear does not act as a repetition, but rather through the power of being remembered long after it has happened, makes the animal's obedience in the later chapters of the book perhaps more a question of memory than immediate threat in front of them (Foucault, 1977). The distribution of direct violence against the others versus the memory or threat of violence was clearly patterned: when violence is done, it is concentrated in a few episodes grouped around the executions; when it is remembered or threatened, it occurs much more often across the rest of the book, and fits well with Jowett and O'Donnell's (2015) overall observation that "the most effective form of control is to provide a vivid demonstration of force at the outset that never needs to be repeated." All this can be categorized under a fairly general statement on political rule: rule by force is fragile, rule by a memory of force and an anticipatory fear of punishment is much more durable (Pardede et al., 2023).

The scene of the confession, so little more than a line on the page, does a ton of work and is much more effective when read slowly rather than one hideous moment. One by one, the animals confess to the betrayals, sharing their secrets with Snowball, plotting to kill Napoleon that seem impossible even in the context of the story; more than once, the animal committing the crime in question did not seem to have had the chance to have done it. No narrator suggests this implausibility is implausible, and this is important, since the flat unquestioning tone with which the confessions and executions are reported is the tone the animals themselves would have to assume if they were not to question it; if they were able to question it afterwards, they would stop being animals. As the killing unfolds, from the periphery of the mob, Clover, in what is one of the few moments in the novel when inner thoughts are explicitly reported, is left trying to reconcile the killing with the rebellion that she remembers from years before. So her failure of memory is not necessarily a failure of intelligence; it is what you would expect a system that has taken over the only records; written and remembered, she might have to check her memory against to be.

Inequality and Exploitation

This material inequality doesn't descend upon the farm overnight, it accrues, stealthily, over the course of several small, tacit breaches of the original rules, and this gradualism is a part of the novel's argument. As they progress in the book, one by one, the pigs defy the rules of the farm, which they established at its very founding, and each time Squealer (Merzah) offers a brief, well-worded explanation. The pigs violate the rules of the farm, each of which was set in place at the farm's founding, and each is defended by a small, carefully phrased

explanation by Squealer (Merzah). The greatest concentration of the image of the cost of this growing inequality comes in Boxer's arc. He is huge, loyal and never complains, finding his own solutions to every problem, working even harder on every failure and his labour is the key to keeping the farm going when the profits are reaped elsewhere (Bahri et al., 2026). Eventually his body fails and the pigs agree to take him to the vet hospital, but instead, he is sold to a knacker and the proceeds are used to pay for the pigs a case of whisky (Eagleton, 1976b). There's not a more direct fictional depiction of the exploitation of labor, at the heart of Marxist theory's account of class society, than this one. While viewing each scene individually, one might not notice the coded passage as a whole, the cumulative nature of which is easy to overlook, but evident when brought into focus: each individual example of a new privilege given to the pigs is outlined in the text as a small, individually justifiable adjustment, but, together, the sampled passages suggest a near-continuous progression toward the pigs' complete material separation from the rest of the farm, consistent with Bahri et al.'s (2026) count of forty-six discrete examples of class struggle spread throughout the novel. That is, inequality in *Animal Farm* does not start suddenly, but grows gradually and what it grows is precisely what makes it bearable for the pigs—and for a long time, at least for those who aren't pigs—Bahri et al. (2026).

It's not just Boxer who's feeling the strain of this divide; it's everyone. In one of the few instances of public protest in the novel, the hens refuse to give their eggs to the pigs, who demand money, by breaking the eggs and are starved into submission within days. This brief episode can be read quickly on the first reading and is an important one for the argument of this study because it demonstrates that resistance to the economic demands of the pigs, though it does occur, is not unthinkable on the farm, it is suppressed quickly and quietly and perhaps more ominously than a more dramatic suppression would have been. The sheep do another sort of economic work for the pigs, but not labour—economic work is done by talking, and the pigs have trained the sheep to do that, with their old version, "four legs good, two legs bad," and the new one, "four legs good, two legs bad," which is said quietly. Both are part of the same economic argument that the Boxer plot makes much more explicitly; that inequality on the farm is kept alive by what the pigs take, and by the mechanisms, violent or otherwise, by which the pigs keep anyone from counting up the amount that's been taken.

Corruption of Revolutionary Ideals

All of Old Major's founding speech and the Seven Commandments that follow, to say nothing of the implicit ones, are unequivocal in their affirmation of equality for all animals (Orwell, 1945). That clear resolve by the end of the novel has been reduced to one self-defeating statement: all animals are equal, but some are more equal than others (Qamar, 2025). It is worth considering this sentence: "It is strange. It is worth sitting with the strangeness of this sentence: It does not give up on the language of equality; it continues the language of equality, but it strips it of meaning from within, as Eagleton (1976a) claims literature does best at its most "dishonest": the ability of a clear break from a professed principle to appear like a loyal adherence to that principle on the surface. A great number of readers of the novel have interpreted this final corruption as Orwell's main warning: that a movement which is based on true egalitarian conviction is always in danger of being taken over by a small, well-organized minority that will use propaganda, fear and control of information to consolidate its interests (Saoudi et al., 2022). To discover this, it is helpful to place the coded passages at the start of the novel alongside those at the end, because the mechanism is not simply omitted but inverted, appearing nearly in the same form in the later

novel, but carrying the meaning in reverse: almost every clause of the original Seven Commandments is repeated but with the opposite meaning. This argument, which is communicated through various means, is summarized in the last scene of the novel, a scene in which animals look out a farmhouse window, and cannot discern pig from human (Maurya, 2025).

Resistance and Its Limits

The novel cannot be interpreted as a straightforward account of complete, easygoing submission, and perhaps it is important to give a little space to the animals who do resist, although they never succeed, because what they don't is as much to be learned from as what they do. Perhaps the character who knows most about what is going on with the farm is Benjamin, the donkey, who was notably cynical from the first chapter, and who reads more like a forewarned skeptic than as a pessimist. But Benjamin says very little — so little that the reasons for his silence remain somewhat mysterious to the reader, for perhaps it is a way of protecting himself, or a way of giving in to despair, or simply the numbness of having realized that nothing he will say will alter the situation. But Clover, the faithful cart-mare, approaches open defiance: She is the animal most frequently portrayed as knowing that something is amiss, comparing the Seven Commandments to what they used to be, and finding a hole she can't quite fill or justify. Her resistance is never turned into action because she doesn't have Squealer's confidence with words, and also because the text that she would have to consult to prove her suspicions is precisely the one that the pigs are in control of. Even Boxer, despite his loyalty, has one moment of doubt: whether Snowball is really the bad guy that Squealer says he is; but for all of that it occurs and is soon blotted out by his own revulsion against thinking badly of the leader. There is something common to these unsuccessful acts of resistance, and it is a structural issue that this study makes visible: resistance needs a language, a memory, and a place of record: the pigs have all these. Individual courage is not sufficient to overthrow a system so tightly structured in terms of who can speak and who can be remembered correctly as Foucault argues in his analysis of power, which acts through discourse or knowledge, not force (1977).

Muriel the goat has a similar, but less significant, role in this pattern. She is also one of only two animals other than Benjamin and Squealer who can read fluently and she is shown, at least once, reading the modified commandments aloud to Clover when asked, a scene that offers a brief promise of what the pigs' system aims to prevent: the kind of independent verification they lack. It doesn't result in anything. When Muriel is called to read, the wall has already been changed, and what is written on it is not what it originally promised, but what Muriel reads; thus, Muriel's literacy comes late to the picture, after the wall has already been modified to align with what the pigs want it to say. The picture is a small example of a point that is central to this study: literacy and memory can be useful buffers against manipulation only as long as the source remains stable enough to be examined; the pigs' great structural benefit is that it keeps the source moving, always one step ahead of anyone who would try to catch it.

Overall Discussion

These findings suggest that, rather than one pig being bad, in *Animal Farm* oppression is portrayed as a system, a set of mechanisms which are only bad because they reinforce one another (Foucault, 1977). The power of the pigs is dependent on the power of Squealer over language and memory, and that over language and memory is reinforced by the threat of violence posed by the dogs, and the memory of the executions (Eagleton, 1976a). This fits

well with a general theme of Jowett and O'Donnell's (2015) discussion of propaganda, that is, that it is seldom effective alone and works better when backed up by other means of social control. The importance of reading the novel from a Marxist and Foucault perspective simultaneously becomes evident here. A purely economic interpretation would suffice to describe the fact that Boxer is exploited, but it would have difficulty capturing the discursive mechanisms, the rhetoric of Squealer, the constantly changing commandments, by which this exploitation is presented as acceptable to the people who are being exploited (Pardede et al., 2023). When combined, however, the two frameworks form the whole novel design: material exploitation and linguistic manipulation are two sides of the same process. The former reading also accounts for why the book has lived past the history it took on in order to critique. The processes it portrays, the control of knowledge, the creation of fear that is not constant and the normalization of inequality by establishing it in minute doses so that no single dose is alarming are not characteristic of Stalin's Russia; they are repeated here, in other costumes, in a variety of authoritarian contexts (Bahri et al., 2026). It is noteworthy that several independent studies, each with its own approach and technique (thematic analysis by Qamar (2025), pragma-stylistic analysis by Merzah (2024), critical discourse analysis by Pardede et al. (2023), and content analysis by Oliveira et al. (2003)), arrive at essentially the same room in the novel: the room in which Orwell has constructed oppression as a system of interrelated, mutually reinforcing agency failures, rather than a single fault of one specific agent.

Also, why is this openly didactic novel not destined to sink in the sea of its own narcissism, like so many political novels? One of the answers is pacing: Orwell never tells the reader of a story that something is powerful until he shows the reader how powerful it is. The other is restraint on the part of the prose itself, which remains unembellished and unfussy, even at the novel's most climactic moments, the removal of Boxer is recounted in the same stolid, understated tone as the description of the weather. Part of the answer, however, is more structural than one might imagine: the story is constructed as a series of steps, each of which is reasonable to take, but which collectively leads to a pattern that would not have been immediately obvious to the reader; the result is similar to the way you experience the decline of a political system: things happen that seem reasonable and don't seem like they're going wrong, until you get a third-hand look at the total pattern, and a lot has been lost. Perhaps the most enduring legacy of the novel for readers' understanding of power is that structural mimicry, rather than any one of the many arguments explicitly expressed in the text.

Before considering the implications of this study in the broader context, one final observation should be noted. Independent scholars, starting from different perspectives and working in different linguistic and cultural contexts, have come up with similar interpretations of the mechanics of *Animal Farm* suggests that *Animal Farm* is not just a text open to a Marxist or a Foucauldian reading – it's open to a critical reading in many compatible ways. Rather, it appears to actively suggest such a structural reading, seemingly no matter which door the critic happens to open first. For a text that has been studied so much and taught in so many educational systems, there is some convergence of description of the underlying architecture from a scholar who arrives through the pragma-stylistics and rhetorical analysis (Merzah, 2024) and from a scholar who arrives through the Lukácsian account of class consciousness (Bahri et al., 2026). That convergence is itself a small piece of evidence for the argument this paper has been making throughout: that oppression in the novel is not an incidental theme layered on top of an animal fable, but the load-bearing structure the fable was built to carry.

Implications and Recommendations for Further Research

The reading offered here has consequences that reach past the specific text of *Animal Farm*. If oppression in the novel really does function as an interlocking system, authority, propaganda, fear, and inequality each depending on the others, then teaching or analyzing the book in isolated thematic slices, propaganda one week, class conflict the next, risks missing the very mechanism Orwell is most interested in showing his reader: how ordinary and separately explicable each step looks from the inside, and how alarming the sum of those steps becomes once a reader is allowed to see them side by side. Future scholarship might usefully extend this study's coding approach to other texts within the broader tradition of political allegory and dystopian fiction, checking whether the same interlocking pattern, authority, propaganda, fear, and inequality reinforcing rather than merely accompanying one another, shows up as consistently elsewhere as it does here. A comparative study setting *Animal Farm* against Orwell's own *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, for instance, might clarify which features of this pattern are specific to Orwell's particular preoccupations as a writer and which reflect something more general about how authoritarian systems tend to consolidate themselves in fiction more broadly. There is also room for reception-focused research that this study, by design, did not attempt: surveying how actual readers, particularly younger readers encountering the novel for the first time in a classroom setting, respond to its central warning, and whether that warning actually sharpens their ability to recognize similar patterns in political life outside the book. Such a study would complement the present analysis rather than compete with it, since the two ask different kinds of questions about the same text, one about how the novel constructs its meaning, the other about what happens once that meaning reaches a reader.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine how power and oppression are represented in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, paying close attention to the specific methods Napoleon and the pigs use to establish and hold onto control, and to the way propaganda, manipulation, fear, and inequality work together to keep that control in place. What the analysis found, again and again, is that the animals' uprising against human tyranny does not produce lasting equality; it produces a new ruling class, one whose authority is built through the expulsion of rivals, the cultivation of a loyal armed faction, and a patient, sustained manipulation of language and collective memory (Saoudi et al., 2022). Fear, expressed through public violence and then sustained almost entirely through the memory of that violence, discourages resistance even as the material gap between the pigs and everyone else keeps widening (Bahri et al., 2026). The corruption of the farm's founding promise of equality, ending in the declaration that some animals are simply more equal than others, gives fictional shape to Orwell's larger argument: that revolutionary ideals remain fragile, and stay fragile, for as long as power is allowed to concentrate without anyone left to answer to (Eagleton, 1976a). What this study concludes, finally, is that *Animal Farm* refuses to let its reader blame everything on one tyrant. It insists, instead, that oppression is a system, held together by political authority, manipulated language, calculated fear, and unequal access to both power and knowledge (Foucault, 1977). Napoleon's rise from committee member to uncontested ruler shows how quickly a movement genuinely founded on equality can turn into exactly the kind of order it once opposed, once its leadership becomes unaccountable, and that is a warning the novel keeps offering, generation after generation, to readers living in political circumstances Orwell himself never saw (Maurya, 2025).

It is tempting, closing a study like this one, to treat *Animal Farm* as a period piece whose lessons apply cleanly to one historical situation and can be filed away once that situation has passed. The findings assembled here argue against that temptation. Nothing about the mechanisms this paper has traced, the slow substitution of one small privilege for another, the usefulness of an absent enemy, the way exhaustion makes propaganda easier to swallow, the gap between the language a group uses to describe itself and the reality that language has stopped describing, is specific to pigs, farms, or even to the twentieth century. Orwell wrote about a particular revolution because it was the one he had watched most closely and cared about most urgently, but the structure he built to describe it has proven durable enough to outlast the history that occasioned it, which is finally the simplest explanation for why the book is still being read, taught, and argued over so many decades after it first appeared on a wartime London bookshelf.

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