Communism and the betrayal of the revolution:

a Marxist critique of the post-revolutionary manipulation of the proletariat in *Animal Farm*

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“Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men.”

Sir John Acton

Abstract

George Orwell wrote *Animal Farm* to warn of the dangers of a totalitarian regime in the practical application of communist ideology. His novella reflects his experience of, and response to, momentous events occurring in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century. It is a acknowledgement of the extent to which totalitarian leaders rely on the manipulation of thoughts and actions in order to maintain power across the class boundaries. In this essay, Orwell’s political and personal standpoints are examined and the book is analysed from a Marxist and socialist perspective. Whereas Animal Farm was written to reflect the terrible experience of Orwell and many of his contemporaries, its message is in many ways limited by his efforts to adhere to a parody of the events in Soviet Russia. Attention is given to the role of propaganda and Squealer, the chief propagandist in Animal Farm. Although Squealer does not wield power overtly in the way that Napoleon does, he is pivotal in the maintenance of a cowed population. Further, and more importantly from the point of view of the Marxist criticism of Orwell's novella, the Author is found wanting in his depiction of the working classes and his ability to champion those upon whom he in actual fact looked down.

Keywords: Animal farm, Marxism, Orwell, Socialism, Communism, Propaganda, Manipulation
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Introduction

*Animal Farm* was written by George Orwell between 1943 and 1944, and was published in 1945. It is an allegorical novella that centres around the author’s political opinions of Stalin and Russian politics of the time. The book’s plot mirrors the chain of events that started with the October Revolution of 1917 and culminated in the total usurpation of power by the charismatic Stalin.

Orwell, born in 1903 as Eric Blair, was a child of the middle class raised at the height of the British Empire. The British Empire spanned the globe and laid claim to a large proportion of the Earth’s land area. What is more, at its pinnacle, it ruled over approximately one fifth of the world’s population. As such, it was the largest Empire that has ever existed. It was the very epitome of the class society, in which the ruling classes owned the lion’s share of all material wealth and the working class, or subjects often lived in poverty, whilst supporting the ruling classes. Orwell's upbringing during these times and his experiences of cruelty towards non-British subjects of the Empire by the Indian Imperial Police (Shelden, p. 117) caused him to reassess his opinions of the Empire both domestically and abroad and he returned “home” to take up a career in writing. Much of what Orwell wrote was as a consequence of his political and humanitarian convictions. He seemed to despise politics and politicians and wanted what he considered the best for his fellow Englishman; this was in the form of a socialist Britain (Menard, 2003).

It is widely acknowledged that Orwell had a keen literary mind and he used his acumen to analyse and lay bare the dangers of totalitarian regimes and the key role that propaganda plays in their formation. His works, including but not limited to *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen eighty-four*, were and are widely considered to be seminal. They provide their readers with useful political and historical analogies which clearly reveal the consequences of certain movements of the people (Letemendia, p.137). *Animal Farm* focuses specifically on the state of affairs that developed in Russia under Lenin and Stalin and seems to caution others against repeating the mistakes made there. The book is devoted to the exploration of the process that leads from the revolt of the downtrodden, to the installation of a different, often worse dictatorial regime. It is therefore important to analyse what led to the initial

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2 This essay revolves around *Animal Farm* and as such, any citations attributed to Orwell will pertain to *Animal Farm* (Orwell, 1993), unless otherwise indicated by the presence of an alternative year.
revolution and how the new power structure was brought about. Violence and the threat of violence are of course extremely effective in eliciting a required response, but nonetheless foremost in the arsenals of those involved in the redistribution of power are rhetoric and propaganda. These tools can be used to sway the general opinion and win support for the way of thinking that suits those in power, or those hoping to attain power.

One of the main areas of focus of this essay is the way in which the lower classes are bent to the will of those with power. There will follow an investigation of Animal Farm and an analysis of Orwell’s stance and motivation in writing his book and what he hoped to achieve. Central to the essay is the fact that Orwell seeks to provide the reader with a warning message regarding the way in which a totalitarian regime can be shaped. One oppressive regime is often replaced by another which is, from the point of view of the working classes, worse than what went before it. The following quote summarises Orwell's thoughts as to the possibility of the working classes changing their lot in life and paints a bleak picture as to his belief in their chances.

What you get over and over again is a movement of the proletariat which is promptly canalized and betrayed by astute people at the top, and then the growth of a new governing class. The one thing that never arrives is equality. The mass of the people never get the chance to bring their innate decency into the control of affairs, so that one is almost driven to the cynical thought that men are only decent when they are powerless. (Ingle, p. 164)

The central thesis of Animal Farm will be explored from a Marxist point of view, as Orwell himself saw it, and in the context of the parallel with the events in Soviet Russia. It follows then, that much attention will be devoted to Marxist theory, teaching and ideology. In order to further examine the effectiveness of such “Communist” endeavours as described in Animal Farm, it will be necessary to evaluate the way in which the Marxist approach is perceived by different historical figures and the difference between socialism and communism, or of different individual’s ways of using these terms. With Marx in focus, no analysis would be complete without an evaluation of the author, based on Marxist literary criticism. Consequently, this essay will define Marxist theory and Marxist literary criticism in such a way as to facilitate its coherent application to Animal Farm. Research will be made
into the person of George Orwell in order to create a picture of who he was and what he stood for.

It will further be expedient to examine the motives behind the actions of the animals portrayed in the book, and thus some of the individual characters and what they represent. The terms propaganda and persuasion will also be defined and discussed, especially in relation to the thesis of this essay that propaganda is essential for the subversion of the masses and that Orwell’s goal with *Animal Farm* was to expose this manipulation and bring it to the attention of the general public. It will show the importance of propaganda in maintaining the status quo within a society. As mentioned, one of the primary sources of focus for this essay will be that of Marxism which constitutes the backbone of what Orwell describes in *Animal Farm*.

The power and clarity of Orwell’s writing and the perceived veracity of his message led to that which he communicated being taken at face value with very little critical evaluation of his underlying motives and attitudes. What is more, the factors described in the fable are taken for granted. That is to say, that no one questions Orwell’s clear depiction of the path from revolution to the establishment of a new dictatorship. Neither do they question his conclusions, because those conclusions represented in the fable seem to be borne out by historical fact. What is more, Orwell’s political convictions and his actions seem to bear out the idea that what he wrote was a reasonable interpretation of the way society is built up and the way in which events are destined to unfold. However, the matters of what moulded Orwell’s thinking, his social status and his motivation have been greatly underappreciated.

Marxist literary criticism is keen to observe how the classes are represented in literature and what is more, how the class distinctions are reinforced. In the light of this logic, a knowledge of the background of the author, who he was and what motivated him will be instrumental in the analysis of this book. Consequently, there will follow an analysis of these aspects of the author.

This essay will question whether or not, given his background, Orwell can truly be said to be in a position to champion the working class, or indeed portray them fairly. Pivotal to this question is the assessment and evaluation of Orwell’s representation of the classes and his attitude towards class boundaries. On the surface, his novella is a purely a condemnation of totalitarian regimes and their use of propaganda. This essay, however, contends that Orwell’s underlying attitudes towards the working classes mean that his words ring false with regard to the realities of class struggle.
Theoretical input

This theory and analysis section will focus on establishing an understanding of Orwell’s intentions and standpoint in writing Animal Farm. It will enable an analysis of the book in relation to Marxism, propaganda and, most importantly, facilitate the application of Marxist literary criticism.

The basic tenets of Marxism

Marxism is the basis for the ideology that inspired Orwell to write Animal Farm. Marxist theory as established in the Communist Manifesto (published in 1848 by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels) highlights the prevailing socioeconomic situation and encourages the formation of a society devoid of class (Barry, p. 108). It postulates a classless society, based on the principles of common ownership. Marxism describes the stratification that is present within society (Saunders, p. 6). It focusses on the rise of industrialisation and its role in the creation of the bourgeoisie, who dominate the working classes, and the importance of removing class boundaries to achieve the equal distribution of labour and resources.

One of the main points of Marxist theory is the economics of human society, and the contention that all other ideologies, or areas of focus are secondary (Tyson, p. 53). Indeed, Marxists believe that all human endeavour, including philosophy (Kreeft, p. 23), education, religion, art, science, government and more, are subordinate to the acquisition and maintenance of economic power. It is maintained that all these other areas of human endeavour are merely a means to the end of obtaining power. Marx believed that all consciousness was political consciousness because he believed that everyone is motivated by political and economic factors. According to him, it followed that this governed and decided people’s views on power, life and the self. False consciousness according to Marx, is the belief that is held by those who are subordinate to the system that their lives and their place in life are inevitable. Thus the peasant looks up to the aristocracy, and industrial workers to those that owned the factories (Jameson, p. 281). There are many obvious echoes of this in Animal Farm.
There are different schools of thought as to how the transformation from the capitalist to the communist society is to be achieved. There is a school of thought, which Marx and Engels propagated, that saw a capitalist framework as a perfectly acceptable starting point for a transition to a socialist society (Saunders, p. 6), so called democratic socialism. In this version of Marxism, it is taken as axiomatic that there would need to be an abundance of resources, more than enough for everyone’s needs for a transition to socialism to take place (Huberman & Sweezy, p. 69). Other schools of thought, exemplified by Lenin and Stalin, emphasise that the transition can only take place in the form of revolution and the overthrow of the ruling classes. The reason for this being that the ruling classes are unwilling to relinquish what they have and the proletariat lack the intellectual resources to manage the instigation and maintenance of a communist society, and must therefore be coerced into making the correct decisions.

Although Lenin embraced the idea of socialism, he did not believe that it could, or would come about peacefully in the form of democratic socialism. He embraced censorship and the “good of the party” thinking (Barry, p.108); Lenin’s thinking was revolutionary socialism. He expounded on the idea that a communist state, which he claimed is a higher state of socialism (Montague, 2001), was best served by a dictatorship, even in the form of one person. Lenin is purported to have responded to the democratic socialist George Lansbury by saying “I don't believe you can do it your way. But, if you can, well, do it!” (Dunn, p. 12). Lenin's line of reasoning propagated the idea that the working classes need to be indoctrinated and kept in line in order for democracy and a free society to prevail. This is echoed in Noam Chomsky's statement:

It's not the case, as the naive might think, that indoctrination is inconsistent with democracy. Rather, as this whole line of thinkers observes, it is the essence of democracy. The point is that in a military state or a feudal state or what we would now call a totalitarian state, it doesn't much matter because you've got a bludgeon over their heads and you can control what they do. But when the state loses the bludgeon, when you can't control people by force, and when the voice of the people can be heard, you have this problem—it may make people so curious and so arrogant that they don't have the humility to submit to a civil rule [Clement Walker, 1661], and therefore you have to control what people think. And the standard way to do this is to resort to what in more honest days used to be called
propaganda, manufacture of consent, creation of necessary illusion. (Chomsky 1992)

This argument seems to tie in with what Lenin claimed: that the people need to be helped to understand what is best for them. This line of reasoning justifies the idea that people (the lower classes, or proletariat) need guidance for their own good. Although it cannot be contended that either Lenin, or Stalin lost the bludgeon, it seems clear that regardless of the actual system in place, it all comes down to the socioeconomic power of which Marx speaks, and the ways in which different individuals and groups go about gaining and maintaining power.

There seem to be a number of ingredients necessary in creating a situation in which an individual, or individuals are held in check and surrender their independence for the sake of what they believe to be the common good. These ingredients are often synergistic and can include such aspects as: the culture industry, the cult of personality and various forms of propaganda.

The culture industry is a phenomenon introduced by Adorno and Horkheimer (Durham, p. 66). It is a system that dialectic materialists believe is put in place to keep the general populace held in check by satisfying their need for entertainment whilst precluding exposure to the finer arts and any other form of expression that might challenge the status quo. It is based on Marxist theory and proposed that popular culture served the purpose of keeping the masses enthralled and blissfully unaware of the reality of their situation (Horkheimer & Adorno, p. 98).

The cult of personality, also known as charismatic authority, as outlined by Max Weber (Gerth & Mills, p. 247), occurs when propaganda is used to create an exaggerated, or fantasised picture of a person’s glory. This was very much the case in Soviet Russia under Stalin (Kris, 2000). Stalin took over from Lenin, accrued his popularity by association but, contrary to Lenin’s belief that communism serves man, expounded on the idea that man serves communism. To this end, Stalin availed himself of a range of different methods to increase his popularity with the people. He initially rode Lenin’s popularity, increasing his own with picture propaganda which initially portrayed the two men side by side. The pictures gradually progressed with Stalin taking more and more of the foreground while Lenin was faded out, eventually to the extent that his is merely depicted on books that Stalin is reading. Further, he used strong symbolism, in large part due to fact that much of the working class was barely literate, depicting him as a strong leader and father figure. What is more, the
indoctrination of the young was an important part of both Stalin’s and Hitler’s regimes and was intended to create citizens loyal to the state. In Russia, young mothers were actively discouraged from raising their children themselves, because they were instead to be raised as “Red” as possible (Pipes, p. 315).

Maintaining submission, particularly in the absence of external threat, is also achieved by the threat of violence against all those not obeying the rules of the state. This has been coined a reign of terror (Figes, p. xii) and involves, for example police, or military violence which enforces the will of the head of state in preference to all else. In Stalin’s Russia, Stalin instigated such a reign of terror to keep the Russian populace subservient. It was at this point that Stalin and Russia abandoned communism and the dream of equality among comrades. This was the point at which the revolution was irrefutably abandoned and the purges took place (Figes, Ch. 6).

According to Marxists the reason that the working classes do not take up the banners of revolution, is that they have been indoctrinated by the ideology of one-dimensional thought (Clegg, p. 161) in which they accept the hegemony of the capitalists as the natural order of things and unquestioningly continue to serve it. This is based on the idea of false dilemma, in which the ruling classes romantise, or justify their way of behaving, by logic such as “If you are not with us, then you are with them”. The “them” in these cases is of course represented by an ideology against which all good citizens should strive. This has the effect of keeping the working classes in check and ensuring that even if they are not satisfied with their situation, they are convinced that any alternative is far worse.

The basic tenets of Marxist literary criticism

The main focus of Marxist criticism, which is the object of this essay, concerns an author’s attitude, conscious or unconscious, towards Marxism, Imperialism, Capitalism, socioeconomic conditions and religious critique (Tyson. p. 68). It is also the basis for the analysis of a text with a view to better understanding the historical situations that gave rise to them and to the historical conditions that cause them to be portrayed as they are. It uses close textual analysis at the same time as it employs structuralism, or post-structuralism. What is more, the analysis is considered of most worth when exercised on literature found within the mainstream genres, thus ensuring that it has an appreciable impact on the political and social spheres (Barry, p. 124). Orwell’s Animal Farm was clearly written to highlight some of the
consequences of the application of Marxist ideology and therefore lends itself very nicely to Marxist critique.

A major facet of Marxist ideology is that material and economic, rather than, for example, political or legal factors make the basis for all power structures within a society. This effect is that a Marxist approach is holistic in its attitude towards man and that which surrounds him, both intellectually and physically, instead of dealing with different facets at any one time. Consequently, arts are a part of the superstructure of society (Eagleton, p. 5), just as are legal processes, built on and in constant reactionary flux with the economic base. It follows then that literature and literary criticism are also part of this whole (Eagleton, preface) and subsequently each literary piece should, according to Marxist criticism be examined in conjunction with an understanding as to the conditions in which it was created.

Analysis

This section will begin with a summary of the narrative of *Animal Farm* in order to provide a context for the description of the characters that follow and to outline the way in which Orwell incorporated large amounts of Marxist theory, while at the same time satirising both characters and the course of events that led from one state of oppression to another.

Events in *Animal Farm*

As is evident from his introduction to *Animal Farm*, Orwell intended to strike a warning note when he penned his book. This introduction was not included in the original publication and, indeed, was only found and published years subsequent to Orwell’s death (Orwell, p. 97). In this introduction, Orwell (p. 100) points out the use of misinformation in the reporting of important historical events, such that facts that spoke to the detriment of the Soviet regime were omitted from media reporting.

*Animal Farm* is a book that uses the backdrop of a farm to provide an analogy for the events in Soviet Russia that led up to and include Stalin’s establishment of a totalitarian regime. In this analogy, we see represented many figures from the then current political climate. We also see figures that are meant to be generalised caricatures of character types.

The book begins with a character who seems to espouse a Leninist approach to Revolutionary socialism and proceeds shortly thereafter to describe the necessity for the
animals to revolt and of the development of Animalism that clearly represents communism, as applied to farmyard animals. During this uprising and shortly thereafter, it becomes apparent that the pigs are ambitious to become literate at least sufficient to realise the animal’s self-sufficiency on the farm. As time progresses, the pigs establish themselves more and more firmly as the intellectual power base that enables the organisation and running of farm business; this the other animals readily accept.

At this time, shortly after the revolution, there is a genuine feeling of having succeeded in achieving a Communist society in which the Marxist motto that states “From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs” (Marx, 1875) seems to have been realised. It seems that each animal is working to the best of their ability and that the farm is running better and more efficiently than it ever did under the oppressive rule of man. The animals take enormous pride in this and constantly strive to better themselves. Notable exceptions to this are the cat who only participates as and when it suits her, the raven who is more intent on preaching visions of the afterlife and most significantly the pigs who can be seem leading the work from the rear. As time passes the pigs discover more and more human wiles and innovation and it becomes clear that the balance of power has so tipped as to have the pigs as the new ruling class, with the other animals maintaining their position as the working class. As the farm becomes more weighed down by supporting the pigs and their growing love of excess, it further becomes necessary for the pigs and therefore the farm, to extend the nature of their power base to trade with the outside world. This is just one example of how the pigs flout the precepts laid down in the original commandments that were decided upon when Animalism was first defined.

Finally, the balance of power tips entirely when one of the pigs takes on the role of dictatorial leader for the whole farm. He is backed in this by numerous methods of manipulation and by the threat of the dogs whom he has trained to obey him. The story ends with realisation from the animal’s part that the pigs have become every bit as bad as the men from whom they originally revolted, and that their revolution has proved to be a futile exercise that has in the long run gained them nothing.

**Characterisation in Animal Farm**

The attention given to the characters that appear in *Animal Farm* revolves around their defining features pertinent to their roles in the book and the struggles that they represent.
Those that have a place in this discourse are described, while for the sake of conciseness, the others are not discussed.

Mr. Jones

In *Animal Farm* the animals are portrayed as the working class and just as with the working class in Russia, they received poor recompense for their labours and were even left to starve for periods. As the book develops, we discover that Mr. Jones is totally idle and feckless, living “off the back of” his workers (the animals). The animals do not, for the most part, see any way out of their life of drudgery. However, they believe that following the revolution they would not be oppressed and that they would own all the wealth and wield all the power (Golubeva & Gellerstein, p. 168). Here, the similarity between Mr. Jones and Czar Nicholas or the Russian aristocracy is apparent. What is more, although Jones is here in the context of an analogy for Soviet Russia and clearly represents Czar Nicholas and the Russian aristocracy, it is possible for him to epitomise any oppressive ruling individual, or class.

Old Major

Old Major who is clearly meant to represent Marx and, perhaps, Lenin, claims a wish to see to the animals best by inciting revolution and the overthrow of man's tyranny. He perhaps claims false brotherhood with the other animals, given that he is “one of the lucky ones” (Orwell, p. 3) and has not suffered as do most. Old Major introduces the idea of comradeship, Man as the common enemy and the song of the cause “Beasts of England”. He further and ironically speaks of the intelligent animal and it is apparent that already in the barn, there is a certain hierarchy, with the pigs sitting at the front. Old Major exhorts the animals to action again the oppressors, man and provides them with a direction, namely that of revolt and overthrow of said oppressors. Furthermore, he provides them both with an ideology and also with a rallying song that not only claims to be old and therefore established, but also incorporates the spirit of Communist ideology.

Napoleon

Napoleon represents Stalin and all others that have taken advantage and who could come to take advantage of revolutionary situations that present themselves. Indeed, Napoleon is presented early on in the revolution as an opportunist when he ensures that the milk goes to him (Orwell, p. 10). The idea of taking advantage seems to come naturally to the pigs in general who can boast the highest intelligence and therefore the highest cultural capital.
Further, we see Napoleon take advantage of the possibility to indoctrinate the impressionable youth, represented by the puppies. In so doing, and in keeping with the totalitarian regimes mentioned, he creates his own kind of citizen, completely devoted and faithful to him. This allows him to circumvent what, up until the point at which he unleashes the dogs has been a seemingly democratic movement. Napoleon claims at this point that the revolution is over and abolishes meetings and the singing of “The Beasts of England”. This is similar to what Stalin did when he assumed total control in Russia. From this point onwards, Napoleon is in undisputed control of the farm and his reign of terror is a fact.

**Boxer**

Boxer is an embodiment of the gullibility and naïveté of the working classes, easily abused by the intelligentsia. His strength and high esteem on the farm resonate among the other animals with his mottos of “I must work harder” and “Napoleon is always right!” . This makes him an individual of great value to the pigs, as he more than anyone inspires the animals into continued effort for the common good. Boxer can be seen to represent the Stakhanovite movement, a system of excelling and outdoing oneself that was initially centred around the miner Aleksei Stakhanov.

**Snowball**

Snowball is a representation of Leon Trotsky. He is to the farm and the intellectual drive, what Boxer is to the physical development. He is impassioned, hard-working, idealistic and selfless. He embodies the spirit of Democratic socialism and works ceaselessly for the good of the farm. What is more, he attempts to organize the other animals into bettering themselves. He is also naive; a fact which Napoleon uses to usurp him.

**Squealer**

Squealer is the true orator in the book. His language, means of persuasion and manipulation ensure that all the other animals are kept under sway. He even goes as far as to falsify truths, memories and the commandments. He is mentioned and appears on no less than twenty-one occasions in the capacity of a persuasive orator. His name indicates that he is a person of less reliable character. It is well known that pigs squeal, but it is also the case that a “squealer” is prone to telling tales and availing themselves of the truths that serve them best. This is a fact that Orwell plays on to create a character with impressive,
but not admirable, traits. Squealer’s lists of statistics can also be seen to stem from the Soviet love of overachieving that amongst other things was found in the Stakhanovite movement.

**Moses**

Moses the raven and his contentions concerning the reward of the afterlife, is a clear reference to the role of religious figures in a society in which the denizens are inclined to believe what they are told. He is tolerated by the pigs on the farm however much they ridicule him, doubtless because he represents hope for the farm animals in the form of a promised reward in the afterlife. Regardless of how much he is believed, he nonetheless provides a further encouragement for the animals to accept their lot.

Early on in the book, Orwell establishes a hierarchy, with the pigs as the animals that are the most intelligent and most adept at learning vital skills such as reading and writing (Orwell, p 6, 7, 10, 12). It is they that instigate, orchestrate and eventually pervert the course of the revolution, claiming it to be over in preference to their own self-appointed rule. The horses, the cows and the goats seem to be of average intelligence, capable of understanding the precepts and necessity of the rebellion, but not the finer points of writing and propagandist rhetoric. They are easily swayed and convinced. They seem, for the most part to be content with, or at least accept their lot. It can be discerned that the pigs already possess capital and go about accruing more in the form of literacy and other knowledge.

**Manipulation**

Orwell was well versed in the use of propaganda having had experience in writing propaganda during wartime for the BBC in order to counteract the propaganda that was spread by the Germans to undermine the loyalty of Colonial India (Shelden, p. 371). Consequently, he understood its importance in the strategy of power plays and also the uses to which it could be put.

The use of manipulative techniques is rife in *Animal Farm*. It is first provided by Old Major in the form of his dream, his resulting vision and the legacy that he leaves behind him in the form of prophetic instructions. There are a number of concepts that describe the act of trying to get another to see one’s own point of view. Among these are persuasion, rhetoric and, a relatively recent term, propaganda (Jewett & O’Donnell, p. 7). Propaganda stems from the Latin *propagare* (to increase or spread) and is a word that came into use during the first
part of the 18th century, then referring to the propagation of the Catholic faith by missions abroad. The word did not receive its negative connotations until its use during WW1 when it was used to refer to the attempt of politicians to affect public opinion. Jewett & O’Donnell make the following distinction between persuasion and propaganda

A form of communication that attempts to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist. Persuasion is interactive and attempts to satisfy the needs of both persuader and persuadee. A model of propaganda depicts how elements of informative and persuasive communication may be incorporated into propagandistic communication, thus distinguishing propaganda as a specific class of communication. References are made to past theories of rhetoric that indicate propaganda has had few systematic theoretical treatments prior to the 20th century. Public opinion and behavioral change can be affected by propaganda (Jewett & O’Donnell, p. 1).

In the light of this definition, it becomes clear that the much of what takes place in Animal Farm is propaganda. This said, there are also many examples of persuasion (Orwell, p. 16, 17, 19, 20, 23, 31). What is apparent is that if the balance is in favour of persuasion at the beginning of the book, it tips firmly in favour of propaganda as the book progresses.

According to Jewett and O’Donnell (p. 17) here are various types of propaganda, termed as white, grey, or black which is a reference to its source and its perceived veracity. The focus here will be on white and black due to the fact that they are most directly applicable to the case of Animal Farm. White propaganda is propaganda that is used in order to produce a beneficial picture of the intended subject. This to the detriment of all else and is done with the intent of building credibility that will be useful in the future (Jowett & O’Donnell, p. 17). Black propaganda is the application of creative deceit and involves crediting to a false source, hiding the source and propagating lies and deceit. It has been purported that the bigger and more bold-faced lie is more easily accepted by the masses than a smaller lie (Jowett & O’Donnell, p. 18).

Jewett and O’Donnell (2012) break propaganda down as being a deliberate, systematic, attempt to shape perceptions and achieve a desired response (Jewett & O’Donnell, p. 6-17). The term deliberate makes clear that the act is intentional and systematic applies to the
method and the structure involved in the act. That the attempt is made to shape the perceptions of another, or others, involves trying to influence the way in which propagandists wish to alter their targets way of thinking about a particular subject. Lastly, all of the above are means to an end that are intended to culminate in achieving a particular response from the intended target, or targets.

**Discussion**

In criticising his work from a Marxist perspective, one approach is to research Orwell and examine him as a person (Barry, p. 107, Tyson, p. 66); to assess his background and his motivation for writing, about topics that he covers and how both his conscious and unconscious attitude is revealed in how he depicts the scenes and characters in *Animal Farm*. It seems clear that he considered it of great importance to stand up for that which he believed to be right and proper - a fact which is borne out simply by looking at his bibliography (Orwell, p. xxiv) and reviewing the topics to which he devoted his writing.

Born Eric Blair, Orwell was the son of a retired colonial official (Selden, p. 11) and clearly a member of the middle class. He was a Socialist who had fought in the Spanish civil war against the Fascists. He found himself disillusioned with the state of affairs in Communist Russia when he discovered that it was ruled in the same totalitarian, self-serving fashion as the Fascists, against whom he had been fighting. While he strongly believed in Socialist ideals, he could not sanction the totalitarian approaches that he saw being used by Lenin and then by Stalin. He was disappointed that the result of revolutionary communism was similar in many ways to that of the Fascist states of the time, in the repression of the people and their freedom.

Orwell had been startled by the impact that Stalin had managed to have on the Spanish revolution and dismayed at the way in which his cult of personality, bolstered by the perceived sanctity of the cause of the revolution had managed to subvert it so thoroughly (Shelden, p. 399). It was in response to this that Orwell wrote *Animal Farm* and in light of what he termed the **gramophone mind** in which an ideology succeeds in holding large portions of a population enthralled (Shelden, p. 400). This phenomenon is visible in totalitarian states.

Orwell wrote *Animal Farm* as an allegory in order to be able to satirise Stalin and other major political figures, present and past. Firstly, he cast the figure meant to represent
Stalin as a pig thus degrading him by association. Secondly, he named this figure Napoleon, a less than subtle reference to another of history’s great and powerful figures. Whether Napoleon’s rule took the shape of a dictatorship is a discussion for another forum, but the fact remains that he maintained power through military might, just as did Stalin in his dictatorial rule of Russia and Napoleon the pig in his dictatorial ruling of *Animal Farm*.

Orwell reacted to the state of drudgery in which the rich kept the poor, writing that they see the poor “as such low animals that it would be dangerous if they had leisure; it is safer to keep them too busy to think (Orwell, 1961, p. 120). This ties in figuratively and literally with the picture that Orwell creates of the poor as animals on *Animal Farm* and of the rich as pigs. It can be seen as part of the way in which Orwell wished to portray the relationships between the animals on the farm. Indeed, the pigs provide the other animals with the project of the mill to which they are to devote themselves. In so doing, they provide the animals with an object into which they can channel their energies, safe in the belief that Comrade Napoleon will see them well looked after and refrain from questioning their lot.

Orwell made it clear that he thought that there could be no future for socialistic revolution, if it took its cue from the Russian revolution (Shelden, p. 406). This is clear in *Animal Farm* as it is just such an uprising that he satirises and vilifies. When a Marxist community has sprung up, it has turned into an oligarchy in which the power has been controlled by a small number of individuals, or indeed a single leader. In these cases, as with *Animal Farm* the cause has been inspired by communist beliefs and the revolution necessary to overthrow the ruling classes taken place. It is subsequently subverted and the basic concepts and beliefs of communist are bent into serving the few, or the one. This is achieved by the use of propaganda

There are many examples of the use of propaganda in *Animal Farm*. Black propaganda is discernable in the name calling and the stigmatizing of the Snowball, as both Squealer and Napoleon brand him a traitor and the root of all evil on the farm (Orwell, p. 36). The use of *glittering generalities*, for example Minimus’ ode to Napoleon, to whom all positive on the farm is attributed (Orwell, p. 58) is an example of the use of white propaganda. The use of euphemism at which Squealer excels, something that he proves in his use of what Orwell would call “doublethink” (Orwell, 1944, p. 45), for example when he calls the reduction of the food ration a “readjustment” (Orwell, p. 73).
Squealer excels in fabricating “truths” that serve his ends. An example of this can be seen when he introduces the idea (Orwell, p. 23) that the pigs disliked the advantages that they were taking and that they were altruistically taking them for the greater good. Here he continues and makes use of one of the common enemies in the book, Mr. Jones and evokes him as an alternative to the current course of action in order to elicit a particular response. This is an example of the use of false dilemma in order to make the pigs’ rule seem like the only viable option.

Propaganda is very effective in times of war, where those in power can use it to paint the enemy black, then use this demonised enemy as a means to persuade the general populace that the will of those in power is in line with their best and spur them into action. This is a device that Orwell used to great effect in Nineteen eighty-four, where, by the end of the book we are not indeed certain that there really is a war at all. In Animal Farm the animals are often reminded of Jones. Propaganda largely builds on the persuasion technique that have gone before, the first instance of which comes from Snowball (Orwell, p. 16), in which he spurs the animals on by saying “Let us make it a point of honour to get in the harvest more quickly than Jones and his men could do.”. This is a fairly innocuous point of pride, in which the "comrades” are encouraged to work hard and better themselves. There is a period subsequent to this in which the animals make it a point of pride that they work better and are more efficient than Jones ever was. However, it sets the precedent on which Squealer later builds, when he reminds the animals that Jones was and is the animal’s enemy. The first instance in which the other animals question the pigs, is when they are seen to be getting the milk and the lion’s share of the apples. Squealer immediately tells the animals that this is a necessary evil that they all must endure in order to maintain the order that keeps Jones from coming back (Orwell, p. 23).

Throughout these exchanges, we are assured by the narrative that Jones is in actual fact an ineffectual individual, who sits at the pub lamenting his fate (Orwell, p. 24). Nonetheless his previous violent and negligent rule serves as an efficient spur for the animals’ continued efforts to prove themselves his better and in so doing validating their chosen path.

Prior to Snowball being driven from the farm, Jones is used by Squealer as an enemy, somebody whose reign Squealer convinces the animals they would do anything to avoid. Squealer repeatedly exhorts them with phrases such as “Surely, comrades, you do not want Jones back?” (Orwell, p. 23, 37, 45). After Snowball is expelled from the farm, Napoleon and
Squealer begin their propagandist work in convincing the other animals that Snowball was a criminal who did not want the best for the farm, quite the contrary, he had plotted against it. In the same motion, Napoleon and Squealer effectively eliminate democracy on the farm, by abolishing the weekly debates in preference for orders distributed weekly (Orwell, p. 35) and the revolution is declared at an end, with the banning of “Beast of England”. Squealer succeeds in this despite the protests of some of the animals that Snowball had in fact fought bravely at the Battle of Cowshed (Orwell, p. 36). This is the first time in which he meets resistance to the ideas that he wishes to push on the other animals and he is forced to sidestep the protests and redefine praiseworthy traits (Orwell, p. 36). When he meets further protest from Boxer (Orwell, p. 53), he is seen to give him a very ugly look. Napoleon and Squealer incrementally increase the charges that they bring to bear against Snowball, from that of a criminal (Orwell, p. 36), to progressively producing persuasive “evidence” that Snowball is the root of all ill that befell the farm, the turning point being when Napoleon decides to blame Snowball for the collapse of the Windmill (Orwell, p. 46). They subsequently up the charges and state that Snowball was in fact collaborating with Jones from the very beginning and was, in fact, the ringleader (Orwell, p. 52). In his persuasion of the animals, Squealer avails himself of black and white propaganda in pointing out and discrediting Jones and by raising Napoleon on high as the saviour of the animals and the only viable alternative.

It should not be forgotten that although the propagandists stand for the majority of the exchange in the communication of their propaganda, there must needs be a recipient for the propaganda who is receptive and who take in and takes on what is said by those in power. The recipients are of course all the animals on the farm, bar the raven Moses who while present stands for another form of propaganda, namely the religious kind; Benjamin, who refuses to be swayed, but instead seems to be resigned to weather whatever events unfold; and the cat (with no name) who holds herself aloof from all that occurs, save where it suits her purposes. There are a range of responses to the propaganda to which the animals are subjected. The sheep seem to accept everything that is presented to them in a startlingly uncritical fashion. They prove to be one of the best resources that Napoleon and Squealer have in quashing argument and possible dissent, simply by drowning it out with their chanting. Just as in Soviet Russia, the pigs in power have no real difficulty in maintaining their power over the general populace, due to the fact that they had near complete control over all the information channels available to their subjects. The pigs and the other animals all implicitly embrace the idea that there are those that can achieve betterment and those that cannot. The pigs make the
assumption that they have the upper hand in the power stakes and nothing that is done or said by the other animals serves to dissuade them of this fact.

Although Orwell casts the animals in the roles that he does, with the upper classes and those in power cast as pigs and the other animals as the working classes, he indicates, intentionally, or not, more than just that the lower classes are worthy of our sympathy. As mentioned, the pigs use whatever means necessary to gain and maintain power on the farm. This of course elicits feelings of sympathy towards the downtrodden who are the victims of manipulation, propaganda and violence. What is more, Orwell narrates his fable from the point of view of the oppressed animals on the farm, such as the cows and horses, as opposed to the oppressors, such as the pigs and the dogs. In so doing, he further encourages us to sympathise with the oppressed. However, these oppressed animals blithely and in some cases, blindly allow themselves to be duped by the devious ploys used. This conveys a different message, as it speaks of the low intelligence and gullibility of the lower classes. Squealer manages to convince these biddable animals that they don’t know what they know and that they are mistaken in what they believe they remember. They allow, almost unquestioningly, the pigs to get away with lies and manipulations of the truth that beg some form of reaction, but a reaction that never comes. It is possible that this is the result of prejudice on Orwell’s part, part of a belief that the lower classes are ill-equipped for the task of logical reasoning.

The concepts of the gramophone mind, one-dimensional thought and the culture industry, give fuel to the idea that the lower classes accept and even welcome a state of passivity in which they allow themselves to be ruled by the upper classes. This is the case in Animal Farm and reveals Orwell’s belief in the idea that attempts by the lower classes to overthrow the ruling classes and achieve self-rule are pointless exercises.

So, while Orwell seems to argue a case for the futility of rebellion and the evils of totalitarianism, at the same time he seems also to have penned a monument to the inevitability of the subjugation of the lower classes. This is hardly consistent with the role of somebody who sought to champion the lower classes and was a Socialist for much of his life. Here we see displayed the ambivalent air that Orwell’s insistence on truthful and upstanding behaviour gave to much of what he sought to achieve. He could argue passionately for something in one breath and in the next outline all of its faults. Louis Menand (2003) referred to Orwell as “a middle-class intellectual who despised the middle class and was contemptuous of intellectuals, a Socialist whose abuse of Socialists ... was as vicious as any Tory’s.”
Orwell was very much a product of his middle class background. His mother "was a loving attentive mother determined to give her children a comfortable middle-class life" (Shelden, p. 18). It could be argued that Orwell was early exposed to class prejudice, when his mother forbade him from associating with the local plumber's children (Shelden, p.19). As the son of a servant of the Empire, things were expected of Orwell as a youth and he was sent to a prep school which he left equipped with a scholarship to the esteemed boys school Eton. All of this places Orwell firmly in the middle-class and therefore a member of the bourgeoisie.

Despite his left-wing leanings, Orwell sought to warn against totalitarianism, whether it be from the Left, or the Right (Shelden, p. 473). He believed that the lust for power and wish for totalitarian rule was not limited to any particular group, and in fact, both Hitler’s Fascist and Stalin’s Communist totalitarian rule were possible to achieve from behind the smokescreen of ideological belief (Shelden, p. 474). Orwell was clearly a product of his time formed by his wartime experiences with totalitarian regimes, in Spain, Germany and Russia he found himself opposing totalitarianism whatever form it took. Even though he believed in socialism, he had seen communism fail, prey to the dictates of the power hungry. Consequently, he found himself unable to stand behind the idea of sacrificing freedom for the greater good of mankind.

Bearing in mind his background and his experiences it can be argued that Orwell was constrained to take the views that he did, which explains why he chose to depict the characters and events in his book as he did. For example, it does not necessarily follow, as Orwell communicates in Animal Farm that just because there are examples of the revolution and Marxist ideals being perverted into that of a dictatorship, that further revolution is destined to end the same way. Indeed, it is quite possible to contend that Orwell only saw this as inevitable due to the fact that he himself was a member of the bourgeoisie. Further his depiction of those who he vilifies in Animal Farm are depicted in a very black and white fashion with no effort made to nuance the interpretation. We have only innuendo and our own assumptions that might lead us to the idea that Napoleon and Squealer were maligning the exiled Snowball, when in fact it could be the case that all their reports were true.

An example of Orwell’s attitude towards those less fortunate and less well educated is presented in the quote “It is a silly piece of cruelty to confine an ignorant man all day with nothing to do; it is like chaining a dog in a barrel.” (Shelden, p. 151). Here we can perceive a little of Orwell’s attitude towards the uneducated and the lower classes. He clearly believed
that they lack the intellectual resources to cope with inactivity. A telling and entirely prejudiced attitude. What is more, although Orwell was against imperialism, fascism and Stalinism, he expressed the opinion that the peoples of India would be incapable of coping with their independence and advocated instead “a federation of socialist states” (Menard, 2003).

**Conclusion**

In summary, it is fair to say that Orwell’s political leanings were definitely Socialist and that he despised Fascism (Shelden, p. 239). However, he consistently warned again the occurrence of the totalitarian regimes, such as that of Russia and that depicted in *Animal Farm* (Orwell, p. 104). He saw great worth in adopting Socialist politics and philosophies, but did not believe in this at any cost. His belief was that those that adopted totalitarian tactics, such as Lenin, Stalin and Napoleon, were at best no better than that which they replaced and that they used ideology as a smokescreen for their own abuse of power (Shelden, p. 474). He believed in the true Marxist ideal where everyone embraces Socialist ideals of their own free will, although it has repeatedly proven to be a utopian ideal, often abused and perverted.

Given the theory put forward and the arguments made here, it becomes obvious that the art of persuasive distraction was something that Orwell believed to be a fundamental ingredient in the building up and maintenance of a state built on the subjection of its people. Having read *Animal Farm*, it seems clear that Orwell sought to warn against propaganda. It is further clear that Orwell succeeded in alluding to a large number of different theories concerning aspects of ideology and to historical figures in the plot and characters that he describes in his book. What he seeks to underline, is the fact that there has never been any evidence of the fact that a true communist community has existed. He communicates his contempt of the use of empty words and manipulative rhetoric by satirising specifically the Russia revolution, but also other revolutions, real and hypothetical. Orwell succeeded in a blunt depiction of many of the factors that are necessary in order to instigate revolution and subsequently pervert the course of revolution in order to seize power, in the name of this revolution; then abolish it and establish a dictatorship.

The depiction of the characters of the oppressors in *Animal Farm*, both humans and pigs, reveals oppression as ugly and unacceptable. At the same time, the message is clear that the ends do not justify the means. Throughout, Orwell’s analysis, treatment and use of language is as a tool with which he could show his support of the Socialist ideal. Yet and at
the same time he was painfully aware of the effect that ineffectual language could have and as witnessed in his attitude towards the empty rhetoric of politicians, the effect that language intended to distract and alter people’s views had on the masses. Clearly then, although Napoleon is the true dictator in Animal Farm, Squealer stands for the persuasive and subversive language of rhetoric and lies that maintained a cowed population. One of the Animal Farm’s great strengths as a satire is that it simplifies, by giving a certain set of traits to a certain type of animal and in so doing makes transparent the ways in which events unfold in the farm’s progression from one state to another, and the pigs’ progression from the oppressed to exactly the creatures which they had once set themselves to overthrow. The communist promise was a utopia, or to use Lukacs’ word, “Messianic”, and possibly not anything that can be realised in practice, whereas Orwell’s Animal Farm depicted an altogether less positive outcome.

The message that Orwell sends is that propaganda here involves both persuasion and the bludgeon and is at once subtle and devious and threatening and ruthless. Certainly, without the rhetoric of persuasion in play, the threat of force itself would not have sufficed in keeping the animals in check. The animals needed to be made to believe and to follow the lead of Napoleon, as did the sheep and as did Boxer, steadfastly and blindly. The combined forces of a belief in the common good, the belief in a common enemy, a common goal in the form of the Windmill and a common saviour in the form of Napoleon are all produced by means of propaganda, for which Squealer is chiefly responsible. This propaganda coupled with the fear that Napoleon succeeds in instilling the animals, keeps them in place and maintains the status quo.

In conclusion, what can and ought to be questioned in a Marxist literary criticism of Orwell’s work is the veracity of picture that he conjures up and the conclusions that he draws. These are clearly the product of and individual biased against the idea of the success of a Socialist society. What is more, he is biased on the grounds of very little empirical evidence to believe that the lower classes have no chance of rising above their station and overthrowing the bourgeoisie and the upper classes. This is nonetheless, whatever his political leanings, the opinion of an individual whose station in life was that of a middle class man, whose attitudes and opinions with regard to class can be expected to have been formed against this background. Indeed, he himself penned the idea that the middle class had been brought up to believe that the working classes smell, something that landed him in some quite considerable bother (Shelden, p. 309).
No one would dispute that Orwell sought out and criticised injustice wherever he found it and indeed if he found fault with them, seemed often to turn on that and those whom he professed to support with criticism at least as harsh as that which he turned on those he condemned (Orwell, p.xii). Orwell was a man who wrote with such honesty and forthrightness, that people could not help but believe him and feel that his words described and sympathized with their situation (Menard 2003). He would doubtless be dismayed concerning the fact that his words were changed posthumously and ironically in the hands of the CIA. They changed the ending of the book, which sympathised with the communism and rewrote an ending in which a second revolution takes place and the pigs are overthrown, In so doing, the narrative became a symbol of something in which Orwell did not believe, namely that of successful revolution. He gave the impression of being passionate, but inconsistent, exemplified by such instances as him clearly changing his opinion concerning whether socialism could be democratic, or needed perforce to be revolutionary and his about face concerning whether or not war was an acceptable alternative for Imperial Britain against the Germans (Menard, 2003).

The fact that he, according to Trilling (Menard, 2003) extolled and adhered to the virtues of what he believed to be his station and even came to love things material, belays the image that he wished to cultivate of a salt of the earth socialist. With all this in mind, it is clear that he was such a contradiction that it is hard to see that he truly championed any cause, let alone, given his background and his attitude towards the unintelligent and ill-educated, the working classes.

George Orwell has provided excellent subject matter for the application of Marxist criticism. A possible continuation of this study would be to broaden the analysis to include more of Orwell’s body of work. In so doing the examination of his background and personality can be usefully applied to an evaluation of, for example his attempt to live as one of the poor in *Down and out in London and Paris*.
Works cited

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