'I will work harder'

A Psychoanalytical Study of Boxer – the Horse, in Orwell’s Animal Farm

Johanna Wermelin

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Supervisor: Marko Modiano
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Abstract

The novel *Animal Farm* was primarily written as a satire on the Russian revolution, with the underlying intention to actively warn readers what happens when a totalitarian regime takes power. Manipulation and propaganda play a central role in the novella, but the ways in which the regime abuses its people psychologically appears to be of even greater importance. This essay examines and analyzes, from a psychoanalytical perspective, how Orwell portrays the characters that take part in the revolution and the psychology behind their behavior and the choices they make. The aim of the essay is to examine what the underlying factors are that enable a totalitarian leader to take hold of a community as this can be analyzed in *Animal Farm*. The character of Boxer the horse is central in the novel and of immediate interest, and is therefore analyzed in greater depth. The defense mechanisms *denial* and *sublimation* are examined closely in order to see what role they play in a totalitarian regime. Orwell delivers a serious message in *Animal Farm*, even though it is written as a satire with comic elements. By choosing to write it that way the novel is accessible to a wider audience than it would have been otherwise.

Keywords: Animal Farm, Psychoanalysis, Orwell, Freud, Propaganda, Manipulation, Defense mechanisms, Denial, Sublimation
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Introduction

From a psychoanalytical perspective this essay analyses the defense mechanisms of denial and sublimation in George Orwell’s Animal Farm. The central thesis of this essay is that creating a totalitarian regime would not be possible without activating the defense mechanism of denial as well as the defense mechanism of sublimation. The central thesis of Animal Farm will be examined and explored from a Freudian psychoanalytical perspective. With Freud’s theories in focus, the analysis will also briefly examine the life of the author based on psychoanalytical literary criticism. This examination will be done in order to better understand what Orwell believed in and stood for. Furthermore, the aspect of why a population voluntarily chooses a submissive behavior is discussed and analyzed. Orwell wrote the novel to warn people what happens when a totalitarian regime takes power so that people would be able to avoid making the same mistake again. This essay will investigate how the Freudian psychological concepts of denial and sublimation influence and affect a population into accepting a totalitarian regime.

In Animal Farm the character of Boxer is central to the development of the totalitarian regime. Therefore, he will be of special interest in this essay. Boxer is considered to be less intelligent than most and his naiveté and gullible nature can be a simple explanation to why he was so easily fooled by Napoleon’s regime. However, it appears as if it is not that simple. There are several aspects to consider. The aspect of intelligence is one important factor, but the aspects of ambition, loyalty, the will to please and the need to believe in something grand, should also be included as important qualities when an individual decides to participate in and support a totalitarian regime. Moreover, when the regime, in addition to all of the above, also makes use of a skilled manipulator in order to spread propaganda within the population the foundation for a successful totalitarian regime is laid. If the propaganda is subtle enough it will be hard
for people to tell if they are being told the truth or not. Important issues to be addressed are why individuals agree to follow a questionable leader and not question dubious intentions more. Another issue is how an entire population found themselves in the exact same, not to say an even worse, situation than before. Furthermore, the aspect of submission is examined, how it is possible for many individuals to accept what they are being told despite obvious lies and deceit. The importance of these phenomena cannot be underestimated, this because it appears as if it can happen to any society. Therefore, it is vital that people are made aware about what may cause them to fall into the hands of a totalitarian regime without them even noticing that it is happening.

The following sections initially present Orwell, Freudian psychoanalytical criticism as well as those aspects of Freudian psychoanalytical criticism which are relevant to this study. The subsequent section focuses on defining the concepts of denial and sublimation and explains their use in the analysis. The analysis focuses on the characters’ different roles and attitudes towards the regime with Boxer central to this discussion. The last part of the analysis centers on the different stages of denial and sublimation and how they progress throughout the novel.

Theoretical Background

Orwell

While George Orwell was a socialist at the core, he nevertheless became more and more convinced that socialism could not work on its own. Even so, he still considered it a necessity in politics. Throughout his early work it is possible to see that Orwell cared for those in society who were economically disadvantaged. In *Down and out in Paris and London*, he explores the misfortunes of the lower classes and what it does to an individual. The vicious circle of poverty that never seems to end, the need of
a job in order to earn money and the need for money in order to be able to get a job. Orwell’s concern that a power with no regards for its citizens would emerge and take over major parts of Europe became real when Stalin came into power in Russia. Orwell’s fear however, was not bound to any particular ideology but rather the works of a ‘Big Brother,’ whose ‘ambition lies in the brute exercise of power, and whose only real allies are fear and hate’ (Shelden 433). Orwell often brings forth the fear of an absolute power and the dread that the free man stands before the choice of deciding whether or not to love the tyranny or die fighting it (Shelden 433). The last lines of 1984, when Winston Smith finally gave in to the power of ‘Big Brother’, sums it up fairly well:

He gazed up at the enormous face. Forty years it had taken him to learn what kind of smile was hidden beneath the dark moustache. O cruel, needless misunderstanding! O stubborn, self-willed exile from the loving breast! Two gin-scented tears trickled down the sides of his nose. But it was all right, everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother. (Orwell 311)

Orwell’s fear of an absolute power also acted as an independent force in his writing. In Animal Farm, he manages to hit the mark with remarkable force by writing a satirical tale about Stalin’s domination in the Soviet Union. According to one of his biographers Orwell truly disliked the ways of communism, even if he had socialist beliefs himself. Early on in his career, he began to criticize the British Empire and its exploits in the Far East, much to his father’s disapproval. His father on the other hand spent most of his working life helping to perpetuate the trade in opium with China, one of the most gruesome businesses at that time. Orwell knew of this business all too well
and did not question much of it before becoming an author. However, as George Orwell, the author, he was devoted to expose the matters of colonialism and spent a considerable amount of his life asking all the hard questions that the generation before him, including his father, had evaded (Shelden 14). This indicates that Orwell’s experiences with colonialism might be a contributing reason why he chose to dedicate his life bringing forth social injustices and also why he began to resent Communism despite being a socialist himself.

Orwell expresses an understanding for the underlying works of human psychology and always remains critical towards power abuse and dictatorship. His devotion to enlightening the public masses about what was and still is going on in the hallways of power is still of immediate interest and something that can be of use for everyone in the present world. The similarities with 1984 are present; the fundamental idea of how an oppressed population is ruled by a solitaire master is the same, but Animal Farm views how the totalitarian ruling came to be, while 1984 shows how it could become when in full bloom. Another difference between the two is that Animal Farm is written in a lighter tone; it has a streak of humor and comedy intertwined in it, and occasionally also ridicules those in power. Despite the underlying tone of seriousness and political message, Orwell manages to keep the tone light, which enables the reader to enjoy the book entirely for its art. 1984 is dark through and through and shows little hope for humanity. The only glimpse of light that is shown is when the protagonist falls in love. However, that did not last for long, so it is straight back to darkness and despair again. Another similarity is that both books end in despair and the reader gets the feeling of a lost cause; no matter what is done, everything is lost. This feeling is something that reoccurs in Orwell’s work; the sense of hopelessness, once a regime has taken hold of a population there are but two choices: fight until death or accept the tyranny. It may be that Orwell found Animal Farm too subtle for everyone to
grasp, and decided to paint a more vivid picture in the minds of people, in order for them to truly understand what he meant. So, in 1984 Orwell takes the totalitarian state even further and expresses how it would become if nothing is done in time to stop it.

As a young boy Orwell was sensitive, introspective and imaginative. As a consequence of this he had a difficult time adapting to the turbulent world of boys, he much rather spent time alone. So, the fact that he learned how to read early on in his life opened up new opportunities for him, considering that he did not interact well with other children (Shelden 19-20). In school, Orwell experienced the headmaster and his wife so controlling that they ‘seemed able to read their pupils minds and to know which ones were truly obedient and which were merely feigning obedience’ (Shelden 25).

There is no question that Orwell was a talented and sensitive child that experienced more nuances than most children would have done in the same situation. This can be concluded since other children that went to the same school during that period in time did not experience anything like the things that Orwell claims happened on a daily basis (Shelden 30-31). Orwell’s background indicates that he early on resented the rules of society and the different obligations that followed with it. And even though resentment for the rules of society is not the same as resenting a totalitarian ruling, it might still indicate the beginning of why he was so attentive towards such matters and spent his life pursuing just that. In the light of this it is easier to understand why Orwell chose to write about power abuse and totalitarian rule. He appears to have been very sensitive and susceptible but also an excellent observer with an ability to put his fears into words.

One could say that Orwell’s experiences during his years in school, his time in India and the time in the army made him keenly aware of how power is abused in totalitarian regimes. His sensitivity towards totalitarian rulers is not a unique trait, but the ability to publicize the issue is not as common and that is what makes Orwell special. He exposed the dangers of totalitarianism in a way that no one had ever done before.
Stalin held a godlike status in Russia, making it hard to question him. Also a kind of mythology had been formed around the Russian Revolution, giving it a sacred aura. Since the Revolution was considered to be glorious, everything that was done in its name also took on that same glory (Shelden 365). Because of this, it became very hard for Orwell to be published, because he more than once expressed a critical view towards Stalin’s regime. At the time Stalin had improved his reputation in Britain immensely by becoming an ally of Britain after the 1939 pact he made with Hitler (Shelden 365). Considering the time (1944), no one dared to publish such a Soviet critical text because the fear of losing Russia as an ally was too imminent (Shelden 366). Orwell concluded that the enemy as such was not Stalin and his followers, but rather the power of the myths that make people unable to think rationally and also make them substitute real debate and politics for slogans of a declamatory nature. *Animal Farm* shed light on what Orwell meant is the true enemy, ‘the gramophone mind’. He stated in the preface of the English edition that all ideologies can encourage such a state of mind; the importance was to be able to recognize ‘whether or not one agrees with the record that is playing at the moment’ (Shelden 365). In this case it is possible to recognize denial as a strong factor for the publishers’ refusal; they refused to see Stalin and his way of practicing communism for what it really was only because he momentarily was of use to their own country. Even so, Orwell is very clear about his intentions with *Animal Farm*. He did mean it as a satire of the Russian revolution primarily, but he also intended for it to have a wider application regarding that kind of revolution. And with that, he meant a violent conspiratorial revolution that is led by unconsciously power-hungry people. He means that if the animals/people had put their foot down in time, it would not have come to the end it did (Shelden 371).
Psychoanalysis

The basics of psychoanalytical criticism originate from the work of Sigmund Freud, the Austrian psychologist that developed psychoanalysis. Even though Freud has been heavily criticized for his theories and hypothesis, and while most of them have been concluded to be built out of straw (Crews), it is not possible to simply cast aside his massive amount of work. Even so, it is his theories (among others,) that lie as a solid foundation in literary studies regarding psychoanalytical criticism.

Psychoanalysis depends upon the notion of the unconscious, as a part of the mind that lies beyond consciousness but nevertheless influences actions and behaviors strongly (Barry 96). Furthermore, psychoanalysis has promoted an awareness about the ‘I’ or any other human subject as decentred; in other words, the ‘I’ can never simply or precisely be who or what I think (Bennett & Royle 133). As a result of his theories regarding the unconscious Freud developed the idea of defense mechanisms, which play significant roles in the unconscious part of the mind. He divided the defense mechanisms of the mind into several categories. This essay will focus on two of those, namely denial and sublimation.

Denial

Denial occurs when external events and traumatic experiences are blocked from awareness. If a situation or experience is too much to deal with it, the unconscious denies that it ever occurred. Denial is regarded as a primitive and dangerous defense mechanism, this because reality becomes distorted and the individual in denial is no longer capable of telling reality and fiction apart. Even so, reality always catches up with fiction. This particular defense mechanism can act by itself, but it is more common that it is supported by other, more subtle, mechanisms as well (McLeod). Denial is linked to the idea of repression, which involves ‘forgetting’ or ignoring traumatic experiences, unresolved conflicts as well as unadmitted desires. This defense
mechanism is used in order to force the unwanted aspects out of the conscious mind and hide it in the unconscious instead. The difference between the two is that repression is an unconscious process while denial can be a conscious choice, that is, the refusal to understand and to fully admit what is really happening (Barry 96-97). Nietzsche described the ways of repression using the words; ‘I have done it, says my memory. I cannot have done it says my pride and remains inexorable. Finally the memory gives way’ (Esterson 223).

Sublimation

Sublimation is a process where repressed material is turned into something grand or disguised as something more socially acceptable and noble. In other words, one impulse is replaced by another in order to satisfy the need for it. Socially unacceptable urges can for example take on the form of religious practice and longings (Barry 97). The concept of sublimation was also asserted by Nietzsche, who claimed that ‘Good actions are sublimated evil ones’ (Esterson 223). Sublimation is sprung from a desire or urge for something, and even if these urges and desires are imagined to be fulfilled, they actually never are. In reality, desire is always one step ahead and will have moved on to the next urge or need (Bennett & Royle 210). This situation indicates that even if a repressed and socially unaccepted need is turned into something noble or grand, the fulfillment experienced when accomplishing something grand appears almost impossible. Unfortunately, this suggests that it might be impossible to completely satisfy a desire.

Freud himself might have been a victim of his own unconscious defense mechanisms by denying that he had been influenced in any way by the philosophers Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Freud completely denies that these men had any influence
on his own work. However, critics mean that it would be almost impossible for Freud to have avoided the philosophers’ work since both of them were widely discussed and debated in late nineteenth-century intellectual circles. So it would have been very hard for Freud to avoid encountering them, especially since he was an active member of the Reading Society, where their views were passionately discussed (Estersson 223). Therefore, it seems as if Freud’s own unconscious denied his conscious part to fully understand that even he was being influenced and to some extent controlled by his unconscious where his desires and hopes took over.

Freud’s work has been heavily criticized through the years. Quite a few doubters have expressed skepticism to whether or not Freud’s results are valid. Jung means that Freud was emotionally involved to an extraordinary degree in his own theories. Jung regarded him as a ‘tragic figure’ in the hands of his own personal demon (Crews 161). Anthony Stadlen states that Freud did not merely misdiagnose patients, such as Dora, but he also fails to see that many times the issue was not with the actual patient but rather with the patient’s parents or spouses. Freud was criticized for being too preoccupied with what he wanted to find, therefore he fails to see what was really going on (Crews 161). According to many critics of Freud it appears that he was too close and too personally attached with the idea that his theories would work. Therefore, he did not manage to see the flaws of his own work. Even so, the theories of denial and sublimation, among other defense mechanisms that Freud suggested, are hard to dismiss completely, since they are easy to understand and relate to, even for people without a degree in psychology. So, regardless of whether or not Freud’s work to some extent seems antiquated and unscientific in our modern view, psychoanalysis still holds its ground. Psychoanalysis has repeatedly been used as a critical approach in literature and it is impossible to dismiss all of Freud’s work despite all the criticism. One quite resent example is Abdul Kareem’s essay *A Psychoanalytical Reading of Emily Brontë's*
Wuthering Heights: An Analysis of the Defense Mechanisms of Some Characters, where he used Freud’s theories about defense mechanisms as theoretical framework. Therefore, the aspects of denial and sublimation seem adequate to use when analyzing the characters in Animal Farm; the choices they make as well as their opportunities.

Analysis

Next to old Major, Snowball was the driving force of the farm. He set the ground rules and enlightened the inhabitants of the farm of what their life could and would be like, if they were not controlled by an absolute power that took the results of their hard labor. Snowball was a true idealist that really believed that they would prosper and succeed without Jones around. Unfortunately, there are often dark forces waiting in the shadows, forces that merely await the opportune moment to strike and turn everything around in their own favor. The situation at the farm was no different; at the exact right moment Napoleon emerges and forces Snowball to leave. Even if Snowball had been the one that showed interest in educating and making sure that they all lived as equals on the farm, something that Napoleon never took any part in, the animals still had a difficult time making up their mind which of them they agreed with. ‘…indeed they always found themselves in agreement with the one who was speaking at the moment’ (34). Napoleon appeared idle, seemingly uninterested in Snowball’s development plans. Instead he was biding his time, building up a network of his own ready to take over when the time was right. When the moment finally arrived, it all worked out as he had foreseen it. Snowball escaped and the rest of the animals felt worried about this development but they were not sure about what to do or say. This depended on the fact that they did not understand what was going on right in front of their eyes. It is also connected to their dependence on others; they all relied on others
and could not imagine that Napoleon would do anything that was not in everyone’s best interest. After all, they all lived by the maxim ‘four legs good, two legs bad.’

Even Boxer was vaguely troubled. He set his ears back, shook his forelock several times, and tried hard to marshal his thoughts; but in the end he could not think of anything to say. Some of the pigs themselves, however, were more articulate. Four young porkers in the front row uttered shrill squeals of disapproval, and all four of them sprang to their feet and began speaking at once. But suddenly the dogs sitting round Napoleon let out deep, menacing growls, and the pigs fell silent and sat down again. Then the sheep broke out into a tremendous bleating of ‘Four legs good, two legs bad!’ which went on for nearly a quarter of an hour and put an end to any chance of discussion.

(36-37)

The new arrangement, with Napoleon in charge, is portrayed as a burden for him and something that the rest of them should be grateful for. The key, it seems, to become a successful dictator is to be surrounded by a number of assistants with different skills that can manipulate, promote, scare, convince and fool everyone that might have doubts about the leadership and its underlying intentions. Napoleon had these particular parts covered with the threat of violence through his dogs ever present, Squealer was able to talk around any issue that arose and he always made sure that the amount of propaganda that reached the animals was kept at a perfect level. Not to forget the sheep, as easily fooled as they were, always ready to bleat out whatever monotone catchword repeatedly until everyone got tired of hearing it and just gave in to whatever they were saying at the moment.
In relation to denial, most of the animals go into denial regarding Snowball’s exile. They convince themselves that everything is done for their own good and their feelings are enhanced by the propaganda that is spread by the leading power. The lies about Snowball, that he in fact was a spy from the start and never worked for them at all, managed to make most of the animals even more uncertain than they already were. By doing acts like that, the regime constantly makes the animals question their memories and doubt themselves, which enables Napoleon to continue to change history as it suits him.

The mill becomes the outlet for many of the animals, including Boxer; it acts as sublimation for him, making him believe that once it is finished everything will be fine again. None of the animals are content under Napoleon’s ruling, but it is not socially accepted to do anything other than actions that benefit the farm. The need for a common purpose leads to an opportune moment for Napoleon. He gives them work that will benefit his cause and also provides the outlet that the animals so desperately need in order to believe in something again. Napoleon plays his cards right and also uses fear as a motivation, the fear that Jones would return and they all would be slaves again. He also successfully manages to create a scapegoat, using Snowball, the perfect candidate when something goes wrong or fails. He is perfect in two ways, first and foremost he is not present and cannot defend or deny the allegations that are presented in his name, and second he did run off, and who would chose to run away if there was nothing to hide? In doing so Napoleon always has someone else to blame and can keep doubters at bay. The uncertainty, the underlying fear and the self-doubt that the animals constantly live with is perfect for Napoleon’s goal in creating a totalitarian regime. He even manages to manipulate them to believe that everything remotely equal and democratic that they once had is bad for them, and poses a threat to them all if it were to continue. One clear
example of his manipulation is the Sunday morning debates that were cancelled on the grounds that it could potentially bring Jones back.

Boxer, who had now had time to think things over, voiced the general feeling by saying: ‘If Comrade Napoleon says it, it must be right.’ And from that on he adopted the maxim, ‘Napoleon is always right,’ in addition to his private motto of ‘I will work harder.’ (37-38)

These lines indicate that Boxer has completely embraced his new leader and denies every ounce of doubt he once had. He truly believes that Napoleon acts in his interest and that all will be fine if he just works harder and finishes the mill. The fact that they receive less and less food since Napoleon’s regime sells everything that is not needed to barely keep them alive is something that he neglects to realize. And despite the fact that they actually caught the pigs having a supply of their own at an early stage, no one seems to be capable of dealing with it. This behavior indicates that the animals chose a submissive state of mind toward the regime. From the beginning, it seems to depend on the fact that it was the most convenient course of action and later on the animals appeared incapable to change the chosen path. As is stated before, the concept of denial can be a conscious choice, ergo; the choice to become submissive seems to originate from the refusal to admit apparent negative factors about the current situation at the farm.

Boxer

The life of Boxer is a tragedy. This magnificent and powerful horse with the loyalty and work ethic that every employer dreams of gets caught up in his own denial that he is working for the common good and that all will be fine once he is finished and
can retire peacefully on the meadow. He is manipulated skillfully with propaganda and lies that keep him motivated and manages to prevent him from listening to his caring friends that actually show concern and worry about his health. He refuses to listen; first and foremost because he is convinced that he is doing the right thing but also because he truly believes that Napoleon only does what he needs to do in order for the farm to be a success. Boxer is far from alone in being deceived by a regime. He was, similarly to the deception towards the German population during WWII, deceived into believing alternative facts. This deception enables a corrupt regime to act under the pretence that everything is done for the good of the country.

It is hard to analyze Animal Farm without including a line or two about Marxist literary criticism. The novel and Marxist literary criticism are closely related since Marxist criticism has class stratification as its primary concern. It becomes apparent that class society exists regardless of what ideology is in power and it is still relevant when it comes to understanding the animals’ actions considering that animalism as well as Communism rest upon the basis that all are equal. In the novel it is connected through the aspect of class and it is clearly divided between those in power and those who are expected to do the work. Even though the ideology of animalism has its roots in an egalitarian belief, the real situation is quite the opposite. The ideology itself is not to be held responsible for these choices but rather the ones interpreting the ideology to the purpose that it should benefit their underlying agenda. The animals are not equally valued and when an animal is not fit for work anymore it completely loses its worth in the eyes of the regime. This is illustrated clearly when Boxer collapses and is unable to work anymore. Boxer, who put his heart and soul into the farm, is disregarded as waste and is to be rid of, preferably with a small profit. His eagerly awaited pension in the meadow has acted like a mirage for him over the years as well as for all of the other animals. But when they realize that it was all a scam it acts like one
of the final eye openers which makes them aware that they have all been fooled, and the
dictator that they once got rid of has merely been replaced with another. ‘The creatures
outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again: but
already it was impossible to say which was which’ (95).

As mentioned before, Boxer may not be the most intelligent of characters,
but he was not a complete fool either. Orwell writes ‘he was not of first-rate
intelligence, but he was universally respected for his steadiness of character and
tremendous powers of work’ (2). The farm had three horses when Jones ruling was
overthrown. However, one of the horses, Mollie, did not like the new ways of the farm
and decided to run off. The two remaining horses, Boxer and Clover were two cart-
horses possessing the most loyal and faithful personalities imaginable. The pair of them
also had difficulties ‘thinking anything out for themselves’ (11) which led them to
believe everything the pigs said. Therefore, they both wholeheartedly accepted the pigs
as their leaders as well as teachers. Here Snowball played a significant part since he
truly made all the animals believe the ideology of ‘animalism’. Without his efforts to
educate everyone and make them all feel as if they were a part of something grand it
would have been much more difficult for Napoleon to reach the position of absolute
power.

Boxer is strong and powerful and gains respect from most of his fellow
comrades. The main reason why Napoleon succeeded in becoming dictator over the
farm after the rebellion is Boxer. This development depends in part on the fact that
Boxer is easily manipulated and to some extent less intelligent than many of the other
animals at the farm. However, it is not as simple as that. Most of the time Boxer only
acted the way he did because he believed that it was the right thing to do and not
because he was stupid. Furthermore, because of his kindhearted personality he found it
hard to believe that anyone would do anything that would hurt others. There is no
argument about his devotion to the cause and that he is willing to put in the extra hours that were necessary in order to obtain the new and improved world that the revolution aspired to reach, rather the opposite. Arguably, he is too devoted and does not see, or refuses to see, what is about to happen. Boxer can be labeled as part of the working class, a class that the ones in power do all that is possible to manipulate and dupe in order to reach their goal. The regime makes use of Boxer in the same way that Russia used Aleksej Stachanov to improve the working class stamina and eagerness to work hard, and even though Stachanov himself hopefully got some positive benefits through this it was still a strategic maneuver made by the regime in order to manipulate their workers. Boxer is the perfect choice, since he always wants to do the right thing, and rarely questions others’ intentions. He believes, however gullible and naïve it even may seem, that hard work will always be rewarded at the end. Sadly for him, that was not part of Napoleon’s plan. The characters influence each other greatly, they work together and everyone contributes to the cause. However, some of them have a greater influence over the other animals’ attitude and mind. Boxer is such a character. Without his strength and power none of the great things that were accomplished at the farm would have been possible. Without him, Napoleon would not have managed to reach his position as a leader in the totalitarian regime that the farm became. Orwell writes: ‘Nothing could have been achieved without Boxer, whose strength seemed equal to that of the rest of the animals put together’ (41). Boxer even made sure that the cockerel would wake him up earlier in the morning so that he was able to work even more. Had Boxer been just a bit more like Benjamin, Clover or Mollie, whose work ethic was nowhere near Boxer’s, his mottos would not have had the same impact as it now had on the rest of the animals. Since the animals are so closely connected and influence each other immensely, it appears as if they all end up in a collective denial where they put all of their effort into the mill in a sublime attempt to reach happiness and success. This
development is fortunate for the regime and according to Napoleon’s plan, since it is exactly what he wants. It would have been much harder for him if the proletariats had been able to come together and question the regime before it was too late.

In relation to psychoanalysis, the defense mechanisms sublimation and denial are frequent in Boxer’s life. He is constantly told new lies about events that have happened previously in his life and even if he often feels that there is something wrong with the system to begin with, he is easily persuaded to accept the new truths. It can be said that he is in constant denial in relation to the real world and the web of lies that Squealer is providing him with through the use of propaganda. When it comes to sublimation, Boxer puts all of his efforts into building the mill and imagines that he, when the mill is finished, will retire peacefully in the backyard field with Benjamin. Clover, the other horse, is cleverer and realizes that Boxer’s hard work is not beneficial for anyone other than Napoleon and his regime. Despite her warnings, Boxer continues in the same way and eventually collapses during the endless process of providing heavy rocks to the construction of the mill. The only gratitude he gets for doing all that he has done is to be sent directly to the slaughterhouse, when it is clear that he will not be of any more use.

Gender

Orwell also indicates that gender might be another aspect to be considered in relation to a totalitarian ruling, because all of the leaders are male and they take whatever they need for their own benefit. The inequality between genders is something that is denied at the farm, it is not even an issue since the females never appear to have any vital role in what is said and done. This is not an uncommon situation in society; since males rarely acknowledge the issue as it rarely affects them. For example, Napoleon took all the puppies from their mother, in order to raise them into horrible
mercenaries that follow any given order. The regime also sold most of the eggs so that there was a shortage of new chicks to replace old hens in the chicken coop. The hens became victims of forced collectivization and even though some of them resisted and refused to give up their eggs, the regime still managed to find a way to defeat them. The few hens that rebelled against the regime were like the Luddites in the 1800’s, and lay all of their eggs on rafters so that the eggs would fall down and break, rather than to give them up. This small rebellion was obviously crushed and the hens that died in the process were said to have died from disease. By doing so, Napoleon had put fear into the remaining hens and the rest of the animals never knew what really happened and could live on in denial. The hens’ action clearly shows that they have but two choices, and that is to obey the males in charge or suffer the consequences. The hens can also be compared to the number of farmers that opposed agricultural collectivization in Russia. The collectivization was usually costly both economically as well as socially for the humans involved. It is also mentioned that Napoleon was the only boar at the farm, which enables him to create his own harem of understudies; including his favorite sow which he dressed up in Mrs. Jones ‘watered silk dress’ (90) when they expected visitors from the neighboring farms. Their behavior does not indicate whether or not the female pigs agree with his ruling, the only thing that can be observed is that none of the female characters have anything vital to say, good or bad regarding his ruling. It can be argued that there have been women in high political positions even in violent power structures. Nevertheless, the numbers of women in these positions are few and it appears as if totalitarian structures are usually something that are constructed and conducted by men in the context of this piece of literature.
Faith and Religion

Faith and religion could potentially pose as a threat towards the regimes agenda. This because it in regards to sublimation could mean that instead of considering their contributions to the farm as their sublime mission; religion and faith could replace the animals longing to be of service to the farm. Because of this religion and faith are regarded as lies and nonsense by the regime, but it exists in the form of Moses, the raven, who speaks about the Sugarcandy Mountain in a religious manner. This provides hope to the animals that are in need of something to long for and it took all of the pigs’ ability to convince them that there is no such place. The rest of the animals hate Moses since he just tells tales and does not work, and by most of them his tales are just dismissed as nonsense.

Manipulation

The regime succeeds in making the animals believe that all others, outside of the farm are either considered as spies or enemies in some way. This is because they do not want them to trust anyone outside of the farm and get undesirable ideas. The aspect of class is clearly present in the tale. In the beginning the animals declare that all animals are equal. However, in the end the pigs changed the slogan to ‘all animals are equal, but some are more equal than others’ (90) which clearly shows how the rest is viewed by the regime. In regards to class it is also clear from the start that the ones that manage to learn how to read and write have a higher value than the rest. The sheep for example, unable to read or write, do not have a high standing position in society, but were one of the most effective ways for the pigs to stop any argument or opposing view. After having listened to the sheep’s chanting for a while, everyone seems to forget what they would have intended or wanted to say.

Psychological manipulation is ever present throughout the book; the pigs start out fairly modest and with Snowball still around all of the animals were almost
equal, at least at the start. Gradually the pigs started to change the rules of the farm and the Seven Commandments. This change was possible since most of the animals were illiterate and did not mind anyone’s business but their own, naively counting on Napoleon to make decisions that would benefit them all. When the pigs started to sleep in human beds in the main house, Clover had a vague memory that the forth commandment ruled against it, and with this event it became clear that the ruling class changes the rules as it pleases them. The commandment which previously read ‘No animal shall sleep in a bed’ (45) had the words ‘with sheets’ (45) added to it. Clover, still feeling a bit confused and puzzled over the matter still accepted it since it was there in writing on the wall, and who was she to question the commandments. In addition to that, Squealer passed by accompanied by a couple of dogs and straightened everything out. He explained that the ruling was against the human invention of sheets, not beds as such, and he reassured them that all the sheets had been removed and instead they slept between blankets, and since there was no rule against the use of blankets, no one had anything to say about it. When in addition to this the pigs declared that they would get out of bed one hour later than the rest, no one seemed to have any complaints about that either. Slowly these new rules and way of life sneaked up on them, leaving little room for opposing views. This is a clear example on how the regime manipulated the others into believing that everything the pigs said was true and that they had good cause for all of their decisions. In this way the pigs managed to manipulate the other animals bit by bit into a reality that not one of the animals, except maybe Benjamin, could have anticipated when joining the rebellion.

The aspect of denial is the most apparent defense mechanism that the animals use. They are all manipulated and exposed to propaganda to the extent that they actually start to doubt themselves before questioning their rulers. By using propaganda and stating examples of what might happen if not acting as they are told a population is
easier to control. A population exposed to the threat of violence is more susceptible towards propaganda and they are more likely to fall into denial. Napoleon managed to manipulate his population in several ways, at first he bided his time and managed to stand out as the honorable one in comparison to the traitor and runaway Snowball. Then the fear of violence appeared through the dogs, merciless and bloodthirsty creatures that merely waited for a signal to go ahead and kill. The propaganda was subtle and clever; it came creeping up on them as the only possible truth. To challenge the rulers would involve yet another violent rebellion and there was no one that was able to organize such a thing outside the inner circle (that already held power). In that respect the propaganda was successful and by increasing it gradually the animals never really knew when they agreed to a new order and then, suddenly, it was too late. Napoleon made sure that anyone who questioned or opposed the regime in any way was silenced. The propaganda and the feeling of uncertainty made the entire population fall even deeper into denial. Starvation, disease and cold weather increased the feeling of hopelessness, and made the animals even more open to whatever glimpse of joy or happiness they could find. Luckily for the regime, Boxer was convinced about the farms excellence and chose to be of service to them. Once again Boxer does what the regime fails to do, inspiring them all. Despite Squealer’s excellent speeches about the joy of doing labor it was Boxer’s strength and his motto ‘I will work harder’ that made them all endure (49). Even so, the cold winter and the shortage of supplies played them all even deeper into the hands of Napoleon and his regime. Fear is something that operates as a solid foundation in all totalitarian regimes; it is an act of balance to keep the population in a state of despair that they are afraid to lose something, because if there is nothing left to lose the regime has lost its leverage. Luckily, the will to live is one of the strongest forces there is within living creatures, so in making them fear for their lives, they are made susceptible to much more than was ever thought possible.
The darkness of Orwell’s stories is also something to consider since everything revolves around the idea that there always is a dark force driving the dictator towards the many times tyrannical and ruthless choices that have to be made in order for the regime to function. Stalin, impersonated by Napoleon, had a rough background, no doubt about it. However, it is not possible to blame all of an adult’s doings on whether or not she or he had a happy or miserable childhood. Stalin’s responsibility for destroying millions of lives goes beyond the intended target; he is as responsible for the pain and suffering caused to all the people around every life that he decided had to be terminated. Here it is intriguing to wonder whether or not he, as well as Napoleon and other totalitarian rulers, make use of the defense mechanism of sublimation. In other words; the socially unacceptable urge or impulse to obtain absolute power is disguised as the socially accepted mission to work for the greater good of a country. These rulers seem aware of all the damage they cause, but since the urge for absolute power always is stronger than anything else their behavior continuously repeat itself. Napoleon made sure that all of his subjects were aware that he made all of his choices for the good of the farm. He also chooses to speak publicly at rare occasions, so when he does speak everyone will be interested in hearing what their sublime leader has to say. He also speaks in a grand manner, making sure that all of them feel the need to participate, no matter the consequences.

‘No more delays, comrades!’ cried Napoleon when the footprints had been examined. ‘There is work to be done. This very morning we begin rebuilding the windmill, and we will build all through the winter, rain or shine. We will teach this miserable traitor that he cannot undo our work so easily. Remember, comrades, there must be no alteration in our plans: they
shall be carried out to the day. Forward, comrades! Long live the windmill!

Long live Animal Farm!’ (48)

Through this short speech Napoleon succeeded in pointing out once again that all blame, on everything that goes wrong, is to be cast on Snowball. He also manages to make the mission of the windmill sound sublime, almost as a holy quest, to the rest of them. There is considerable doubt about the question whether the mission of the mill is sublimated by the other animals or not. What saves the mission, once again, is that Boxer’s defense mechanism of sublimation is completely activated and the rest of the animals follow his lead. There is no doubt that the mission would not feel as glorified in the middle of the cold winter, when there was not enough food for any of the members of Napoleon’s proletariat. Stalin acted in the same way, using grand gestures when he needed to and executing alleged spies when it was called for. This tactic is evidently fruitful when it comes to making the subjects feel unsure about their own reality. Had he been cruel and horrible through and through it would have been much easier to raise a new rebellion toward him. In this case, because there was always a perfectly good explanation to all of the actions and doings, it was hard to argue against the regime. Moreover, the fact that both Stalin and Napoleon took care of any opposition or competition fairly quickly if it became too inconvenient, makes it easier to understand how they both managed to stay in power despite their despicable behavior. This way of ruling makes everyone feel uneasy, including the dictator’s allies, even the closest comrade could potentially become a threat.

Another aspect to be considered is also Squealer’s ability to manipulate. In his favor was the fact that most of the animals had fairly short life spans, therefore he could easily fool them about how it was before the rebellion.
Sometimes the older ones among them racked their dim memories and tried to determine whether in the early days of the Rebellion, when Jones’s expulsion was still resented, things had been better or worse than now. They could not remember. There was nothing with which they could compare their present lives: they had nothing to go upon except Squealer’s list of figures, which invariably demonstrated that everything was getting better and better. (87)

This strategy can be compared to Stalin’s Five Year Plans, where the people never really knew if a plan was successful or not. They only knew what could happen if they were caught with a record of poor attendance, bad workmanship or other things that could indicate resistance of the plan. Then they would most likely be accused of sabotaging the Five Year Plan and if found guilty it was either a direct execution or forced labor that awaited (Simkin). Napoleon acted similarly; if found guilty of a crime against the farm, the dogs would take care of the problem. The agenda for the farm was also kept hidden from the rest of the animals; they were only given bits here and there and always told that everything that Napoleon had carried out since the rebellion had been successful.

To begin with the animals are on, what at least seems to be, the same side with the same purpose; to be free of oppression and live on their own conditions. However, once the rebellion is complete and Mr. Jones is defeated it stands clear that the pigs have an agenda of their own. Even if Napoleon and Snowball have different approaches to reaching success, they are similar in the sense that they both have the ambition to lead the rest of the animals into their joint future. Why the pigs were the ones that took charge from the beginning is quite obvious since the founder of the revolutionary ideas was old Major, the prophet of the farm, who all the animals
respected and listened to, except the cat and the raven Moses that never listened to anybody but themselves. Another reason for their ability to lead the others is their level of intelligence including their ability in learning how to read and adapt to the ways of their predecessors – the humans.

The animals are first presented with old Major’s vision that has come to him through a dream, they all think that it sounds amazing and are mesmerized by the idea of being free from the slavery they are held in. He summarizes their problems to one single fact – the man. Without this enemy all animals would be free from slavery and could make use of all the produce that they are entitled to since they are the ones doing all the labor. They would be able to eat until their stomachs were full and no one would steal all the milk and eggs and take it for themselves anymore. He also reminds them that when they are of no use any longer they will immediately be sent to the knackers or drowned in the nearest pond, no one is allowed to retire peacefully on this farm. The idea of freedom sounds amazing, almost unbelievably wonderful for all of them. They cannot imagine a better way of life, so they all agree to go along with the rebellion.

Major had a clear ideology and carefully expressed that it was vital that even after man has been conquered they should not take after his vices. The habits of men are as evil as man himself. He also pressed on the importance of respect towards one another, that ‘…no animal must ever tyrannize over his own kind, weak or strong, clever or simple, we are all brothers. No animal must ever kill any other animal. All animals are equal’ (6). Unfortunately, old Major passed away in his sleep so his vision was executed by others’ that did not share his generosity.

When Major’s legacy was carried out, mainly through Snowball and Napoleon but also Squealer, the direction of the rebellion changed, especially when Napoleon realized that he potentially could be master of the farm one day. He did not care for the ‘all for one and one for all’ motto that Major indulged in. Snowball on the
other hand shared Major’s vision in how the farm should be managed and shared his belief that all should live in harmony as equals. Snowball was also more empathetic and attentive to the needs of the other animals; he listened to them and tried to teach them how to read, even though he mostly cared about the newly founded ideology of Animalism. So similarly to Napoleon he cared most about his own agenda, even if his agenda would have benefitted them all in a better way than Napoleon’s did. The regime wanted to dissociate itself from everything that had any connection with the world of humans. Mollie, however, was unimpressed with the new rules and the regime probably considered her as an inconvenient and uncomfortable comrade. And even though she appears superficial and frivolous she chose to control her own destiny, indicating that she possessed strength and a determination that most of the other animals lacked. The following lines indicate that she was unhappy with the new order and saw the reality for what it really was.

The stupidest questions were asked by Mollie, the white mare. The very first question she asked Snowball was: ‘Will there still be sugar after the Rebellion?’

‘No,’ said Snowball firmly. ‘We have no means of making sugar on this farm. Besides, you do not need sugar. You will have all the oats and hay you want.’

‘And shall I still be allowed to wear ribbons in my mane?’ asked Mollie.

‘Comrade,’ said Snowball, ‘those ribbons that you are so devoted to are the badge of slavery. Can you not understand that liberty is worth more than the ribbons?’ Mollie agreed, but she did not sound very convinced. (10)
Boxer on the other hand threw his small straw hat into the fire once he heard that the regime had decided that all animals should go naked (13), even though the hat helped him keep the flies out of his ears in the summer. Needless to say, the most devoted disciples were Boxer and Clover; they soon accepted the pigs as their teachers and took in everything they said according to their ability. They had a hard time thinking out anything for themselves, so they embraced the fact that someone else was teaching them. They on the other hand passed on what they learned to the other animals using simple arguments which made everyone fall in line one by one. When the rebellion finally was complete, they all got rid of everything that reminded them of the regime of humans, an era that was now over. All seems perfectly fine and everyone agreed on the seven commandments as well as the decision that the farmhouse should be kept as a museum. But that very same day, Napoleon decided to keep the milk to himself instead of sharing, and even if the animals noticed that it was gone nobody said anything, and that was their first mistake.

The stages of denial
The first step towards denial happens in this very moment, even though all of them suspect that the pigs have taken the milk for themselves (16), each and every one finds an excuse for it. This small deceit is excused and explained away. Most of them probably assumed that the pigs used it where it was needed the most. The second stage of denial happens when most of them realize and accept their inability in reading (21); they accept that they must rely on the pigs’ abilities and judgment. Acceptance is common within all communities, the acceptance and respect of authorities, and why would they question those with the most knowledge? Because many of the animals were incapable in learning how to read the seven commandments were reduced to the maxim of ‘Four legs good, two legs bad’ because that was something that they all could
learn, even the sheep adapted it. The third stage is fear, which makes the animals more susceptible to manipulation. Squealer threatens the other animals of what might happen if Jones returns to the farm, which is inevitable if the pigs are not granted special favors, considering the massive brainwork they are involved in. In this particular case they were entitled to take all the milk and apples (23), that otherwise were supposed to be equally shared. The fourth stage involves confusion; the animals believe that they know their own reality. However, they soon realize that they do not know anything; everything becomes twisted once Napoleon decides to exile Snowball. Once Snowball is gone, all information and knowledge that they believed was true is turned into something else, the greatest change is the change in opinion of Snowball that goes from being a hero into becoming the greatest traitor of all time - the root of all evil. The fifth stage is when they endure hardship through the long and cold winter and all of them starve, except the pigs, and many of them catch diseases and succumb. This period in their life is filled with denial, the common thought being that despite everything, they should at least be grateful that they are free. Clearly, at this point they are far from free, but they are so caught up in their illusion of freedom and independence from their former master that they are unable to realize that they are just enabling another master to take Jones’s place. The sixth stage is disillusion, the stage where many of them start to see that they have been fooled and that all was a scam. Finally the seventh stage is realization, when the animals realize that everything is back where they once started, except now it is far worse since they have been betrayed by someone that is supposed to be one of their own. This is the stage where the defense mechanism of denial is no longer effective since it is completely impossible for them to hide from the truth. The fear of being slaves has once more become reality and the fearless leader has turned into a ruthless master with an endless thirst for power.
The stages of sublimation

The stages of sublimation are not as many as the stages of denial. Not all of the animals are affected by the defense mechanism of sublimation either. Many of the animals are just in denial that they are being manipulated and deceived. However, some of them, Boxer in particular, makes use of all their inner frustration and despair in order to build the mill. The first stage of sublimation occurs gradually and consists of the desire to be involved in the great new world that they are creating at the farm, the will to please and choose the accepted path is what drives most of them. They all felt as if they were part of something extraordinary through the rebellion. The second stage is when the Windmill is to be built; the mill symbolizes a higher purpose and their common effort into creating something that will benefit all of them. Especially Boxer views the Windmill as a necessity, he convinces himself that when it is done all is well, he can with good conscience retire to the meadow. He manages to believe this, despite all the hardship and toil that they all have to go through. He puts all of his energy towards finishing it instead of acknowledging the unacceptable thoughts of doubt and despair. Boxer’s attitude and sturdiness make the others believe in the project as well, a project that would have been almost impossible to complete, had it not been for Boxer. Despite all the hard work and endless trials, the animals never gave up hope; neither did they lose their sense of pride and honor for being part of the farm. Eventually sublimation ends, and this happens when Boxer collapses and he realizes that all of his efforts have been in vain since there is no reward or gratitude for hard work, there is no meadow waiting for him, only death. The final moment of revelation appears when pig and man is hard to tell apart and this finally makes the animals lose faith. It is at this very moment they give up and realize that whatever they do nothing really matters.

Nevertheless, there was one on the farm that seems completely unaffected by the rebellion and all the manipulation, and that was Benjamin, the donkey. He
carried out his work in the same way as always, regardless of who was in charge. When asked if he was happier without Jones, he only said: ‘Donkeys live a long time. None of you has ever seen a dead donkey (19),’ and with this cryptic answer the others had to be content because he would not say anything more. When all of the other memories failed, Benjamin claimed to remember everything in detail. He meant that ‘things never had been, nor ever could be, much better or much worse’ (87). Freud discusses the concept of happiness and states that ‘we do not become happy, but we can live with our unhappiness in a more fruitful and less miserable way, with the events and circumstances of our lives as they are rather than as we wish them to be’ (Slade 7). Benjamin seems to have adapted this concept fully and does what best he can with the life that is given to him, unlike Boxer, who lived his entire life in denial, fooling himself that there was something better to look forward to. Boxer also failed in learning how to read properly since he lacked the ability to learn more than three or four letters, while Benjamin was as skilled in reading as the pigs were. Still, he never used this knowledge with the excuse that there was nothing worth reading. His attitude was most unfortunate for the other animals, especially since he could have influenced Boxer greatly and enlightened him when Boxer himself was unable to collect his thoughts and form sentences. As a result of Benjamin’s lack of involvement they all ended up as they did. All of their lives could probably be quite different if Benjamin had cared about anything at all.

**Conclusion**

The conclusion of this is that the defense mechanism of denial and sublimation indeed play an important role in the creation of a totalitarian regime. It appears as if the defense mechanism of denial has to be activated in order to create a totalitarian regime. Sublimation, on the other hand, it seems, is not as important to
activate since not all of the animals were affected by it. Nevertheless, it is not possible
to blame Boxer’s, or any of the other animals’ lack of intelligence or naiveté for letting
a totalitarian regime take control. It was rather the effect of skillful manipulation that
increased gradually, that fooled them to following blindly in what became an even
worse situation than Jones had them in. Even though they went along with it all, it
should be remembered that they all were victims of an extremely skillfully planned
setup. It was the skillful manipulation and propaganda, a manifest that everything done,
was in everyone’s best interest, which in the end resulted in a totalitarian ruling. These
aspects made them all fall into a collective denial, because they all truly wanted and
craved for everything to be true, and therefore they believed everything and ignored
aspects that did not add up. They did actually believe the lies to be true, despite all the
facts against it, only because of the simple fact that they chose to deny the truth. Their
submissive behavior came to be because they genuinely wanted to believe it all. The
fact that most of the animals did not manage to learn how to read also contributed to a
failed rebellion, they were never equal to start with and the inequality only progressed
when some of the animals took on rights that they never had under Jones’s ruling.

Considering that Boxer always looked forward to a brighter future and
genuinely wanted to believe everything remotely positive, he was the perfect mark to
manipulate. Because of his positive attitude and willingness to do manual labor, instead
of putting down time in learning how to read, he was also extremely easy to fool.
Moreover, he never interfered or questioned any of the regimes decisions; instead he
trusted everything and was convinced that the regime would do the right thing and stay
ture to its word. Boxer enabled the regime to develop into a totalitarian state since he,
with his positivism and stamina, managed to convince everyone with doubts that
everything would be fine if they just kept going and worked harder.
It appears as if one of the strongest forces within a community is the will to believe in something, and if life is bad to start with it is easier for a leader to deceive, because all everyone wants is something to believe in and fight for. This is what both Napoleon and Stalin did so carefully, they used all means possible to deceive the population that they were acting on the people’s behalf, no personal gain whatsoever. Napoleon repeatedly made sure that everyone knew that he was burdened with the heavy weight on his shoulders because of the sacrifice he made for the sake of them and their farm. He did not explicitly say so much himself, but he made sure that others delivered his message.

Furthermore, when it comes to autocratic ways and why dictators seem to be followed voluntarily, at least from the beginning, it can be stated that the vast majority are manipulated into believing that they all are working towards a common goal in order for everything to be better than before. It appears that it is vital for a totalitarian regime to have some basic knowledge about the underlying psychology in a community in order to succeed in their elaborate scheme. Stalin, as well as Napoleon made sure that they were surrounded with faithful and loyal followers, who usually had some personal gain in it as well. Those who showed any doubt or opposed were rapidly dismissed in various manners, discredited, exiled or killed. The leader appears to benefit from being charismatic in some way; intriguing in ways that attract attention, everyone should want to hear what the glorious leader has to say. Stalin was used to making things go his way, and if something did not go as planned he made sure that it was rearranged to his benefit. Similarly, Napoleon was the silent and fierce type and known for ‘getting his own way’ (9). In order to make an entire population follow a totalitarian regime, the leader must also be a master of manipulating minds and memories. To make them deny the truth and to put all effort into whatever sublime mission the regime wants
at the moment, it takes planning and a cunning personality that stays with the plan, no matter the consequences.

Napoleon’s success in creating a totalitarian regime in *Animal Farm* is based on his skill in manipulating the others into activating their defense mechanisms, denial in particular but also sublimation to a certain extent. Had he not been able to make them believe all the deceit, or in other words, if more of them had been more cynical and skeptical, not to say clear sighted, like Benjamin; he would most likely not have succeeded. This indicates that in order for a dictator to come into power, the population should be provided with information and knowledge that benefits the regime and nothing more. As soon as unfavorable facts to the regime enter the community the most effective way to deal with it seems to be to start a campaign to smear and malign everything about these facts, sow doubt and fear in everyone that dares to think differently. Orwell manages to write a story that really hits its mark, equally true then as it is today. *Animal Farm* will never go out of date as long as there are people in the world with a need to dominate others.
Works cited


