

## **Degree Project**

Level: Bachelor's

### **Reading Orwell's Animals**

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#### **An animal-oriented study of George Orwell's political satire *Animal Farm***

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”[F]or centuries nonhuman animals have been locked in representations authored by humans, representations that, moreover, have justified their use and abuse by humans. But unlike in women’s studies or ethnic studies, those who constitute the objects of animal studies cannot speak for themselves, or at least they cannot speak the languages that the academy recognizes as necessary for such self-representation. Must they then be forever condemned to the status of objects? ” (Kari Weil 2)

According to Robert McKay, what had been missing in academic disciplines until the 1990s was: “the commitment to developing both scholarly knowledge of an as yet unthought subject of inquiry ... and also the responsibility needed to show the proper respect for, to take seriously as subjects of experience, the animals whose lives are represented in cultural texts” (637). Back then, very few scholars concerned themselves with the presence of animals in literary texts, and McKay describes it as a challenge to even imagine a community of inquiry that would “systematically and conscientiously attend to the representational complexity of cultural imaginings of animals’ lives and deaths, and of the manifold encounters with humans that often mark the passage from one to the other” (637). During the past few decades, however, what is commonly referred to as The Animal Turn<sup>1</sup> has made its way through the academic disciplines and into literary criticism, making visible and calling into question cultural and literary representations of animals as well as our attitudes and treatment of the same. According to Professor Cary Wolfe, given what we have learned in recent years about animals (such as the richness of their mental and emotional lives as well as the complexity of their forms of communication and interaction), “many scholars now think that we are forced to make the same kind of shift in the ethics of reading and interpretation that attended taking

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<sup>1</sup> A term denoting the recent rise of scholarly interest in animals within the humanities and social sciences (Wolfe 565)

... race and gender seriously in the 1970s and 1980s” (Wolfe 568). For Marion W. Copeland back in the 1980s, this shift in perspective had seemed as natural a progression, once feminist and ethnic literatures had been recognized as appropriate areas of study, as it had seemed unnatural to many others (Copeland 91). Both Copeland and Susan McHugh (2011) recall similar incidents from their undergraduate careers where their literature professors had responded harshly to their essays due to giving prominence to animal subjectivity. McHugh, for example, had suggested that Wordsworth’s poem “Nutting” was a reflection of the squirrel’s thoughts on seasonal change, a suggestion that was met by: “That’s insane ... Animals don’t think and they certainly don’t write poetry” (qtd. in Copeland 91-92). This skepticism towards taking an other-than-human perspective on literary texts can be understood as mirroring the anthropocentric Western tradition of viewing animals as existing for our sake rather than for their own. While it can be agreed upon that animals lack the ability to express themselves using human language (a lack which undoubtedly plays a great part in our objectification of them), there nevertheless *is*, as suggested by Animal Studies, such a thing as an other-than-human perspective (Copeland 91). With this in mind, looking at the how animals are represented in literature is not only interesting in terms of what their literary representations have to say about our relationship with, and attitudes towards, animals – but also because it allows us to explore the world through other-than-human eyes, and, as demonstrated by Daniel Quinn in *Ishmael* (1992); “to view ourselves and judge ourselves as other species may judge and view us” (qtd in Copeland 94).

Even though thought and consciousness are, as Weil argues; “not the exclusive property of humans” (19), it seems that if represented as beings able to talk, act and feel - taking the literary animals’ words, actions and feelings seriously (or rather, literally) has not been a common agenda among those who study literature. Instead, interpreting animal presence and representation in literary genres such as fiction, poetry and fable, for example,

tends to be heavily based on the understanding of the literary animal as a non-animal – i.e. on the assumption that animals in literature are secondary to the concerns and actions of the human characters. As Onno Oerlemans argues in her article about the use of animal allegory in poetry: “We can, and normally do, interpret literary animals allegorically even if a poem appears literally to be about animals” (315). However, the successfulness of animal allegories aiming to create sympathy for the intended referents (like for example the Russian proletariat) depends partly on “the acceptance of animals as sensitive beings” (311). Thus, involving literary animals in literature in order to illustrate the abuse of one group of humans by another, implies having an awareness that animals feel, have desires and, like humans, “face death with horror and pity” (311). So while the reader of a story about farm animals might “skip” the farm animal and instead look at it as human, the allegory only works well because we recognize and accept similarities between our selves and those very animals.

Reading animals simply as metaphors for human traits has certainly been the case with George Orwell’s novella *Animal Farm* (1945), a world-famous satire in which animals are used allegorically to represent the people and the leaders of communist Russia. According to David Dwan in his article “Orwell’s Paradox: Equality in *Animal Farm*”, those who have studied Orwell’s novella have understandably focused on its “immediate polemical function” (Dwan 655). That is, its function as a critique of the Soviet régime at the time. And indeed, this function was the reason that Orwell had to struggle with publishers before being able to put the fable into print. In Orwell’s proposed preface to the novella, one publisher’s concerns are shown in an extract:

If the fable were addressed generally to dictators and dictatorships at large then publication would be all right, but the fable does follow ... so completely the progress of the Russian Soviets and their two dictators, that

it can apply only to Russia, to the exclusion of the other dictatorships.

(Orwell 103).

Similarly, though half a century later, Mitzi M. Brunsdale, in her *Student Companion to George Orwell* (2000), provides students as well as general readers with a detailed list explaining what each allegorical animal represents in the novella, and with this, strongly limits the possibilities of interpretation and understanding of Orwell's work. One of the most prominent scholars within the fields of Animal Studies - Erica Fudge (2009) - is critical of this gloss, and argues that, "while such a list might make teaching the text easier, it cancels the possibility of reading it as having anything to say about human-animal relations" (Fudge).

While literary critics like Brunsdale argue that reading *Animal Farm* as a text that has something to say about animals is to misread it, Dwan points to the book's central concept of equality as something that expands the range of interpretative possibilities: "By casting events as a farmyard fable, Orwell gives historical particulars a *peculiarly extended life* [my italics] and broadens the scope of the questions the narrative raises" (655). Because the story is organized around the concept of equality, which Dwan argues is fundamental to any political ideology, the fable can be interpreted as criticizing other forms of political ideologies, and thus not simply that of communism. Depending on the type of reading, the formal conventions of the fable can be seen as allowing Orwell's narrative to raise a series of complex issues concerning ethical concepts, such as the concept of equality - and to who or what it should extend (657).

Although Orwell's intention was likely not to write a novella with the purpose of bringing the inequalities permeating the human-animal relationship to light, he surely took animal exploitation and the arbitrariness of the animal-human divide into account when deciding to use animals as allegories. In fact, the problem of animal welfare lies implicit in Orwell's own account of the novella's origins (Dwan 666). In the preface to the Ukrainian

edition (1947), Orwell states that that he had wanted to expose the Soviet myth in a way so that it could be easily understood by almost anyone:

However, the actual details of the story did not come to me for some time until one day ... I saw a little boy ... driving a huge cart-horse along a narrow path, whipping it whenever it tried to turn. It struck me that if only such animals became aware of their strength we should have no power over them, and that men exploit animals in much the same way as the rich exploit the proletariat”

(Orwell 118).

Again, while this novella is not overtly about Animal Rights, the choice to use animals as central characters gives the reader a chance to consider the arbitrariness behind the concept of equality, and to reflect on our most fundamental attitudes and practices involving animals.

In the article “At the heart of home: An animal reading of Mikhail Bulgakov’s *The Heart of a dog*” (2009), Fudge examines Bulgakov’s *The Heart of a Dog* (1925), in which a man experiments on a dog, and that has traditionally been interpreted as a political allegory, from the view-point that it has something to say about human-animal relations. Here, she argues that an allegorical reading that interprets the dog as a mere symbol “silences the presence of that dog as the suffering center of the story” (2009). This means that while there is in fact (some) real truth to the animal side of allegory, this has to be more or less disregarded in favor of getting to the core meaning intended by the author. In fact, Fudge states that only a brief look at Orwell’s *Animal Farm* allows us to see how this “silencing” works (2009). As argued by McHugh in her article “Animal Farm’s Lessons for Literary (and) Animal Studies”; while *Animal Farm* can be regarded as amazing for “engaging so skillfully with its political moment” (32), prompting appreciation for literary representations of animals as always concealing human meanings involves a kind of “studied avoidance” of how the

characters work as farm animals (25). Further, she argues that part of the difficulty with reading the literary animals in the novella as animals is that “farm animals have come to signify the erasure of subjectivity in the stories as well as practices of industrialized meat production” (25). This is indeed an interesting connection, as it partly explains how it is that we so effortlessly see humans in the images of literary farm animals. To readers of stories and consumers of food alike, they are merely anonymous meat. Perhaps it is not so radical, then, to say that “ways of reading animals become matters of life and death” (32). According to McHugh, when viewing animals in literature as significant only ever in relation to human subjectivity, literature may actually be seen as reifying the claim made by cultural critic John Berger, who said that “animals are disappearing in modernity” (qtd. in McHugh 24). As Fudge argues, regardless of what can be traced by an animal-focused reading, the important thing is that it returns the animals to the center stage – “which is where they always were in the first place” (Fudge).

While the complexities involved in interpreting literary animals have already been recognized by scholars and literary critics such as McHugh, Oerlemans and Fudge, where the former has specifically linked the reader’s understanding of *Animal Farm*’s central conflict of class-inequality to the site of industrial meat-production, no scholar has yet performed an in-depth animal-oriented analysis of this particular novella. However, when exploring how *Animal Farm* gives a narrative form to the problems of the coherence and viability of equality as a general theoretical principle, Dwan recognizes the conventions of the fable (i.e. speaking animals) as something that invites queries about the “proper scope” of this much arbitrary concept. Also, he concludes that different contexts reveal different conceptions of equality (658). Drawing further on these observations, the aim of the present study is to apply both a traditional human-political and an animal-oriented (though equally political) perspective on the reading to perform a comparative analysis of the novella in order to explore what happens

to the story and its (perceived polemical) function when shifting to an animal-oriented perspective. Consequently, this essay will argue that a reading that takes the animals seriously turns the critical focus away from Russian dictators and totalitarianism to every human, the arbitrary nature of the human/animal relationship and the speciesism<sup>2</sup> that permeates it.

### **Animal Farm: a brief introduction**

Orwell's novella *Animal Farm* was published 1946 and is widely accepted as a political satire on the Russian Revolution that took place in 1917. For the Russians, the revolution resulted in a government that was even more oppressive and totalitarian than the one they managed to overthrow. In the novella, the revolution is told through allegory based on a revolt by animals on a British farmyard. In the beginning the animals have grown tired of being so badly treated by the humans, and they decide to rebel. After successfully chasing the humans away, Orwell ascribes the new role of antagonist to the pigs (who gradually become more and more like the humans they detest).

In the novella, the ideology of Animalism parodies the one of Communism, and is a complete system of thought whose principles are reduced to seven commandments inscribed on the end wall of a big barn:

- 1) Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy.
- 2) Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend.
- 3) No animal shall wear clothes.
- 4) No animal shall sleep in a bed.
- 5) No animal shall drink alcohol.

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<sup>2</sup> Term coined by Eng. philosopher Richard Ryder in the 1970s, and that refers to the practice of treating members of one species as morally more important than members of other species; also, the belief that this practice is justified (Encyclopaedia Britannica).

6) No animal shall kill any other animal.

7) All animals are equal.

Despite these commandments, the pigs soon start to abuse their power over the other animals. Gradually, they start wearing clothes, drinking alcohol, sleeping in beds and killing other animals. During this progress, the seven commandments are manipulated to better suit the pigs' voracious needs. Towards the end, there is only one commandment left on the wall. It reads: "All animals are equal – But some animals are more equal than others" (Orwell 97)

The animals are ultimately forced to realize that the revolution has failed, and does this in perhaps one of English literature's most memorable end-scenes. The animals are weeding the turnip field, hardly raising their faces from the ground as humans suddenly start arriving in dogcarts at the farm. At this point, the animals do not know who to be most afraid of – the pigs or the human visitors. Later in the evening, there is an up-roar of voices coming from the farmhouse, and the animals rush to one of the windows and witness a violent quarrel in progress:

Twelve voices were shouting in anger, and they were all alike. No question, now, what had happened to the faces of the pigs. 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. (97).

### **The allegory versus the animal**

Personification is a literary device that relies on the understanding that what is taking place with these literary animals point to human affairs. But, although their struggle and pain largely serves as a metaphor, the animals in Orwell's *Animal Farm* have been given a voice by Orwell to reveal something of their reality (we know, for example, that he used the

mistreated cart-horse for inspiration). The use of animals as allegory here thus opens up for two different interpretations of the novella's central focus on the exploitation of animals. In many ways, from an animal-oriented point of view, the choice to cast animals as central characters and to use the device of personification can be seen as contesting man's exploitation of animals, since the reader's attention is after all drawn first and foremost to what is immediately represented (Oerlemans 299-300). That is, the farm animals who dream of freedom from exploitation, and of equal rights. Paradoxically, at the same time, "allegory effectively reinforces the anthropocentric hierarchy (i.e. human superiority over animals), because the vehicle of the allegory is inferior to its tenor" (Oerlemans 299). This means that Orwell can be seen as using animal disenfranchisement as a means for successful political storytelling, rather than striving to lift animals into visibility as subjects of experience. Thus, the notion of animals as inferior to humans can be seen as being reproduced and naturalized with Orwell's narrative.

Depending on the reading, the animals in Orwell's novella either refer to problems with social class or to issues of animal welfare and animal exploitation. To illustrate, in the beginning all animals gather in the barn to listen to the well-respected pig Old Major (which should of course be recognized as a Military-human title). He wants to start a revolution against man and asks the others to consider the nature of the life they live: "Let us face it, our lives are miserable, laborious and short. We are born, we are given just so much food as will keep the breath in our bodies ... and the very instant that our usefulness has come to an end we are slaughtered with hideous cruelty" (Orwell 4). Now, if this scene is interpreted from the view-point that these exploited animals represent the Russian proletariat, we would see the actual animal conditions as a metaphor for the inequalities and struggles endured by the laboring-class at the time. Seen from the perspective of animals used for food and labor, however, the words present more immediate insight to an equally real injustice, although it

has less to do with Russian leaders and more to do with humans in general and their attitudes towards animals. In this reading, man is the perpetrator, and if removed from the scene, “the root cause of hunger and over work is abolished for ever” (5). Old Major (and soon the other animals as well) does not find it reasonable that man should be their master. He asks his friends if they think that their misery and slavery are parts of the order of nature, and then answers himself: “No, comrades, a thousand times no ... [The answer to all our problems is] summed up in a single word – Man” (4). What can be understood from this is that human exploitation of animals is the critical target of the novella. Further, the divide between animals and humans is problematized as a construction rather than as part of nature, which can be seen as a form of critique towards human subjectivity and anthropocentrism. But, as critics have traditionally argued, the problem is not the humans’ treatment of animals. Instead, what is at the heart of the matter is the exploitation of the laboring-class.

As a means of illustrating the exploitation of the Russian proletariat by the Russian leaders, Orwell’s animals all experience complete disenfranchisement as human property. Their position is depicted by Old Major in his speech: “You cows that I see before me, how many thousands of gallons of milk have you given during this last year? And what has happened to that milk which should have been breeding up sturdy calves? Every drop of it has gone down the throats of our enemies” (4-5). He then poses a similar question to the hens, and finally turns to the horse, Clover: “And you ... where are those four foals you bore, who should have been the support and pleasure of your old age? Each was sold at a year old – you will never see one of them again” (5). Old Major continues; “And even the miserable lives we lead are not allowed to reach their natural span ... You young porkers who are sitting in front of me, every one of you will scream your lives out at the block within a year. To that horror we all must come ...” (5). Now, it is likely to assume that all readers find this treatment of animals to be accurate in real life as well. The systematic slaughtering and exploitation of

animals is indeed a reality, which is quite unexpurgatedly brought to the fore when seen from an animal-oriented perspective.

Perhaps it is the life and death of the loyal work-horse Boxer that most moves the general reader towards taking an animal-oriented perspective on the issue of animal welfare in this novella. After the animals successfully manage to expel the humans from the farm, they all work according to their capacity, under the rule of the pigs. But it is Boxer that is “the admiration of everybody ... From morning to night he was pushing and pulling, always at the spot where the work was hardest ... His answer to every problem, every setback, was ‘I will work harder!’ – which he had adopted as his personal motto” (Orwell 11-12). From a traditional perspective, Boxer is understood as an allegory of the hard-working and loyal laboring class. Even as his strength weakens over the years, he continues to work hard. Eventually however, he gets hurt and needs medical care. Their leader, Napoleon, claims that he is making arrangements to send Boxer to be treated in a nearby hospital. Naturally, the other animals feel uneasy about it, as “they [do] not like to think of their sick comrade in the hands of human beings” (46). However, the pigs argue that this is the best thing for Boxer. So, boxer’s closest friends stay with him when they can during the two days that it takes for the transport to come. Unfortunately, the transport turns up during working hours, and when the working animals learn that Boxer is being taken away, they all break of work to say good-bye. Here, one of the animals able to read, shouts “Fools! Do you not see what is written on the side of that van? ... ‘Alfred Simmonds, Horse Slaughterer and Glue Boiler, Willingdon. Dealer in Hides and Bone-Meal. Kennels Supplied.’ Do you not understand what that means? They are taking Boxer to the knacker’s” (47). All the animals start crying for Boxer to get out, but it is no use:

It was uncertain whether Boxer had understood ... But a moment later his face disappeared from the window and there was the sound of a tremendous

drumming of hoofs inside the van. He was trying to kick his way out. The time had been when a few kicks from [his] hoofs would have smashed the van to matchwood. But alas! His strength had left him; and in a few moments the sound of drumming hoofs grew fainter and died away (47).

This powerful scene shows not only the breaking of the sixth and the seventh commandment by the pigs – which signals the near completion of their transformation – but also the low value that was ascribed the Russian laboring-class. More immediately however, from an animal-oriented perspective, the scene is yet another illustration of the effects of human exceptionalism. The pigs are only interested in generating profit, and do not prioritize taking care of anyone in need of medical treatment. In fact, sending Boxer to become packs of meat at the knacker's, gives them some money in return: “[The] word went round that from somewhere or other the pigs had acquired the money to buy themselves another case of whiskey” (48). As can be seen, and as is daily the case with so many animals used in the food industry, Boxer is sent to his death without as much as a trace of sentimentality from his abusers. This happens because the pigs believe that belonging to their particular species justifies them to have greater rights and privileges than other animals. Depending on the reading, the same kind of thinking can be seen as true for the Russian leaders, for viewing their class as superior, or for (in particular Western) humans who view their species as superior.

Another powerful scene that allows for quite contrasting interpretations is the one mentioned in the previous chapter – namely the end-scene, in which the pigs and the humans become indistinguishable from each other (97). According to Oerlemans, the animal chosen to represent some aspect of human behavior is not an arbitrary choice (298). Pigs are omnivorous (i.e. feed on whatever is available), and as livestock they are bred to put on weight quickly. This leads to anthropomorphic pigs often being portrayed as gluttonous and

greedy beasts. Bearing this commonly used - yet largely fabricated - trope in mind, it is easy to see how Orwell's choice to let pigs represent the Russian leaders in the novella can be understood as a direct insult to the latter. And indeed, the offensiveness of this particular allegory was recognized by one of the approached publishers, who wrote the following to Orwell in a letter: "[It] would be less offensive if the predominant caste in the fable were not pigs. I think the choice of pigs as the ruling caste will no doubt give offence to many people, and particularly to anyone who is a bit touchy, as undoubtedly the Russians are" (Orwell 104). From a human-political perspective, then, it is clear that what is most disturbing with this particular allegory is that it likens the Russian leaders to pigs - or rather, to the *pig-trope*. From an animal-oriented perspective on the other hand, it is the transformation from pig to human that can be seen as the core issue of this novella:

[As] the animals outside gazed at the scene, it seemed to them that some strange thing was happening. What was it that had altered in the faces of the pigs? ... Some of them had five chins, some had four, some had three. But what was it that seemed to be melting and changing ... The creatures ... looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which" (Orwell 97).

This scene can be seen as illustrating the completion of the pigs' transformation from nature to culture, from four legs to two legs, from abused to power-abuser and, ultimately - from good to bad. From the animals' perspective, it is not the omnivorous pig in the allegory that is bad. On the contrary, it is becoming human that is. After all, though the antagonists in this fable may be disguised as pigs, their way of distinguishing themselves from other kinds of animals, exploiting them and trading the lives of other species for money are all traits that could well be described as characteristic for humans – not for pigs.

As can be derived from the analysis in this chapter, the meaning embedded in *Animal Farm* is two-fold. By using the device of personification, Orwell is able to use the fable to “say things that might be otherwise forbidden or unpalatable” (Oerlemans 301). He addresses a very sensitive (at the time) political issue in what could be perceived as a light manner. However, at the same time, the novel shows the very stark contrast between the lives of humans and the animals used for food and labor, pointing to humans as not only exploiters, but as immoral. Therefore, even though the intention was primarily to use animals allegorically for coded political commentary, the novella can be seen as bringing issues regarding animal exploitation to light.

### **Speciesism and the human/animal divide**

According to Dwan, the relatively simple formal conventions of the fable allow Orwell to raise a series of complex issues concerning ethical concepts. For example, what the enlisting of animal protagonists does is that it “immediately invites queries about the proper scope of equality: who or what does it incorporate and should it extend ... to non-human animals?” (657). *Animal Farm* strongly satirises the way the concept of equality is defined and distributed. In the novella, after some discussion among the animals, it is decided that whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy, and that whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend and should therefore be treated as an equal (Orwell 17). The birds in the novella object at the “two-legs-bad principle at first, since “it seemed to them that they also had two legs” (24), but the pig, Snowball, proved to them that this was not so: “A bird’s wing, comrades ... is an organ of propulsion and not of manipulation. It should therefore be regarded as a leg” (24). Thus, with this “legal and political hair-splitting” (Dwan 666), the birds are now considered equal to the other animals. A similar example is when, during Old Major’s speech, the dogs suddenly rush for a couple of rats that appears at the meeting:

“Comrades, there is a point that must be settled. The wild creatures, such as rats and rabbits – are they our friends or our enemies? Let us put it to the vote. I propose this question to the meeting: Are rats comrades?” (Orwell 6). It is then agreed upon that rats are to be regarded as comrades. The line drawn between those who are to be encompassed by the concept of equality, and those who are not, is so completely arbitrary, and there is not much logic underlying the decisions. Rather, deciding whether a creature should be considered as equal or not seems to be determined partly by how the dominating group *feels* (at a given moment), and partly about physical appearance and provenance. This moral parochialism has evident ties to both the ideology of racism and sexism, where the case of equality is decided by skin-color, ethnic background and/or sex. Further, it can also be traced in the distinction that has traditionally been drawn between humans and animals, and that prohibits animals from being thought of as equals in terms of their right to – and quality of – life.

The term speciesism was coined by the British psychologist Richard D. Ryder and was later popularized by Australian philosopher Peter Singer in his book *Animal Liberation* (1975). It was coined to denote the belief in the inherent superiority of one species over others. Ryder and Singer, as well as other opponents of speciesism, have claimed that speciesism is analogous to “other forms of irrational discrimination and prejudice” (such as racism and sexism) as it not only allows us to separate ourselves from “the (non-human) other”, but also works to justify our exploitation and abuse of other-than-human species. From an animal-oriented perspective, it is easy to see the mechanisms of this ideology in the novella. Even though it is first decided that all animals on the farm are equal, the pigs eventually change the slogan to “All animals are equal – but some are more equal than others” (97). As observed by Dwan, “more equal” ironically implies “more deserving” (656). And indeed, once in power, the pigs start feeling that they are more important than the others, and thus more entitled to certain luxuries and well-being: “Some times the work was hard ... The

pigs did not actually work, but directed and supervised the others. With their superior knowledge it was natural that they should assume leadership” (Orwell 11). The pigs start distinguishing themselves from the other animals because of their superior intelligence: “Comrades ... Many of us [pigs] actually dislike milk and apples ... Our sole object in taking these things is to preserve our health. Milk and apples (this has been proved by science, comrades) contain substances absolutely necessary to the well-being of a pig. We pigs are brainworkers. The whole management and organization of this farm depend on us”. What the novella does here is that it makes visible the concept of equality as a construct and as something that legitimizes members of a particular species to be equally entitled to (or equally deserving of) certain qualities and rights, while others are not.

## **Conclusion**

It should be noted that Orwell largely leaves it to the reader to decide for her or himself what any moral implications of this fable may be. Although helpfully noticing injustices within the novella, he arguably avoids making any explicit inferences about the injustice of these acts (Dwan 670). It is within this open space that this essay has set out to explore other-than-anthropocentric reading of *Animal farm* and the implications such reading has for the understanding of the novella as a form of critique.

By looking at the use of personification from contrasting perspectives, it becomes clear that the allegory obscures the perspective of animals, as the injustices experienced by them only serves as metaphors. In fact, using animals to illustrate the inferiority of a certain group of humans can even be understood as a way of naturalizing dominant attitudes towards animals, as it depends on prejudice to be understood. However, when considering the story from an other-than-human perspective, this prejudice becomes visible, as the reader’s perception of the vast injustices that was likely experienced by the Russian proletariat still

lingers when the villain suddenly transforms into the general human. With this shift, the reader is challenged to distance her or himself from the allegory and instead see the relationship between animal and human as the core issue.

Regardless of the type of reading, one of the greatest implications of this fable is that power easily corrupts those who possess it. What does depend on the type of reading, however, is how the reader contextualizes – and therefore understands - this message. As has been shown with the comparative analysis in this essay, the perspective decides who gets to be the villain, who gets to be the victim, and ultimately – what gets to be the novella’s target of critique.

In Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, the divide between humans and animals is made visible as an arbitrary construct that has elements of other forms of discrimination such as racism and sexism. From an animal-oriented perspective, the (human-like) pigs’ reasoning around the concept of equality closely mirrors the thinking that underlies the ideology of speciesism.

Consequently, as much as this novella can be seen as a critique against the divide between social classes, it can thus also be understood as a critique against the way humans have traditionally distinguished themselves from animals – and how we have referred to this notion of “other-ness” to justify our exploitation and abuse of them.

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