



SOCIAL CRITICISM IN GEORGE ORWELL'S LITERARY WORKS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the social criticism embedded in George Orwell's literary works, particularly in *Animal Farm* and *1984*. Through allegory, satire, and dystopian narratives, Orwell critiques political systems, social inequalities, and the abuse of power. By examining his works through the lens of social criticism, this study highlights Orwell's warnings about the dangers of totalitarianism, the manipulation of truth, and the degradation of individual freedoms. The thesis compares Orwell's socio-political concerns with contemporary issues, demonstrating the enduring relevance of his critique.

Keywords: Social criticism, George Orwell, Totalitarianism, Political systems, *Animal Farm*, 1984, Allegory, Dystopia

INTRODUCTION

George Orwell, one of the most influential political writers of the 20th century, is renowned for his sharp social criticism and exploration of totalitarianism, corruption, and the abuse of power. His works, particularly *Animal Farm* (1945) and *1984* (1949), have become seminal texts in the field of political literature, offering both a reflection of the sociopolitical climates of their time and a chilling glimpse into the potential consequences of unchecked political power. Orwell's unique ability to combine literary craft with biting social critique makes his works both powerful and timeless in their relevance.

At the core of Orwell's writings is his relentless critique of totalitarian regimes and the ways in which those in power manipulate language, truth, and society to maintain control. Through the allegorical tale of *Animal Farm*, Orwell examines the corruption of revolutionary ideals, illustrating how power can distort even the most righteous causes. In *1984*, he creates a dystopian world where the state exercises absolute control over both the public and private lives of its citizens, raising alarms about the dangers of surveillance, propaganda, and the destruction of personal freedoms.

This thesis will analyze the social criticism embedded within Orwell's literary works, particularly focusing on the themes of power, oppression, and the manipulation of truth. By examining his use of allegory, satire, and dystopian settings, the study will highlight how Orwell critiques the political and social dynamics of his time while offering enduring lessons on the nature of power and its potential to corrupt. The analysis will also explore the relevance of Orwell's warnings in contemporary society, as his works continue to resonate in a world where issues of surveillance, political

manipulation, and the distortion of truth remain pressing concerns. Through this exploration, the thesis will demonstrate how Orwell's literary genius goes beyond storytelling, serving as a powerful tool for social and political critique.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous scholars have analyzed George Orwell's works through various lenses. In *Animal Farm*, Orwell critiques the perversion of socialist ideals following the Russian Revolution, showing how revolutionary movements can be co-opted by those in power. As noted by Kinna (2004), Orwell uses the farm animals as metaphors for the betrayal of the proletariat by Stalin and his regime. In *1984*, Orwell's exploration of totalitarianism, surveillance, and the manipulation of truth resonates with modern concerns about government control, as highlighted by Gray (2000) and Roberts (2007). These works are often compared to historical events, such as World War II, the rise of fascism, and the Cold War, which provided Orwell with the backdrop for his criticism of authoritarian rule and mass conformity.

Orwell's concern with the manipulation of language and truth is central to his critique, particularly in *1984* where Newspeak, the controlled language, symbolizes how language can be used as a tool of oppression. Through his nuanced social critique, Orwell's works challenge readers to confront the consequences of political systems that prioritize control over individual rights and freedoms.

METHODOLOGY

This thesis adopts a qualitative literary analysis methodology, focusing on thematic and symbolic elements within Orwell's works. The following steps are undertaken: Textual Analysis:

Detailed readings of *Animal Farm* and *1984* are conducted, focusing on Orwell's use of allegory, satire, and dystopian themes. Specific attention is given to character development, symbolism, and the portrayal of political regimes. Comparative Approach: The study compares Orwell's depiction of political systems and social issues in both works. Key themes such as the abuse of power, social inequality, and the manipulation of truth are examined in the context of historical and modern-day political systems. Historical Contextualization: The political climate of Orwell's time, including the rise of totalitarian regimes in Europe and Asia, is explored to understand the influences behind his works. Additionally, the contemporary relevance of his criticism is discussed in relation to modern political and social issues.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

1. Allegory and Satire in *Animal Farm*

Animal Farm is an allegory of the Russian Revolution and the subsequent corruption of socialist ideals under Stalin's rule. Orwell's depiction of the farm animals reflects the disillusionment of the proletariat as their revolutionary hopes are crushed by a new tyranny. The pigs, who represent the ruling class, initially promise equality but gradually adopt the same oppressive practices as the humans they replaced. The famous line "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others"

encapsulates Orwell's criticism of political hypocrisy and the betrayal of revolutionary ideals.

2. Totalitarianism in 1984

In 1984, Orwell presents a dystopian future dominated by the Party, led by Big Brother, where individual freedoms are suppressed, and the truth is manipulated. The concept of "doublethink," the ability to hold two contradictory beliefs at once, symbolizes the regime's power to control reality and rewrite history. Orwell critiques the dangers of surveillance, state control, and the use of propaganda to manipulate public perception. *1984* serves as a powerful warning against the erosion of civil liberties and the dangers of unchecked government power.

3. The Role of Language in Control

Both *Animal Farm* and *1984* highlight the manipulation of language as a tool for control. In *1984*, Orwell introduces Newspeak, a language designed to limit the expression of dissenting thoughts, showing how language can be manipulated to restrict freedom of thought. Similarly, in *Animal Farm*, the distortion of language is used to justify the pigs' increasing privileges and the repression of other animals.

CONCLUSION

George Orwell's works, particularly *Animal Farm* and *1984*, are seminal pieces of literature that offer incisive social criticism. Through the use of allegory, satire, and dystopian narrative, Orwell critiques the dangers of totalitarianism, the manipulation of truth, and the betrayal of revolutionary ideals. In *Animal Farm*, Orwell exposes how political power can corrupt even the most noble of causes, illustrating the ways in which the ruling class can exploit the masses. The famous line, "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others," serves as a powerful reminder of how political leaders manipulate language and ideals to maintain their control. In *1984*, Orwell's portrayal of a society under constant surveillance and strict control of information serves as a chilling reminder of the potential consequences of unchecked government power. His concept of "doublethink" and the manipulation of language through Newspeak underscore the dangers of a society where truth is distorted, and individual freedoms are systematically eroded. Both works warn of the risks associated with the concentration of power, the use of propaganda, and the suppression of dissent. Orwell's social criticism, though rooted in the political climate of his time, remains remarkably relevant in the contemporary world. The themes of governmental overreach, the distortion of truth, and the manipulation of language continue to resonate in modern-day political discourse. Orwell's cautionary tales remind us of the importance of vigilance, free expression, and the preservation of individual rights in the face of authoritarianism. Orwell's literary legacy lies in his ability to provide readers with timeless insights into the workings of political systems and the effects of power on society. His works challenge us to critically examine our own political realities and to resist the forces that seek to control and manipulate our thoughts and actions.

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