



## Reflections on the 1917 Russian Revolution in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*: M.H. Abrams' Mimetic Approach

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**Abstract.** *This study analyzes George Orwell's novel Animal Farm as a reflection of social conflicts in the 1917 Russian Revolution using M.H. Abrams' mimetic approach. The novel functions as an allegory, with Mr. Jones representing Tsar Nicholas II, Snowball as Leon Trotsky, and Napoleon as Joseph Stalin. Through the mimetic approach, this research identifies how the rebellion, power struggles, and the corruption of revolutionary ideals are depicted in the novel, ultimately leading to dictatorship that mirrors the regime they initially rejected. Orwell highlights how the revolution's original vision of equality was ultimately betrayed by the new leaders. The findings of this study show that Animal Farm not only critiques Stalinism but also reflects broader social and political phenomena related to the concentration of power, abuse of authority, and the cyclical nature of power in history. This study supports mimetic theory by demonstrating how literature can deeply reflect historical realities, contributing to the discourse in both literature and politics, and serving as a reminder of the dangers of authoritarianism.*

**Keywords:** *Animal Farm; Mimetic Approach; Russian Revolution; Social Conflict; Social Revolution.*

**Abstrak.** Penelitian ini menganalisis novel *Animal Farm* karya George Orwell sebagai refleksi konflik sosial dalam Revolusi Rusia 1917 menggunakan pendekatan mimetik M.H. Abrams. Novel ini berfungsi sebagai alegori yang menggambarkan peristiwa-peristiwa sejarah, dengan Mr. Jones merepresentasikan Tsar Nicholas II, Snowball sebagai Leon Trotsky, dan Napoleon sebagai Joseph Stalin. Melalui pendekatan mimetik, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi bagaimana pemberontakan, perebutan kekuasaan, dan korupsi terhadap cita-cita revolusi digambarkan dalam novel, yang pada akhirnya mengarah pada kediktatoran yang meniru rezim yang sebelumnya mereka tolak. Orwell menyoroti bagaimana visi awal revolusi yang menjunjung kesetaraan akhirnya dikhianati oleh para pemimpin baru. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa *Animal Farm* tidak hanya mengkritik Stalinisme, tetapi juga mencerminkan fenomena sosial dan politik yang lebih luas terkait dengan konsentrasi kekuasaan, penyalahgunaan otoritas, dan siklus kekuasaan yang berulang dalam sejarah. Penelitian ini mendukung teori mimetik dengan menunjukkan bagaimana sastra dapat merefleksikan realitas sejarah secara mendalam, memberikan kontribusi pada wacana sastra dan politik, serta mengingatkan kita akan bahaya otoritarianisme.

**Kata Kunci:** Konflik Sosial; Pendekatan Mimetik; Peternakan Hewan; Revolusi Rusia; Revolusi Sosial.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Literature often serves as a reflection of social and political realities. One of the most wellknown examples is George Orwell's novel *Animal Farm*, which is considered an allegory of the 1917 Russian Revolution. This novel illustrates how shifts in power can lead to the betrayal of the revolution's initial ideals. Through its characters, Orwell represents key historical figures from the Russian Revolution, such as Tsar Nicholas II, Lenin, Stalin, and Trotsky. Rodden (2002) The modern reception of Orwell is a universal critique of various political systems of power. While numerous studies have analyzed this novel from political and sociological perspectives, fewer have specifically examined it through the lens of M.H.

Abrams' mimetic theory. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how *Animal Farm* reflects the social realities of the 1917 Russian Revolution using a mimetic approach.

The mimetic approach in literary studies focuses on how a literary work represents reality. M.H. Abrams asserts that literature is an imitation or reflection of the real world. Several previous studies have explored *Animal Farm* from different perspectives. For example, Fadaee (2011) analyzed the use of symbols, metaphors, and similes in the novel as tools to depict historical events. Meanwhile, Agustin (2019) applied a mimetic approach to examine social conflict in films, demonstrating that this approach can be used in various contexts. However, there remains a gap in research that specifically applies M.H. Abrams' mimetic approach to comprehensively compare *Animal Farm* with the 1917 Russian Revolution.

This study seeks to fill that gap by analyzing how *Animal Farm* reflects the social conflicts of the 1917 Russian Revolution through a mimetic approach. By doing so, this research not only contributes to literary studies by reinforcing mimetic theory in the analysis of historical novels but also helps readers understand the connection between literature and realworld political events. Peters (2010) Orwell uses the fable form to convey a sharp critique of historical figures explicitly to convey an aesthetic political message.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This investigation is consistent with prior scholarly work that has scrutinized the political symbolism present in George Orwell's literary work, *Animal Farm*. Fadaee (2011), for instance, concentrated his examination on Orwell's linguistic techniques and stylistic choices in the formation of allegorical significance, while Agustin (2019) analyzed social conflict within media narratives as a manifestation of power dynamics. In contrast to these investigations, this study proffers a more extensive analysis by explicitly correlating the narrative events of the novel with the historical realities of the 1917 Russian Revolution through the lens of a mimetic approach. Theoretically, this inquiry employs the mimetic framework articulated by M.H. Abrams in *The Mirror and the Lamp*.

Abrams elucidates that the mimetic paradigm perceives literary creations as imitations or representations of the external world. Within this theoretical construct, literary works are not regarded as isolated artifacts, but rather as reflections of the sociopolitical and historical contexts that inform them. Consequently, *Animal Farm* is interpreted as an allegorical depiction of the historical occurrences surrounding the Russian Revolution, with its characters symbolizing historical personalities such as Tsar Nicholas II, Leon Trotsky, and Joseph Stalin.

A mimetic approach enables this research to elucidate the alignment between the narrative structure of the novel and the historical dynamics, particularly concerning the rebellion against the preceding regime, the power struggles among revolutionary leaders, and the corruption and ideological divergence that ensued following the revolution's triumph. Through this analytical lens, the novel is perceived not merely as a critique of Stalinism but also as a more expansive reflection on the cyclical nature of revolution, the concentration of authority, and the propensity for the abuse of power.

By applying Abrams' mimetic theory, this research illustrates that *Animal Farm* functions as a cautionary narrative regarding the degradation of revolutionary ideals when authority is centralized within a select elite. The text exemplifies how, in the absence of mechanisms for accountability and a collective awareness, a revolution that initially vowed to establish equality ultimately results in the emergence of new modalities of oppression.

### **3. RESEARCH METHOD**

The methodology employed in this investigation is predicated upon M.H. Abrams' mimetic approach, which underscores the notion that literary creations serve as representations or reflections of sociocultural and historical realities. The principal data source for this inquiry is George Orwell's seminal work, "*Animal Farm*" (1945). The data comprises textual excerpts from the narrative that illustrate events, characters, and societal conflicts that bear resemblances to the Russian Revolution of 1917. Secondary data sources were procured from historical texts, scholarly journals, and critical analyses that address the Russian Revolution, Stalinism, and M.H. Abrams' mimetic theory.

The process of data collection was executed through an extensive library-based research methodology. The researcher conducted a thorough reading of "*Animal Farm*," pinpointing segments pertinent to the social conflicts of the 1917 Russian Revolution, subsequently recording and categorizing the data into distinct classifications, including pre-revolutionary conditions, the catalysts for the revolution, power struggles, and the corruption of revolutionary ideals.

The data analysis was executed through a series of methodical stages. Initially, data reduction was performed, which entailed the selection and concentration of data pertinent to the research objectives. Subsequently, data presentation was accomplished in the form of descriptive narratives and textual excerpts that substantiate the analysis. Finally, data interpretation was undertaken by juxtaposing the events within the novel against the historical

realities of the Russian Revolution, employing Abrams' mimetic theory as a framework. The analysis is conducted by discerning parallels between the characters, events, and power dynamics depicted in the novel and the historical realities they signify.

The integrity of the data validity is upheld through source triangulation techniques, specifically through the comparison of data from the novel with a diverse array of historical references and pertinent academic examinations. Consequently, the findings from the analysis are not only interpretative but also possess a robust academic foundation.

#### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the theoretical framework, research data, and analysis. The discussion is structured to ensure consistency with the research objectives and title. The findings are analyzed to evaluate their academic contribution, and a comparison with previous research is also conducted to assess the alignment of the results with existing studies.

##### **Mimetic Theory as the Research Framework**

The mimetic approach, as proposed by M.H. Abrams, posits that literature is an imitation or reflection of reality. According to Abrams (1953), literary works should be analyzed by examining their relationship with the realworld events they depict. This theory is particularly relevant in the analysis of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, which is widely recognized as an allegory of the 1917 Russian Revolution. Orwell himself acknowledged that the novel was intended to criticize Stalin's betrayal of revolutionary ideals (Shelden, 2010).

Several studies have applied mimetic theory to literary analysis. For instance, Fadaee (2011) examined Orwell's use of symbolism, metaphors, and similes to portray historical events. Similarly, Agustin (2019) utilized the mimetic approach to explore social conflict in films. These studies support the application of mimetic theory in analyzing how *Animal Farm* reflects the sociopolitical dynamics of the Russian Revolution.

##### **The Reflection of the 1917 Russian Revolution in *Animal Farm***

The analysis reveals several key parallels between Orwell's novel and historical events:

###### **a. PreRevolutionary Conditions**

Before the revolution, Russia was marked by political instability, economic hardship, and widespread social discontent (Lohr, 2020). The novel mirrors this situation through the depiction of Manor Farm under Mr. Jones' rule. Like Tsar Nicholas II, Mr. Jones is portrayed as an incompetent and negligent leader. Kershaw (2004) Modern revolutions often begin with the accumulation of economic and political discontent as reflected in the animal rebellion of the character Mr. Jones. Orwell describes how he

mistreats the animals, leaving them hungry and overworked, much like the suffering endured by the Russian proletariat before the revolution (Orwell, 1945).

*“Mr. Jones, although a hard master, had been a capable farmer, but of late he had fallen on evil days. He had become much disheartened after losing money in a lawsuit, and had taken to drinking more than was good for him” (Orwell, 1945, p. 13).”*

This passage reflects Nicholas II’s declining leadership, particularly after Russia’s economic struggles and military defeats during World War I (Davenport, 2010).

Meyers (2000) The changing slogan in Animal Farm reflects the political language of a totalitarian regime. This is in line with the thinking of authoritarian states as explained by Arendt (1951).

#### b. Causes of the Revolution

The February Revolution of 1917 was fueled by food shortages, labor strikes, and dissatisfaction with the monarchy (Fitzpatrick, 2017). Orwell allegorizes these events through the animals’ uprising against Mr. Jones, which is triggered by their starvation and mistreatment. The animals, led by the pigs, rise against their oppressor, similar to how the Russian workers and soldiers revolted against the Tsar.

*“The next moment, Mr. Jones and his four men were in the storeshed with whips in their hands, lashing out in all directions. But this was more than the hungry animals could bear. With one accord, though nothing of the kind had been planned beforehand, they flung themselves upon their tormentors.” (Orwell, 1945, p. 13).*

This moment symbolizes the spontaneous nature of the February Revolution, which saw Russian citizens revolt against the autocracy, leading to the abdication of Nicholas II (Steinberg, 2017).

#### c. Power Struggles and the Rise of a New Regime

Following the revolution, the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin and later Stalin, consolidated power. Similarly, in Animal Farm, the pigs, particularly Napoleon, gradually seize control. Snowball, who represents Leon Trotsky, initially emerges as a leader alongside Napoleon, but he is later expelled, reflecting Trotsky’s exile by Stalin (Davenport, 2010). Patai (2008) The discourse in Animal Farm represents a totalitarian regime constructing truth through control of the public narrative.

*“At this, there was a terrible baying sound outside, and nine enormous dogs wearing brassstudded collars came bounding into the barn. They dashed straight for Snowball, who only sprang from his place just in time to escape their snapping jaws” (Orwell, 1945, p. 40).*

This scene illustrates how Stalin used secret police to eliminate political rivals, solidifying his dictatorship. Service (2009) Stalin's consolidation of power marked the revolution's shift toward personal dictatorship. This is in line with Napoleon's gradual elimination of the system of equality in *Animal Farm*. Tucker (2001) These characteristics are in line with Napoleon's power strategy in the novel *Animal Farm*.

d. The Corruption of Revolutionary Ideals

One of Orwell's key messages in *Animal Farm* is how revolutions often betray their initial ideals. McCaulay (2008) said that Stalin's system evolved into a one-party state with total control over society. This is reflected in the absolute dominance of *Animal Farm*. After seizing power, Napoleon and the other pigs begin to resemble the humans they overthrew, altering the farm's commandments to justify their actions. Sandle (2006) Stalin's system showed a shift from revolutionary to authoritarian control. This is in line with Napoleon's change from revolutionary leader to dictator. The famous phrase, "*All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others*" (Orwell, 1945, p. 90)

Parallels the way Stalin distorted Marxist ideals to justify his authoritarian rule. Research by Moorehead (2017) highlights how Stalin's policies deviated from Lenin's original vision, ultimately leading to widespread repression and inequality.

### **Academic Contribution and Implications**

This research contributes to literary studies by reinforcing the validity of the mimetic approach in analyzing historical allegories in literature. It also offers insights into how literature can serve as a critical lens for examining political and social changes. For educators, this study provides a framework for using literary texts like *Animal Farm* to teach historical and political concepts, fostering a deeper understanding of the dynamics of revolution and authoritarianism.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

This study analyzes George Orwell's *Animal Farm* as a reflection of the social conflict in the 1917 Russian Revolution using M.H. Abrams' mimetic approach. The analysis reveals that Orwell deliberately crafted the novel as an allegory, where characters and events closely resemble historical figures and incidents from the revolution. Mr. Jones represents Tsar Nicholas II, whose incompetence and neglect led to widespread dissatisfaction. The rebellion of the animals mirrors the February Revolution, which was driven by hunger and oppression. Snowball symbolizes Leon Trotsky, who was exiled and later erased from history, while Napoleon represents Joseph Stalin, who consolidated power and betrayed the ideals of the

revolution. The transformation of Animal Farm into a dictatorship reflects how the Soviet Union under Stalin became an oppressive regime, contradicting the initial revolutionary aspirations.

This research reinforces the application of mimetic theory in literary studies, demonstrating how literature can serve as a mirror to historical events. By highlighting the parallels between Animal Farm and the Russian Revolution, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how literature critiques political power and social change. Additionally, it emphasizes Orwell's warning about the cyclical nature of power and corruption, making the novel relevant beyond its historical context. These findings suggest that Animal Farm remains a powerful tool for analyzing political discourse and the consequences of authoritarianism.

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