

DENOTING THE CHARACTERS OF ORWELL'S ANIMAL FARM THROUGH SEMIOTICS

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Abstract

Orwell's animal farm is called so as political fairy tale. This novel tried to elucidate the language abuse on how the ruling class controls the lower class. They impose an ideology to the lower class that they live better under the spirit of animalism. However, the intrigue and strategy are always used to linger the tyranny of the autocrat. The entire condition is well-designed so that the lower class believes everything. Therefore, none of them dares to question everything seems anomalous.

The characters in Animal farm are twisted resemble to the qualities of human characters. In a certain way, they symbolize the characters of politicians, aristocrats, or even government officers. Therefore, this novel teaches the reader about hidden agenda of political systems instead of its function to give pleasure. The story goes under the aim of criticizing the universe about the intrigue in accomplishing ambitions and sustaining the profession. However, this paper focuses on denoting the characters through semiotics to reveal better understanding about this novel.

Keywords: *ideology, semiotics, symbol, icon, index*

Introduction

Literature is believed to be created as the mirror of society. The author depicted a certain condition of society and retold it in a form of story. Thus, literature does not only give pleasure but also moral value for readers. In his writing, Plato adverts repeatedly to the analogy of the reflector, a mirror, or water, or else those less perfect simulacra of things we call shadows (Abrams, 1953: 30). The shadow is a reflection of the universal ideas, things, natural and artificial arts. Hence, that theory is believed to be the pit to the development of imitation theory.

Instead of imitation, literature is also designed to criticize the government or political party. It also happens in *Animal Farm*. This novel was created with a very great intention of political meaning. George Orwell called *Animal Farm* a fairy story, and it can be enjoyed simply as a tale about how animals try to take over a farm from a man, and find that they can't manage it (Orwell, 1993: xi). It seems that *Animal Farm* is as simple as fable but readers will aware that instead of containing that simple matters this novel is also containing deeper than that.

It is obviously true that Orwell tried to encounter the popularity gained by the Soviet Union as a wartime ally. However, it is not only anti Soviet but also anti socialist propaganda. Through *Animal Farm*, Orwell criticized Stalin's attempt to force other countries. As it has been noted in the history that Orwell experienced by himself about how intent the Communist Party on destroying any possible Left-wing rivals (Orwell, 1993: xii). Unfortunately, this experience enriched his writings and his works as it is obviously well understood by readers that political propaganda clearly used in this novel.

Hence, in reading Orwell's *Animal Farm*, many people always relate it to satire and politics. However, they haven't related it yet through the theory of Semiotics. The fact that there are so many ideas of propaganda and politics intrigue in this novel haven't been figured out deeply then. Yet, the hegemony is continuously happened from one level to the other level. The ideology as imposed to the characters and the practical of hegemony in the novel were clearly depicted by the author. Therefore, instead of trying to understand more about the details ideology provoke by the author, this paper will discuss more by giving an alternative understanding about the symbols through the characters. Indeed, each character is created to symbolize a certain idea of many aspects in this life.

Theoretical Review

Literature offers meaningful value of life. Readers may take many advantages from literature as it contains an endless value. Thus, a good literature contains the universal value so that it will be useful for readers. It will not be easy for readers to understand the value instead of denoting the hidden meaning. Therefore, readers need a certain theory to understand more about the sign, symbol, or the hidden meaning.

Every day, we can see signs in our life. When we go passing through the street on our journey, we also can see so many signs. There are traffic light, zebra cross, road signs, and many other signs. However, many people do not always realize that all the symbols have different meaning. The study of meaning is always interesting to be done. Instead of finding the lexical meaning, people also try to understand more about the profound sense of the sign. This effort to understand more about the sign is done by using semiotics.

Semiotics is not only used to understand the sign in our life but it also can be used to understand the media, advertisement, literature, and all kinds of cultural products in this world. It tries to dig out the deeper meaning beyond it. Reader can reach an unpredictable understanding instead of the level of surface. Hence, we should understand more about the basic concept or the idea of the sign itself.

Semiotics is also called as the study of sign. One of the broadest definitions is that of Umberto Eco, who states that 'semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign'. Semiotics involves the study not only of what we refer to as 'signs' in everyday speech but of anything which stand 'stands for' something else. In a semiotic sense, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures, and objects (Chandler; 2007: 2).

Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Peirce are regarded as the co-founders of semiotics. Saussure proposed dyadic model, he stressed that sound and thought (or the signifier and signified) were as inseparable as the two sides of a piece of paper. While Peirce offered a triadic (three-part) model consisting of:

1. The *representamen*: the form which the sign takes (not necessarily material, though usually interpreted as such) - called by some theories the 'sign vehicle'
2. An *interpretant*: not an interpreter but rather the sense made of the sign
3. An object: something beyond the sign to which it refers (a referent)

The interaction between the *representamen*, the *object*, and the *interpretant* is referred to by Peirce as 'semeiosis'. The relationship between these three parts can be seen on below figure:

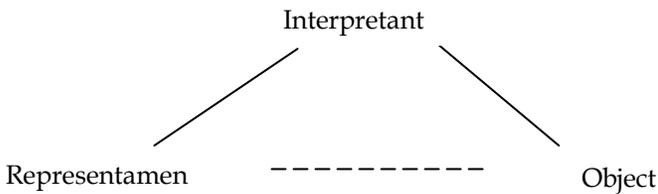


Figure 1. The relationship between representamen, object and interpretant

Basically, the *representamen* is similar in meaning to Saussure's signifier while the *interpretant* is nearly analogous to the signified. However, the interpretant has a quality unlike that of the signified: it is itself a sign in the mind of the interpreter. Thus, this theory involves the abstract idea as it refers to the sign of each interpreter.

While Saussure did not offer typology of signs, Peirce offered several ones. The three modes proposed by Peirce are: (Chandler, 2000; 37)

- a. Symbol/Symbolic

Symbol is a mode in which the signifier does not resemble the signified but which is fundamentally arbitrary or purely conventional- so that this relationship must be agreed upon and learned. Example language in general (plus specific languages, alphabetical letters, punctuation marks, words, phrases and sentences), numbers, morse code, traffic lights, national flags.

b. Icon/Iconic

Icon is a mode in which the signifier is perceived as resembling or imitating the signified (recognizably looking, sounding, feeling, tasting or smelling like it)-being similar in possessing some of its qualities: example portrait, a cartoon, onomatopoeia, metaphors, realistic sounds in 'programme music', sound effects in radio drama, imitative gestures

c. Index/Indexical

Index is a mode in which the signifier is not arbitrary but is directly connected in some ways (physically or causally) to the signified (regardless of intention) this link can be observed or inferred: example natural signs (smoke, thunder, footprints, flavors), medical symptoms (pain, a rash, pulse-rate), measuring instrument (thermometer), signals (a knock on the door, a bell ringing), pointers (a pointing 'index' finger), recordings (a photographs, a film, video or television shot, an audio recorded voice), personal trademarks (handwriting, catch-phrases).

Three typologies of sign above will be used to analyze the important characters which symbolized important things in the novel. However, this paper will not focus on all characters on the novel but it will take some characters which are important in symbolizing the universal theme.

Findings and Discussion

Characters in a story reveal certain characters in real life. Although the condition is not always the same as portrays in the story, however in a certain way or case it has similarity. The characters in a fable are also the characters of human as it has the same qualities, such as greedy, cruel, arrogant, kindhearted, etc.

Animal Farm is usually called as political novel as it portrays political issue. Thus, readers should understand more about the terminology of ideology, hegemony, and propaganda. According to Marxian terminology, the ideology is the ruling ideas, it is nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make one class the ruling one, therefore the ideas of its dominance. It can not be denied that even though the idea is perfect but still it is the idea of the dominance. Certainly, the idea is distorted

into the demand of a certain class as it is designed to fulfill their own need. It will neglect the fair one as everything will be done to impose a certain ideology for certain need of ruling class.

At first, it can be seen that the Animals tried to have revolution under the spirit of animalism. It is the symbol of the condition at that time. The writer tried to depict the condition in Soviet where the people tried to have revolution. However, the animals unite each other when they are hand in hand for the rebellion towards Mr. Jones. The animals hate human, they don't want to be hegemonized by human. They want to be free. Consequently, they had the rebellion as they planned. The ideology of this agenda is the spirit to be free. They want to be free from people as they feel that they are being exploited without any kind of good feedback. Thus, they want to rule their own class. The animals do not want to be the pet of human because it means that they let human to be their leader. Furthermore, they believe that they will have better life under their own leader.

“All the animals capered with joy when they saw the whips going up in flames. Snowball also threw onto the fire the ribbons with which the horses' manes and tails had usually been decorated on market days.

In a very little while the animals had destroyed everything that reminded them of Mr. Jones. Then they sang 'Beast of England' from end to end seven times running, and after they settled down for the night and slept as they had never slept before.

But they woke at dawn as usual, and suddenly remembering the glorious thing that had happened they all raced out into the pasture together” (Orwell, 1993: 13)

As the animals also have the qualities of human characters, they want to live happily under their own rules. Thus, they have to make their own rules. They want to be different from human. They create seven commandments to be obeyed by all animals. The seven commandments are as followed:

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
6. No animal shall kill any other animal
7. All animals are equal.

However, everything doesn't run well as it should be. As they have chosen the pig as the leader. They also have animal committee to

maintain the activities in the farm. Slowly as the time passing by, each of the animals prioritizes their own interest. All the above commandments turn into rubbish. They are going to obey the commandment which gives advantage for them. For example, the pigs sleep in a bed with an excuse that they need to take better rest. The pig turns their position into the ambition. The Seven Commandments is finally being distorted. With a very great intrigue, the incumbent or the ruling class used the commandments for their own sake. This event denotes the universal idea of power abuses. People or animals will always take the chance whenever and wherever they can have it no matter whether they have to sacrifice others or not. The point is that everybody will always try to reach their ambitions by hook or by crook.

“ A few days later, when the terror caused by the executions had died down, some of the animals remembered-or thought they remembered-that the Sixth Commandment decreed: ‘NO animal shall kill any other animal’. And though no one cared to mention it in the hearing of the pigs or the dogs, it was felt that the killings which had taken place did not square with this. Clover asked Benjamin to read her Sixth Commandment, and when Benjamin, as usual, said that he refused to meddle in such matters she fetched Muriel. Muriel read the Commandment for her. It ran: ‘ No animal shall kill any other animal *without cause*’. Somehow or other the last two words had slipped out of the animals memory. But they saw now that the Commandment had not been violated; for clearly there was good reason for killing the traitors who had leagued themselves with snowball.

(Orwell: 1993: 59)

The characters which are depicted in the Animal farm also signify many things beyond the surface meaning. They represent the ideology or state hidden idea as the alternative way to criticize world’s condition. It is true that the author can not change the world by war, but they can change the world into the better one by literature. The important characters in this novel are:

1. Napoleon

When we heard the name of Napoleon, it will be directly associated with the name of a great leader or King. In this case, it can be said that Napoleon is a symbol. However, Napoleon is the name of pig who became the leader in this farm. He is tyrannical. In one or certain way, Napoleon is extremely a corrupt opportunist. He always uses the power of other animal to reach his ambition. The fact reveals that Napoleon never makes a single contribution to the revolution – not to the formulation of the ideology. Even not a little bit in the bloody struggle

that it necessitates. He never shows interest in the strength of Animal Farm itself, only in the strength of his power over it. Indeed, He is nothing. He did nothing for the whole animals. Thus, the only project he undertakes with enthusiasm is the training of a litter of puppies. He doesn't educate them for their own good or for the good of all, however, but rather for his own good: they become his own private army or secret police, a violent means by which he imposes his will on others.

Although he is most directly modeled on the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, in a more general sense, He denotes the political tyrants. He is not only communist leader but also the early-eighteenth-century French general Napoleon, who betrayed the democratic principles on which he rode to power, arguably becoming as great a tyrant as the aristocrats whom he succeed.

“Napoleon, with the dogs following him, now mounted onto the raised portion of the floor where Major had previously stood to deliver his speech. He announced that from now on the Sunday-morning Meetings would come to and end. They were unnecessary, he said, and wasted time. In the future all questions relating to the working of the farm would be settled by a special committee of pigs, presided over by himself. These would meet in private and afterwards communicate their decisions to the others. The animals would still assemble on Sunday mornings to salute the flag, sing ‘Beasts of England’ and receive their orders for the week; but there would be no more debates.

(Orwell, 1993: 35)

2. Squealer

Through Squealer, the author tries to depict how the politician used the tactics to provoke the society. Squealer is the name of pig. He is very clever in manipulating other animal. By using Napoleon, he convinced all animals that they have better life just after they are free from human. In this case, it can be seen his role as the manipulation. He uses propaganda to hegemonize all animals. He also used the technique of scapegoating to keep the existence of the leader. He is the symbol of politician. However, politician is always related to intrigue and betray. Therefore, he is possible to be the combination between symbol and Index.

In broader sense, Squealer is denoted a symbol of great manipulator. He is such a silver-tongued pig. He abuses language to justify Napoleon's actions and policies to the proletariat or the lower

class by whatever means seem necessary. Even by radically simplifying language—as when he teaches the sheep to bleat “Four legs good, two legs better!”—he limits the terms of debate.

In ruling the uneducated class, he makes them confused and believed that Napoleon is always right. He imposed the ideology and distorted the real fact. He always said that they have better life under the leadership of Napoleon. He also mentioned that pigs, who are the “brainworkers” of the farm, consume milk and apples not for pleasure, but for the good of their comrades. Squealer’s rhetorical skills denote him to be the perfect propagandist for any tyranny. He is such an immense betrayer.

“ ‘Comrades!’ He cried. ‘ You do not imagine, I hope, that we pigs are doing this in a spirit of selfishness and privilege? Many of us actually dislike milk and apples, I dislike them myself. 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. Day and night we are watching over your welfare. It is for your sake that we drink that milk and eat those apples.

(Orwell, 1993: 23)

3. Old Major

Old Major plays an essential role as the “whistle blower” in this story. He started his ambition from his dream of having Animals authorities. The authority gives them new chance to be the master as they feel that they are the slave of human. Thus, they are sick of the condition of being exploited by human without any confinements. He is the one who thought them about the spirit of *Animalism*, the spirit to be free. Besides, he also teaches them about the equality under the commandments. The animals are also thought about the song called ‘Beast of England’. He even regarded as the hero by all animals. Particularly, he is an index of nationalist. He denotes the universal nationalist who wants to struggle for the independence. In short, we usually called this figure as the symbol of founding father. He lays the basic ideology of having new world under the spirit of equality among the animals. It can be seen on below quotation:

“ I have little more to say. I merely repeat, remember always your duty of enmity towards Man and al his ways. Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy. Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings,

is a friend. And remember also that in fighting against Man, we must not come to resemble him. Even when you have conquered him, do not adopt his vices. No animal must ever live in a house, or sleep in a bed, or wear clothes, or drink alcohol, or smoke tobacco, or touch money, or engage in trade. All habits of Man are evil. And above all, no animal must ever tyrannise over his own kind. Weak or strong, clever or simple, we are all brothers. No animal must ever kill any other animal. All animal are equal.

(Orwell, 1993: 6)

4. Moses

So many times moses is being neglected by readers. It seems that he doesn't play an important role in the story. However, moses is a tame raven who tells the animals stories about a paradise called *Sugarcandy* Mountain. *Sugarcandy* Mountain is believed as the place where there is a mountain of *sugarcandy*. It appears as the way to escape from the reality of the chaotic condition, and it turns into their belief.

The *sugarcandy* is a symbol which denotes something nice, interesting, and incredible. Don't we remember that sugar and candy is the most favorite food for children? Thus, readers may say that it symbolized heaven. Heaven is as the final destination of all people to get the endless happiness, to enjoy the eternal life, to have the incredible moment, just like the sweet taste of sugar candy.

" He would perch on a stump, flap his black wings, and talk by the hour to anyone who would listen. 'Up there, comrades,' he would lay solemnly, pointing to the sky with his large break-'up there, just on the other side of that dark cloud that you can see-there it lies, *Sugarcandy* Mountain, that happy country where we poor animals shall rest for ever from our labours!'.

(Orwell, 1993: 76)

Conclusion

Orwell gives an alternative idea about class struggle through *Animal Farm*. The struggle to be equal with human set them free to have better life. Thus, they have succeeded in the rebellion against human. Besides, the way of propaganda and betraying others should be underlined as the effort to continue the power of the dominant class. Indeed, the *Animal Farm* depicts political intrigue which is done by the animals for their own sake. The systematic abuse of logic and language to control their subordinates is such a genuine tactics in politics.

The characters of *Animal Farm* denote many universal issues about tyranny. How they manipulate each other is clearly portrayed in this novel. The *Animal* characters describe different kinds of human characters. At the end of story it is well described that human and animals have no difference when they are at the same level of qualities.

Thus, even though this novel is created to criticize the political intrigue in Soviet, truly it happens not only in Soviet Republic but also in all parts of the world. Finally, no wonder that people always say that abuse of power will always happen whenever there is a chance as this fact is absolutely true in this life.

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