

Investigating the Tenets of Post-structuralism in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*

Nazia Hassan Khan

M. Phil English Researcher, Department of Linguistics & Literature, Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology, Dera Ismail Khan, KP, Pakistan.

Email: naziahassankhan5@gmail.com
(Corresponding Author)

Marriam Bashir

Assistant Professor, School of English, Faculty of Languages, Minhaj University Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

Raj Wali Khan

Islamia College Peshawar, KP, Pakistan.

▪ p-ISSN: 2663-3299

▪ e-ISSN: 2663-3841

▪ L-ISSN: 2663-3299

Abstract: In literary theory, the term Post-structuralism is a prominent concept which is built upon structuralism and at the same time it negates the ideas associated with that. Though post-structuralists all present different critiques of structuralism, common themes among them include the rejection of the self-sufficiency of structuralism, as well as an interrogation of the binary oppositions that constitute its structures. Accordingly, post-structuralism discards the idea of interpreting media (or the world) within pre-established, socially constructed structures. The purpose of this research was to revisit Post-Structuralism by selecting George Orwell's *Animal Farm* as a target text for this research. Post-Structuralists like Derrida (1966), Foucault (1994), and Barthes (1975) argue that no ultimate truth can be found with the help of binary opposition. Power and knowledge change the truth and pre-existing realities into a new phenomena. This research endorses the ideas of poststructuralists and *Animal Farm* offers allegorical representation which indicates a multiplicity of truth.

Key Words: Post-Structuralism, Deconstruction, Power, Knowledge, Logocentricism, Allegory, Decenter

Introduction

20th century examines the world of literary theories and understanding of literature splits into two extremes, on this polarization there were the critics who still believe, to understand a literary text, the reader must necessarily know about the pros and cons of the author's life its political background and etcetera, on the other hand, there was a concept in a fashion that to understand a text or work, no need to know all old tools, meanings are there in the text and 'to read a text closely' is sufficient to understand the meaning. In this regard, Structuralism came

into existence and it presents the idea that meanings are fixed and stable because of the underlying structure to know the meaning it is necessary to know the underlying structure, and structure can be held with the help of binary opposition in which word presents contrary meaning so that a person could know the meaning of the previous thing. As if there is 'true' we can know the meaning of it because of 'false' this concept of the binary opposite was challenged by some modern literary critics and those challenging people were called post-Structuralist and the movement or the practices of all their ideas is

called now Post-Structuralism. Key figures in post-Structuralism Derrida (1966) who presents his concept of Deconstruction in which he insists that there is no stable meaning of a certain text to know the ultimate reality reader has to dive into the metaphysics of absence and in this regard, things become dominant or oppressed this is how the reader has to find out a centre but that centre actually has an anti-centre which always remains in work so this is how ultimate truth is nowhere. Structuralism insists on the stability of meaning rather than open-ended text. Roland Barthes and Michael Foucault, are two other critics who have given their ideology regarding Post-Structuralism.

Barthes (1968) elaborates on this concept clearly in post-Structuralism which contrasts with the structuralist idea of fixation of meaning. Foucault (1975) is it supports the instability of the meaning rather he started his work as a structuralist and he argues that epistemic power can change every pre-existing reality into another phenomenon he states.

Post Structuralists have discussed the such type of idea in their works in which although they accept binaries and arbitrariness of sign and signifier but they also extend the idea of binaries into the instability of truth or ultimate reality. Through these concepts of metaphysics of presence, binary opposite, and epistemic power over the truth the characters of *Animal Farm* (Orwell, 1947) reveal how power corrupts extremely the meanings of the things changed because of the knowledge and power, furthermore binary oppositions like man versus animal and further animal versus animal proved the concept of Deconstruction by Jacques Derrida, that there is a centre in a text and with it, an anti-centre co-exists everywhere.

Research Questions

- 1) How does *Animal Farm* portray the tenets of post-structuralism?
- 2) How does subjugation connect with willingness in the perspective of freedom portrayed in the selected text?

Literature Review

With the fast-growing development and special emphasis and focus on the analysis of language in the twentieth century, stylistics became a very promising and attractive discipline with its own theories and frameworks of analysis for practical use such as Schema Theory, Foregrounding Theory and the Text World Theory. The main goal and purpose of it are to analyse the formal features and properties of language and highlight its significance for the purpose of a good explanation and better interpretation of a given text. Initially, Stylistics took its start with a great focus on literary texts in particular but with the passage of time its ambit got extended and both literary and non-literary texts received the attention of stylisticians alike (Jeffries and McIntyre, 2010). Today, regardless of the nature, every text serves as a raw material for the production of well analysed and interpreted reviews of stylistics.

Among the different theories of stylistics, the theory of Foregrounding is the one which received great attention and application in the analysis of literary texts. This theory has been defined in various ways by different scholars and lacks any single and agreed-upon definition. According to Van Peer and Hakemulder (2006), the term foregrounding refers to some particular linguistic devices such as deviation and parallelism in some literary texts that are used in a functional and condensed way. According to this definition, such devices can help to enhance the meaning of the text as well as will give a new aesthetic experience to the reader.

Martindale (2007) believes that foregrounding in a text is done in two ways. First, through parallelism which is maintaining the traditional or expected format or repetition. Secondly, through deviation which is the tendency to use some particular devices in unusual ways. Furthermore, Van Peer and Hakemudler (2006) believe that deviation is a kind of poetic license that makes the writer exempted and allows him to bypass the formal rules and regulations and surprise as well as amuse the reader by giving him a new experience by going against their expectations. In other words, foregrounding is the opposite of autothomization which systemises the events and patterns while foregrounding breakdowns the schematization and thus establishes a new and special type of meaning (Miall and Kuiken, 1994).

It additionally explores how the structures in textual content contribute to attaining reality. Gerard, G. (1979) Narrative Discourse Model offers a theoretical framework in which textual references from the primary source of information have been analyzed. The study had been carried out with a qualitative approach because it does not contain any numerical value.

Numerous studies have been done. Different articles have been written presenting structuralist reviews in different fields like anthropology, sociology, psychology, education etc. Sociology has been explained under the structural approach by Goddard (1976). Another prominent research has been done by Vrakas et al (2013) carrying out experimental research by employing the technique of structural dialectic approach.

Barthes discussed post-Structuralist ideas in which he says there are two types of Readerly text and Writerly text 'that determine the meaning are based on readers and further he argues, whenever a writer

wrote a text he dies and a reader born here, means all the power of interpreting the text relying on the part of the reader (1986).

Research Methodology

The current research is based on the descriptive method of qualitative research which describes details about characters, stories, events and the theory applied to understand the meaning in regard to that literary theory. The sources of the data processors are the novella by George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945). The study follows these steps: reading the novel simply after that with critical remarks to understand the complete meaning of the text, all the themes and characters are closely studied to understand and grasp the link with the applied theory. This research is based on the post-structuralism theory to relate the story with post-structuralist concepts of power, knowledge, metaphysics of presence, the role of the binary opposite, and the role of reader and writer in the meaning of the text. And to analyze how power and knowledge change society in this regard.

Data Analysis and Discussion

George Orwell's novella is a beast fable through it he highlights the core theme of post Structuralism, the concept of power and knowledge and instability of meaning. The story starts with the representation of a farmhouse named Manor Farm in which there is a bitch Jessie calling for a meeting with all the animals which are deteriorated by their owner. During the meeting, the old major provokes their spirits and makes them aware by being united they should retort against the suppression of their rights by using power and knowledge through which Mr Jones is ruling over them. Soon after its speech, the pig dies and there comes a revolt in the Manor Farm all animals by the use of their union and planning, force Mr Jones to leave the Manor Farm and they built their own territory there. (1945)

In this paper the post-structuralist concepts of Barthes (1970), Michael Foucault (1975) and Derrida (1967) will be under discussion with the detailed study of Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) with the special perspectives of Post-Structuralism which are the following:

- Episteme and Power
- Metaphysics of Presence
- Centralisation and Decentralisation
- Dominant v/s Suppressed
- Role of reader and author

Episteme and Power

Foucault (1984) states 'Knowledge is not for knowing: knowledge is for cutting' in his opinion history does not allow us to find the truth or reality it is episteme or knowledge with the power of knowledge the discourse is built by the historians to create a specific truth that is far away from the reality this is how knowledge and power manipulate reality. This concept of Foucault becomes the core of Post-Structuralism and in *Animal Farm* first, with the power and knowledge, it is observed that first Mr Jones violated the basic rights of all animals and further Napoleon and Squealer, with ultimate power.

History of Sexuality, Foucault writes "Where there is power, there is resistance and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (Foucault, 1978) it can be observed first the animals resist against the power of the owner Mr Jones and then they found their own territory there are masters Napoleon and Snowball. Ultimately there again comes resistance against the sharing of the status of master power corrupts Napoleon and he becomes fervent to attain solely the position of master of the Manor Farm which now has become *Animal Farm*. First, they wrote their few rules to show how they are right to exclude the old master from this place.

But soon all these commandments were altered by Squealer under the order of Napoleon, first, they add there the words 'with sheets which is only a little piece of the alphabet but it changes the whole meaning of the sentence previous meaning was no animal will sleep in bed now the meaning is no animal will sleep on the bed with a sheet, it means with the sheet it is allowed to sleep in the bed .this is an impression of Post-Structuralism given by Foucault that with the power of knowledge u not only can alter the truth but also this power evokes resistance in the dominants, same happened here rest except Jessie everybody was unaware about the fact and doing their duties which were assigned to them even the most strong bourgeois image of Boxer says 'Napoleon is always right' this is the lack of knowledge of Boxer, not the lack of courage or strength in him that restrains him to understand the reality. On the other hand, Jessie has a sense of episteme in her mind that she not only understands the manipulation but she is also aware of this fact to others and there comes again a new resistance against this manipulation.

Metaphysics of Presence

Eagleton (1982) discussed the meaning in its contradiction which Saussure (1916) suggested in his lectures about Structuralism there his most eminent concept of binary opposition was given that meaning is understood with the opposit of that particular word like light/dark, good /bad. Derrida challenged this concept that if we understand the meaning with the presence or absence or lack or being something so it will not determine the sign with a specific signifier because it creates a chain of signifiers because no ultimate meaning can be found of a single sign like if there is word god it has a chain of a signifier, not a particular image or signifier comes into the mind everybody will select a concept of God according to his context. He further argues that there is no

specific or particular meaning that can be determined by the binary concept of understanding the meaning it becomes unstable and not fixed. Orwell's story proved it right when it is observed that first, the animals want freedom what does mean freedom for them that they don't want to work under the rule of a human being 'All animals are equal' was the slogan and for this regard, they think that if the ruler will be from their own genre they will be free from the suppression of their rights because an animal will understand the value of the rights of animals but what ultimately happens there soon after an animal, Napolian came into the higher ranks he eventually starts to do the same thing which the old master was doing with them it was only a change of masters for them nothing else so on this context they realized this is not the meaning of being free they will be free if they will question against their suppression.

This sense of acknowledgement reconstructs the meaning of real freedom that to exclude a man from Farmhouse is not sufficient or not equal to freedom really freedom is to raise the question and protest against the wrong. this chain of the signifiers of the sign of freedom proved that meaning is not stable and meaning can be understood though in the absence or presence of something but that thing doesn't show a clear meaning of the first thing it circulates furthering another phenomenon of the meaning or new realities so this how the metaphysics of present works in language or society.

Centralisation and Decentralisation

Derrida (1966) argues that to understand the meaning first the text should be centralised. There is always a centre of a text in that the meaning revolves first to understand what is the centre or main core of the text when a reader determined the centre he observes that there is an anti-centre on work that negates the meaning of the centre this is how

it is not possible to understand the meaning except by jotting down all the perceptions of all readers and context we only can assume the original meaning not can get original idea (1967) Barthes also discussed the same idea in his work 'The death of the author'(1968) that meaning is not fixed and when a writer wrote a work he dies a reader born here. The concept of the death of the author will be discussed in the next part but here it is the debate whether there is a centre of every phenomenon with its anti-centre in work or not! In Animal Farms we see first all the efforts made to get freedom from 'The Man' Old Major's speech, revolt against man, their struggle everything revolving around this centre soon after this reader finds out that if this was the main centre so novel should be ended there after getting freedom from a man but it doesn't happen there writer creates other struggles and shows that this was not the centre of the story the centre is actually an anti of this that is to struggle against animal /animal not animal against animal. It proved that there is an anti-centre in work against the centre to understand the meaning reader has to determine the centre and then to reach the meaning find out the anti-centre of that centre this is how meaning revolves and is not fixed. But how the reader can get the real meaning is only by the perceptions made by the context or pre-existing meaning like there is pre-existing meaning that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely so the same happens there first power corrupts was the centre that it corrupts man and then power corrupts even the animals too so the reader only can get the meaning in this regard of the context and centre or anti-centre philosophy.

Dominant V/S Suppressed

In the Deconstruction theory Derrida argues that the concept of the binary opposites is based on the roles of two entities in society which are Dominant and suppressed (1967) Derrida's concept seems perfect in the

reading of *Animal Farm* in which there are these two entities are discussed throughout the novel, first Dominant was Mr Jones who suppressed all the animals does not provide food and basic rights to them and old Major awoke a thought in the mind of all the animals that 'Man is the only creature that consumes without producing. In this regard, all animals fight against the dominant Mr Jones and revolt against his territory but what happened there again there comes another dominance of pigs like Napoleon and Squealer, now again the theme of suppressed and dominance can be observed in the novella, furthermore not only inside the Farm it happens it also happened with the human society too where Mr Jones faced suppression from his dominant opponents who want to take Manor farm Fox wood and Pinchfield who also neglects there Farm but each of them was having a sense of envy against other.

Role of Reader and Writer

Roland Barthes notes in his book *The death of an author* (1986) and *Empire of signs* (1970) that when the writer wrote a book his rules ends there and the rules of the reader begins he further argues that there are two types of any writing, the text and the work, he says work is a complete meaning containing thing in which reader doesn't do any specific duty to get the meaning rather text is a completed phenomenon which is incomplete, open-ended and based on the understandings of the reader (Barthes, 1977) this concept he has discussed as *Doxa* and *paradox* I his work in his book in which he also suggested that study focuses on the subject rather the Conservative society or militant leftist. Hedonism (John Piper 1986) and *Jouissance* connects readers to the subject (Barthes 1975). Further, the state Author is an authority no longer viable he creates text with his original imagination (Barthes, 1970) in this regard he resented his concept of author and sriptor. These

concepts of Barthes seem fit into this novella of Orwell (1945) in which regardless the theory or concepts of Marxism and communism which are linked to George Orwell no longer in work when a reader reads the novella regardless the know of all these theories. The meaning can be found by the reader in his or her own background or context their own social practices about good and evil about power manipulation about rereading of the text. How many readers read the text so many interpretations can be in work? Some readers can interpret the novel as a misuse of authority others can take it as the role of wealth and money the centre which the writer has created according to his own understanding or about his own personal imagination cannot be held by the readers.

Conclusion

By summing up the above discussion it can be proved that all the cosmos is revolved around the one persistent thing which is change and instability to understand reality because of the manipulation of epistemic power and a chain of disordered centres of things. When Orwell wrote the book *Animal form* it was the peak time of Post-Structuralism and Modernism in which the practice of chaos and instability were prevailing in society. George Orwell truly fabricated his story around these entities which further becomes the backbone of Post-structuralism. All the characters and themes prove that if there is the power it always creates manipulation and corrupts society it is very difficult to overcome the manipulations of power and if knowledge is used in a negative sense how it disturbs the society and habitats in this world. To overcome this manipulation, the other system of power comes into work and immediately it also becomes corrupt. Actually, it is not only the power that corrupts man or the dominant it is the

inability to question the ruler and it is the force of feeling of weakness or suppression through which the other ultimately becomes a master of the previous. By applying the post Structuralism theory to this novel it truly can be said that the interpretation depends on the readers' behalf if the reader is prone to find a political meaning of socialism or Marxism and communism (Marx 1867) in this text they can find it in it. And if the reader is likely to be a didactic eager he can find the true didacticism in the fable. Furthermore, every interpretation can be changed from reader to reader the original meaning can be found only on the basis of all the interpretations of all the readers and the phenomenon becomes unattainable and

unstable. Animal Farm is actually a true execution of all the concepts of Deconstruction and post Structuralism which are for the readers a horrible dream before but through this paper, it will prove an effort to simplify the real sense of Post-Structuralism.

Acknowledgement

The authors express their sincere gratitude to Dr Muhammad Ajmal at the Linguistics and Language Department of Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology, D. I. Khan for his unconditional guidance and support during the preparation of the manuscript.

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