



Agrarian Ecology, Animal Labour, and Species Hierarchy in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*

Mostak Hossain¹ & Muhd. Mustafizur Rahman²

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of English, Bangladesh Army University of Engineering & Technology, Qadirabad Cantonment, Natore-6431, Bangladesh

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-6572-978X>

² Associate Professor, Department of English, Bangladesh Army University of Engineering & Technology, Qadirabad Cantonment, Natore-6431, Bangladesh

Email: mostak024@gmail.com; mustafizsiu@yahoo.com

DOI: 10.53103/cjess.v6i5.570

Abstract

This study explores *Animal Farm* (1945) as a political allegory to examine how ecological relations among land, labour, food, and animal bodies reproduce hierarchical power on the farm. This research aims to show how the revolution against Mr Jones not only changes the form of political power, but also the situation in which the domination is maintained, thereby expanding the allegorical interpretation of power toward an ecological critique of power. The study analyses the windmill project, food rationing, and the exploitation of Boxer through close textual analysis Using Wolfe's (2010) posthumanist theory, Michel Foucault's (1978, 1995) concepts of biopower and biopolitics, Giorgio Agamben's (1998, 2004) biopolitical theory, and Huggan and Tiffin's (2010) postcolonial ecocriticism as its theoretical frameworks, as all of them are expressions of the inequality between political authority and agricultural production and between human and animal life. The analysis shows that the administrative control of the pigs is based on the differential valuation of animal body and the other animals are exposed to laborious work and suffer from hunger, injury, body exposure and environmental hardship. Boxer embodies the transformation of the animal body to become a disposable means of production whose value lies in its capacity for labour. Finally, this paper concludes that species hierarchy in the farm is an ecological and a political hierarchy, as power works through the ways in which bodies work, eat, suffer and survive.

Keywords: Agrarian Ecology, Animal Labour, Species Hierarchy, Posthumanism, Animal Farm

Introduction

Animal Farm (1945) has been widely read as a political allegory of the Russian

Revolution (1917) and its betrayal under Stalinism, which Orwell encouraged when he described it, in a letter to the French writer Yvonne Davet, as “a satirical tale against Stalin” (*Animal Farm*, n.d.). While this allegorical reading has been at the core of criticism of the novel, it cannot be said to be the only thematic and material dimension of the novel. *Animal Farm* (1945) can also be read as a story about a farm, in which the land, the working condition of the animals, the production of food, the presence of hunger, the weather, the breeding of the animals, or the physical condition of the animals is a fundamental element. So it is important to select the beast-fable form, especially since Orwell’s concern in the use of farm animals is stated. As Chisty (2021) notes, this aspect of the novel has received limited critical attention, as many critics have focused primarily on its human and political themes, thereby overlooking the representation of animal life in the novel. The study shows that the novel creates a particular agrarian ecology, a distributed ecology of agrarian relations, in which land, labour, body, food and species are related and distributed differently. This ecological order is in parallel to and in important ways exceeds the novel’s political allegory. From this point of view, the main theme of the story is not political, “some animals are more equal than others” (Orwell, 1945, p. 68), but the valuation of the animal body based on its productive capacity. Some bodies are made available as sources of labour, are worked to the bone, given very little food, and so are physically injured and exposed to environmental stress; others gain managerial authority and are relatively spared of such stresses. The most obvious example of this can be seen in Boxer, the cart-horse. His repeated promise to do more, “I will work harder!” (Orwell, 1945, p. 37), becomes a rule of his life in *Animal Farm*, ultimately leading to his exploitation and sale to a horse slaughterer when his usefulness is exhausted. Boxer does not fit easily into the allegorical history of Stalinism, but his destiny is understandable in the context of this article’s conception of species hierarchy: a hierarchy in which the bodies of animals are arranged differently based on their labour value, ecological fragility, and degree of access to resources.

The focus of the paper goes beyond the identification of the historical referents represented by the individual animals. It explores the nature of the farm as an ecological and agricultural system, in which the proportion of labour, risk, food and resources are unevenly shared between different species, and how such divisions enable its continuation and survival during the political change in process as a result of the animals’ revolution. This approach covers an aspect of the existing scholarship that has not been explored enough. Scholarship on *Animal Farm* (1945) has overwhelmingly focused on the political and historical aspects of the work (Jaccard, 2018) and the work has recently been examined by posthumanist and animal-studies scholars, who have paid increased attention to the problematisation of animal subjectivity, agency, and species identity that goes beyond their role as political symbols (Bansal and Singh, 2023). The farm as an agricultural and ecological system has received comparatively limited critical attention, although land use,

labour organisation, food distribution, and bodily exploitation operate as interconnected mechanisms of power. This study deals with this important aspect by examining the windmill project, the rationing system and the exploitation of animal labour as ecological and material processes instead of just as part of the novel's political allegory.

This paper is not just one that reconsiders genre or textual detail. When critiquing hierarchy in *Animal Farm* (1945), political institutions can be used in combination with and through ecological relations, and an exclusively political interpretation can turn a blind eye to the material conditions in which domination is created and sustained. This restriction could also mimic the anthropocentric constriction that is apparent in Bansal and Singh (2023) and Chisty (2021) in some of the novel's critical reception. The apparent simplicity of a work that is often first introduced to younger researchers is therefore often followed by a more complicated narrative about power in which political authority is maintained by the unequal organisation of labour, food, bodily capacity and environmental burden. This study highlights these relations, bringing the interpretation of *Animal Farm* (1945) from the political realm of allegory to that of an ecological critique of domination, and showing how inequalities in the distribution of resources and in the valuation of species can continue after a seemingly transformative political revolution. The novel thus provides a fruitful literary framework for thinking about more general issues related to animal work, farming, ecological injustice, and the ideologies by which inequality in access to resources and environmental costs is made to seem natural or inevitable.

Literature Review

Most scholarship on George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) focuses on the book as a historical or political allegory. In Jaccard (2018) the critical reception of the text is shown to be a result of competing ideological positions, especially in the context of the Cold War (1947–1991). Genuinely socialist critics on the left and right of the political spectrum used the novel to serve different ends: the British New Left (1956) was searching for ways to harmonize Orwell's socialist ideology with his condemnation of Soviet Communism (1917); while conservatives often portrayed the novel as a sweeping attack against socialism (Jaccard, 2018). This reception history shows that the novel is so far defined by its political commentary that it has been more than ever defined by its political significance. Its literary value has also been analysed by Jaccard (2018), who observes, "For sure, many critical treatments background or marginalize the novel's political dimensions, and instead read the novel in terms of literary form, judging its merit on the successful execution of its satirical fable. However, the larger portion of criticism elevates the form's consequences above the form itself, focusing on the novel's send-up of Stalinism and, importantly, the ambiguous political positioning of its author" (p. 4). While this political-historical context is still vital to the novel's analysis, this emphasis has also historically inclined to

marginalise other aspects of the novel, such as the portrayal of animal bodies, agricultural labour, material environments and resource distribution.

A relatively more recent strand of scholarship has approached the novel from the perspective of animal studies and posthumanist perspectives, Bansal and Singh (2023) place Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) within a critical posthumanist context, considering the ethical and agential dimensions of its animal characters in relation to the Russian Revolution (1917) and industrialisation (1929–1939). This solution, which attempts to distance the animals from the symbolic, brings to the fore the issues of animal ethics, agency and species difference (Bansal and Singh, 2023). However, its main focus is on animal subjectivity and ethics rather than on material organisation of the farm as an agricultural system. Especially, the interdependence between animal bodies, agriculture labour, food, land, productive resources and ecological fragility are not adequately explored. The study contributes to the posthumanist turn by focusing on the ecological connections in which hierarchy of species is produced as a material phenomenon and maintained.

An ecologically-oriented view comes from the work of scholars on the intersection of animals and environmental destruction in Orwell's fiction, such as his essay "Shooting an Elephant," written in 1936. Chisty (2021) illustrates how colonial authority is articulated in interrelated structures of colonialism and ecological damage. More attention, he suggests, has been paid to environmental issues in the essay than to the colonial psychology and imperial power that run through it. The protest against mistreatment of farm animals, however, is more significant in the context of this present study as Orwell's declared intention for the novel was to protest against such mistreatment (Huggan and Tiffin 2010; Chisty, 2021). This observation presents a point of departure for the present study, which takes the ecological question from Orwell's nonfictional treatment of human–animal relationships to the agricultural world depicted in *Animal Farm* (1945). The aim of this study is not to represent the farm solely as the site of political struggle, but to see it as a material space where labour, resources, physical abilities and species status are unevenly distributed.

The ecological approach to reading is further supported by Orwell's nonfictional encounter with the natural world. In his essay "Some Thoughts on the Common Toad" (1946), published shortly after *Animal Farm* (1945), Orwell challenges the widely held notion that considering nature is politically insignificant, "To put it more precisely, is it politically reprehensible, while we are all groaning, or at any rate ought to be groaning, under the shackles of the capitalist system, to point out that life is frequently more worth living because of a blackbird's song" (Orwell, 2010, p. 9). A biographical account of Orwell's life by Taylor (2023) also draws attention to his close observation of the natural world and his broader appreciation of nature, as reflected in his letters and diaries. This type of evidence helps to create a strong link between Orwell's political writing and his

interaction with nature and non-human beings. This biographical evidence, however, is not enough to prove an ecological interpretation of *Animal Farm* (1945). Instead, it challenges the assumption that the novel's political allegory constitutes its sole adequate framework of interpretation. When analysed within this context, the relative lack of sustained ecological readings is all the more significant and could explain the political interpretations that have gained the upper hand, perhaps reflecting the historical circumstances of the novel's reception and canonisation (Jaccard, 2018).

The study also relies on theoretical literature on the topic of species difference, animality, labour and power. The term speciesism was introduced by Singer (1975) to describe the systematic devaluation of non-human interests and to explain a vocabulary for understanding hierarchy based on species. While Singer's (1975) formulation of ethics is not quite in line with the focus of this study on agricultural labourers and ecological relations, the idea is applicable to the valuation of animal bodies on the farm. In addition, Wolfe's (2010) posthumanist theory questions the conventional separation between humans and non-human beings by drawing attention to different approaches within animal studies. He states, "there are humanist ways and there are posthumanist ways of engaging in this supposedly always already posthumanist pursuit called animal studies" (p. xxix). This distinction can be helpful for rethinking relations between humans and animals in the work, where the line between them is blurred by their shared experience of labour, suffering, political agency and resistance. Haraway's (2008) notion of multispecies relations broadens this thinking to a multispecies moment in which humans and other species are intertwined and mutually constituted. These theoretical approaches enable us to grasp the agrarian system as an ecological and economic multi-species assemblage that relies on animal work for production and in which food, protection, authority and bodily security are distributed unevenly.

The novel's allegorical and ideological frameworks are elaborated by political-historical perspectives, animal agency, ethics, and species difference by posthumanist and animal-studies scholarship, and the importance of environmental exploitation and human-animal relations through ecocritical studies of Orwell. However, these have not been sufficiently developed in a sustained consideration of the farm as an ecological system of agriculture. Specifically, the interplay of land, labour, the distribution of food, animal bodies and species-based vulnerability is under-studied. In this study, the posthumanist theory (2010), the concepts of biopower and biopolitics (1978, 1995), biopolitical theory (1998, 2004), and postcolonial ecocriticism (2010) are combined with the material organization of agricultural life presented in the novel to fill this gap. It thus presents the symbolic nature of the individual animal species, as well as the unequal allocation of labour, resources, risk and bodily value, and the material reproduction of political subjugation in ecological relationships between animals.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on four complimentary theoretical resources. First, Posthumanism theory (2010) provides a critical framework for reconsidering the conventional boundary between humans and non-human beings in *Animal Farm* (1945). Based on the posthumanist theories of Wolfe (2010) this research examines the novel's challenges to the human exceptionalist framework, giving animals agency, labour, suffering and political subjectivity. The framework also emphasises the material connection between humans, animals and their common environment, and the farm becomes a site of making, sustaining, and contesting difference between human and non-human life. Second, Michel Foucault (1978, 1995) introduced the notions of biopower and biopolitics that outline a new way of working with power; as he states, "In any case, in its modern form-relative and limited-as in its ancient and absolute form, the right of life and death is a dis symmetrical one. The sovereign exercised his right of life only by exercising his right to kill, or by refraining from killing; he evidenced his power over life only through the death he was capable of requiring. The right which was formulated as the "power of life and death" was in reality the right to take life or let live" (1978, p. 136). This is a system which the pigs, in their case, use to govern *Animal Farm* (1945), and which they manage, as Jones does, with the aid of a bureaucracy of statistics, it can be seen from Squealer's frequent description of the production figures.

Third, Giorgio Agamben's (1998, 2004) work on biopolitics, in particular that of bare life and the anthropological machine, outlines the processes by which political orders define and produce the category of life that is included in the community only as excluded from the community, or made to depend on the sovereign. Agamben's description of the open, the practice of redrawing the boundary between full political life and merely biological life, provides a correct terminology for the pigs' changing demarcation of the animals that are full citizens of Animalism and those that are merely working animals to be controlled (Agamben, 2004). Fourth, postcolonial ecocriticism (Huggan and Tiffin, 2010) requires that any consideration of power and hierarchy in an ecocritical analysis of a text also be mindful of who's exploited in a text as a resource, and who is exploited as a beneficiary; it also demands that any discussion of natural order in an ecocriticism of a text be informed by an awareness of how the natural order is employed to support unequal distributions of environmental risk and benefit (Huggan and Tiffin, 2010). Together these four frameworks enable the farm's Seven Commandments, its rationing system, and its windmill project to be read not just as political parodies of a Soviet institution, but as a unified narrative of the production, legitimization, and maintenance of ecological and biopolitical hierarchy through the control of animal bodies and agricultural labour.

Clarifying the interrelationships among these four frameworks is essential, rather

than treating them as operating independently in parallel. The mechanism for hierarchy is provided by Foucault's (1978) concepts of biopower, which is exercised in the form of "calibrated" ration management, labour hours, and provision. The result is that what Agamben calls "bare life" gives the structural explanation as to why the animals subjected to this management are unable to effectively challenge it: they are included in the political community of Animalism, and the mechanism by which they are excluded is the fact that the same commandment that promises equality is the commandment that the pigs alone have the right to interpret and change. The postcolonial ecocriticism of Huggan and Tiffin (2010) provides the critical orientation to prevent this analysis from naturalizing or normalising the ecological hierarchy of this farm, forcing the reader to periodically ask, at each moment, who profits from a particular account of natural necessity and who pays the price. When combined, these frameworks enable us to read the daily agricultural decisions made by the farm, especially as they show up in the show trials and propaganda, as sites in which hierarchy is "actively produced".

Research Methodology

The methodology of this study is qualitative, interpretive, and uses close textual analysis along with posthumanist theory (2010), the concepts of biopower and biopolitics (1978, 1995), biopolitical theory (1998, 2004), and postcolonial theory (2010) in the form of ecocritical theory. The primary text is Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) in which relevant passages about land, labour, rationing, breeding and the windmill project are purposefully sampled as they relate to the concept of species hierarchy and agrarian ecology. Secondary sources are composed of peer-reviewed journal articles in posthumanist theory, animal studies, biopolitics, and Orwell scholarship, chosen to frame the textual analysis within the theoretical vocabulary and critical debates currently shaping the field. The analysis unfolds thematically, by the three recurring structures of the novel's ecology: (1) the unequal distribution of food and work in the novel from the very beginning of the rebellion through the rationing and labour system; (2) the windmill project as a case study on the displacement of ecological and infrastructural risk onto particular bodies; (3) the character of Boxer, in whose labour, injury, and disposal, the novel's treatment of the animal body as an exhaustible ecological resource is illustrated. The analysis, within each theme, is based on a range of evidence throughout the whole novel, from the animals' initial rebellion to the establishment of the pigs' new power.

Findings

Animal Farm (1945) develops an agrarian structure in which ecological risk, productive work and access to vital resources are purposefully categorised based on species

and rank within the newly created hierarchy of the farm. The idea of collective ownership and equality is first established by the animals' rebellion, but the reorganisation of agricultural production slowly re-establishes unequal relations between labouring bodies and those exercising administrative authority. One of the most visible forms of this is the rationing of food: the more the agricultural resources are allotted to the pigs, the more materially deprived the animals are whose labor is required to feed them, the horses and hens in particular. The windmill project is also institutionalised inequality in terms of the distribution of labour and the physical risk; it has been designed as a collective enterprise which benefits the whole animal kingdom, but the construction also entails a considerable amount of physical work and exposure to physical danger for the working animals, especially Boxer, while the pigs gain supervisory power and take the intellectual credit for the project. The evolution of Boxer from a symbol of 'productive commitment' to his famous slogan "I will work harder" (Orwell, 1945, p. 31), an example of the embodiment of animals being turned to disposable productive resources. This transformation is evident in the decline of the good looks, intelligence, and sound mind that initially characterise Boxer (Orwell, 1945), eventually leading to his physical deterioration and sale to a horse slaughterer. His fate reveals that the hierarchy of the farm exists not only by virtue of political control but by a material regime that assigns different values to animal bodies, entitles some to protection, resources, and authority, and others to intensified labor, deprivation, injury, and eventual disposability.

Rationing, Labour, and the Ecology of Hunger

The Seven Commandments are introduced right after the rebellion, and immediately present the farm as an egalitarian community, particularly in the formulation of "All animals are equal" (Orwell, 1945, p. 13). Nevertheless, the organisation of agricultural labour begins to qualify this principle at an early stage of the novel. In the initial harvest, the animals cooperate in order to satisfy production requirements. Their combined effort shows that a non-human organisation of farm labour is possible. Their joint work, however, does not lead to a balanced allocation of labor. The pigs remain exempt from physical work, "The pigs did not actually work, but directed and supervised the others" (Orwell, 1945, p. 21). It's an early division between animals that do physical work and those that take charge of it. The pigs are taken out of the "hardest" agricultural jobs and still have control over the animals doing the jobs. Political privilege is thus manifested in the organisation of labour, as the working animals perform most of the physical work and face the greatest risks. This imbalance is reinforced by the uneven distribution of food. The animals produce milk and apples through their combined work, but the pigs take them for their own use and justify them to be "absolutely necessary to the well-being of a pig" (Orwell, 1945, p. 18). The pigs are also described as "brainworkers"

which sets them apart from physical work and gives them a reason to be given food: "We pigs are brainworkers. The whole management and organisation of this farm depend on us" (Orwell, 1945, p. 18). Their greater share is shown not as a command, but as a demand based on their alleged physical and mental necessities. Political privilege is therefore recast as biological necessity. The distribution of food is no longer based on the collective production but on a hierarchy that reflects the degree of priority that should be given to the needs of different bodies. This is reminiscent of Foucault's (1978) discussion about biopower, which is when power is exercised through the management of life and the control of bodily needs. In addition to, the pigs demonstrate their power in determining how this unequal sharing can be justified as a necessity. Their food control goes hand in hand with their control over the explanation of food control.

As the novel continues the relationship between labour and food becomes more apparent. The rations for the working animals are cut back at various stages and are described as necessary reactions to scarcity, while the pigs are given food and types of consumption which are not given to them. One such example is their acquisition of "with an allowance of a gill of beer a day" (Orwell, 1945, p. 59), which is another material difference. This distinction is significant because those who perform most of the farm's physical labour receive less food, whereas those who direct that labour enjoy greater access to its resources. Rationing is, in other words, a way to keep the productive class of pigs in the workforce and to keep the pigs in charge of the material security of the ruling class. Hunger is not just a result of bad government or low crop yields. It is part and parcel of the organisation of labour. The working animals are given sufficient feed to sustain their work, and the pigs get a bigger piece of the farm. Food distribution is then integrated into the system that hierarchises labour, physiological requirements and material privileges. The body that creates the material order of the farm is equally managed, and this unevenness in management is important for the political order of the farm to be maintained, not just by commands and propaganda.

Species Hierarchy Among Pigs and Other Animals

A more subtle and nuanced order exists among the non-pig animals themselves, one that is often obscured by the binary opposition between the pigs and everyone else; the non-pig animals are not necessarily less privileged in the world of the novel. The hens, for example, are acutely vulnerable ecologically, even more than Boxer: when Napoleon decides to sell the eggs of the hens to make money, they frame the novel's only real organised act of collective resistance, flying "up to the rafters" and breaking their eggs on the floor, an ecological refusal, withholding of reproductive labor, which is met with brutal reprisal: their rations are withdrawn, and "Nine hens had died in the meantime" (Orwell, 1945, p. 38). The hens' episode reminds us that in the novel species hierarchy is not binary,

but a more differentiated arrangement; the hens are at different ecological niches, depending on which kind of labour their bodies are designed to carry out, muscular labour for Boxer, reproductive labour for the hens.

The sheep, on the other hand, do not have a place of ecological complicity, but an ecological complicity. Their function is not to be labouring animals who are worn out by the ecological requirements of the farm, but instead, as a biological noise machine whose bleating silences dissent at opportune times, as dictated by politics. Read ecologically, the sheep are a third type, neither managerial pigs nor working horses or hens, but bodies whose ecological role is to suppress the ability of other animals to deliberate together, the capacity to express concerns about the environmental consequences of their actions when such consequences become matters of collective consideration.

Ecological Risk, Weather, and the Limits of Political Explanation

The windmill project is the most explicit example of these dynamics throughout the novel: Snowball first proposes it, then after his expulsion it is taken up by Napoleon who claims it as his own project, and at the end, the credit and safety are passed on to other people. The windmill is offered as a shared good, Snowball promises, “so much labour would be saved that the animals would only need to work three days a week” (Orwell, 1945, p. 26). In reality, however, the construction of the windmill, the quarrying of stone, the hauling of loads, working through the winter, comes mainly at the price of the horses, this is particularly evident in Boxer, who rises half an hour earlier than the other animals to work on the windmill before beginning his regular daily labour. A storm destroys the windmill, providing Napoleon with an opportunity to redirect attention from the farm’s material and environmental conditions towards an alleged political enemy. It is instantly blamed on Snowball, and becomes an excuse for increased political manipulation. But Squealer echoes this story by asking, “Have you heard of the enemy, that came at night, and destroyed our windmill? SNOWBALL!” (Orwell, 1945, p. 36). It illustrates the political re-interpretation of environmental failure and the pigs have the opportunity to move the blame from the condition of the farm and increase their control of the animals. This reframing introduces an ecological reading of the novel, instead of a political one, and that it is employed to strengthen the discipline of labour and the blaming of the animals instead of to question the relationship between animals and the risk of the environment and infrastructural planning. In Boxer’s words, “work harder” (Orwell, 1945, p. 37), the animals never question whether or not the windmill was an ecologically responsible endeavor; it is largely a decision they make after suffering a setback caused by environmental factors.

The author redefines ecological issues as the lack of labour or the lack of loyalty throughout the novel, instead of the lack of resources and insufficient planning. The species

hierarchy analysed in this study is in the process of being displaced by environmental factors of the farm such as weather, terrain and animal bodies. In *Animal Farm* (1945), these pressures are not just hardships but demands from the most vulnerable animals for greater work. Environmental and material conditions are presented as failures of labour, discipline or loyalty by the pigs, because they have control over the interpretation of these conditions. This process links ecological vulnerability to labour and political inequalities, and reinforces the argument of this article that environmental hazards are concretely reproduced in the system of species hierarchy and domination of the farm.

Boxer's Body as Exhaustible Resource

Throughout the novel, the ecological logic of which Boxer is the fullest embodiment is activated. Boxer is introduced as "an enormous beast, nearly eighteen hands high, and as strong as any two ordinary horses put together" (Orwell, 1945, p. 2) and strictly speaking, and in utilitarian terms, based on the resources that he can provide, and not his character. Boxer's two slogans, "I will work harder" and "Napoleon is always right" (Orwell, 1945, p. 31), show his total surrender of his analysis and evaluation of ecological and political problems to demands for labour on the farm. For him, every problem has only one solution, to work more.

The novel repeatedly establishes from an early stage that the pursuit of power carries its own costs, anticipating the consequences throughout the narrative. The value of Boxer on the farm is immediately evident and based largely on his strength and his ability to work. The lack of any concern about his well-being is clearly apparent in the threat, "the very day that those great muscles of yours will grow weak, Jones will sell you to the knacker" (Orwell, 1945, p. 4). The statement makes an explicit connection between the value of the animal and its strength, implying that the value of the animal on the farm is related to its ability to work. Once that capacity declines, the animal becomes disposable rather than deserving of care. It is accomplished with the precision and the devastating irony that, when the animals are no longer under Jones' rule, they begin to suffer and die of over-work, a fate that the farm's new management had promised the animals would never happen again, and that the van sent for his body is named "Horse Slaughterer" (Orwell, 1945, p. 63). The other animals gave him the same answer as they had given him the first time, and when he explained it to them, it was Squealer who replied: The van was only a second-hand, from a slaughterer, and Boxer had died peacefully in a hospital with the words, "Long live Animal Farm! Long live Comrade Napoleon! Napoleon is always right" (Orwell, 1945, p. 62), the only one to say it, to be said, will rhetorically over-write the wailing and protesting of the dispossessed and the dispossessed ones, who do not exist. It's the easiest instance in the novel of the fact of species hierarchy before it becomes a political propaganda.

Discussion

The above results reveal that *Animal Farm* (1945) can be read as establishing two parallel and interdependent hierarchies, one political (pigs over other animals), well documented in the current literature, such as in Jaccard's (2018) study, and one ecological (the managerial over the labouring), which this article has proposed operates on its own terms and can be discerned in the way the novel treats the rationing of food, the risk of infrastructure and the labour and death of Boxer. One can go across these two hierarchies without mixing them: the political hierarchy is legitimated by propaganda, by the modification of commandments, by the memory of history, the ecological hierarchy is legitimated by the needs of the body, by its productive capacity, by the natural distribution of physical risks. The two should be read together, and it is clear that the revolution of the animals is doomed to fail, before it even turns out to be clearly political with the modification and subsequent exclusion of the Seven Commandments and Snowball, because the unequal distribution of labour and resources is present from the start.

This paper not only critically examines the novel's deployment of animal concerns as the subject of the historical allegory, but also the way in which such subordination occurs at the level of agricultural and ecological particulars as Bansal and Singh (2023) shows in his posthumanist reading. While Bansal raises the question of the subjectivity and agency in general, it has been argued that the ecological structure of the novel provides a particular answer: that the animals' subjectivity and agency is distributed unevenly across species, according to labour role, the supervisory animals (the pigs) possessing narrative and political agency, while labouring animals (the horses, in particular Boxer) are given physical agency (labour capacity) – but are systematically denied narrative agency over their own fate. It also confirms Chisty's (2021) insight that the ecologic and animal welfare issues in Orwell's writings have been 'overlooked' by critics, as it shows that the latter's concern with those issues are present not just in "Shooting an Elephant (1936)," but in the explicit description of the agricultural mechanisms shown in *Animal Farm* (1945) itself.

The above facts make the interpretation of the hierarchy of the species into a dichotomy more difficult. For the first little while the hens can assert some sort of political agency, that of their eggs (the eggs they produce being their productive capacity in their turn), in exchange for compliance – the cost of their resistance is however a biopolitical one, just as severe as the spectacular violence on offer – immediate starvation, rewarded, as the pigs are, by themselves – but in reverse. This means the ecological hierarchy is not merely reproduced from the top, by means of propaganda, but is imposed from the top, by means of the well-targeted management of the provision itself—this is what Foucault (1978) considers the most characteristic feature of the activity of biopower: its management of life and death, not in execution itself, but rather through access to provision.

The windmill episode, in the context of Foucault's (1978) account of biopower,

further illuminates how ecological risk is managed within the regime of the pigs, which is one of labour extraction rather than a covert and spectacular violence like that of Jones's ownership, and whose task is calibrated, with rations and blame distributed as needed; the pigs' power is effective because it's legitimated through appeals to collective necessity and natural bodily difference, in contrast to naked coercion. Orwell's critique therefore extends beyond totalitarian propaganda to reveal how bodies, labour, and the natural environment are reduced to biological and productive functions within unequal systems of power.

This study also brings implications regarding the meaning of "allegory" in reference to the novel itself. The political reading of an allegory is purely allegorical as it maintains a fixed and mutually one-to-one correspondence between fictional and historical objects: Napoleon for Stalin, Snowball for Trotsky, and so on, which the ecological reading does not imply, and, in the case of Boxer, cannot fully confirm. This historical referent, though relevant to Boxer's situation, is not all that it signifies, as the experience of the Soviet industrial worker and that of Stakhanovite workers compelled to sustain ever greater levels of production are ecologically analogous to those of farming and industrial workers in other contexts. This partly explains why *Animal Farm* (1945) continues to appeal to researchers without a particular interest in twentieth-century Soviet history, given the broader implications of its ecological argument.

Implications to Research and Practice

In literary critical writing, this study reveals that Orwell's writing could be understood both politically as an allegory and ecologically by focusing on the countryside and the "Golden Country" that is the dream of Winston Smith (Orwell, 1949, p. 39) that has been paid less attention in his political themes. There is further scope for enriching beast fables and animal stories in the Aesopian tradition (Spencer, 2010), and Swift's *Houyhnhnms* (Swift, 1726/2003), with regard to systems of agriculture and labour and the political implications of these. *Animal Farm* (1945) is a readable text for animal studies and posthumanist pedagogy, for introducing the theory of Foucault (1978, 1995) on biopolitics, the theory of species hierarchy of Foucault (1978), and the theory of ecological displacement of risk of Foucault (1995), as well as the theory of speciesism of Agamben (1998) and Singer (1975). Boxer's role also serves as a starting point for discussion of animal bodies as productive resources, and new methods of enquiry may continue to produce new findings in this well-studied text.

Conclusion

This study shows that George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) establishes a consistent farming system whose various organising principles are the organisation of

labour, food, body and physical danger between the species, and also between the classes. The paper is valuable for demonstrating the role of species hierarchy in both political propaganda and ecological and biological arguments of need, output and risk, in relation to the rationing system and the windmill project, and in the character of Boxer the cart-horse. The pigs thus possess power because they can appropriate the physical resources of agriculture, they don't have to do the hard labour and they have control over the material conditions that other animals can use to sustain their life. These viewpoints are a material system in which political power and ecological privilege are mutually reinforcing in a farm. *Animal Farm* (1945), using Wolfe's (2010) posthumanist theory, Michel Foucault's (1978, 1995) concepts of biopower and biopolitics, Giorgio Agamben's (1998, 2004) biopolitical theory, and Huggan and Tiffin's (2010) postcolonial ecocriticism is a critique of domination that operates politically via political institutions and ecologically via ecological relations. The body of the labouring animal is exploited, exhausted and finally killed and the value placed on it is based on its utility to agriculture. It is also an anticipation of future offensive against industrial animal husbandry particularly the industrialisation of killing for profit which results in the animal body being disposed of on the principle of economic usefulness. The present ecological interpretation is not an alternative to the widely known political-allegorical interpretation of *Animal Farm* (1945), it is complementary to it, as the process of taking up political power is based on unequal distribution of the resources on which the division of labour depends, the value of bodies, the ecological risks, etc. The novel thus exposes hierarchy as a form of material relationships where political domination is produced in the very agrarian landscape.

Future Research

Future research could be carried out on Orwell's other works, especially *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) and his nonfiction nature writing, such as "Some Thoughts on the Common Toad" (1946), to determine whether the ecological concerns addressed in *Animal Farm* (1945) are emerging issues that constitute a pervasive current in his work. Comparative studies may also be broadened to other twentieth-century beast fables and animal allegories to see if the ecological displacement pattern evident here, in which infrastructural and environmental risks are transferred onto demands for labour already placed upon the bodies of the animals, is characteristic of political animal fiction more broadly. Finally, empirical research and interdisciplinary research (literary ecocriticism and the current animal-welfare science) could explore whether there remains scope for further public and academic debate about the current state of working animals in industrial agriculture using Boxer's literary experience as a starting point.

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