

Deconstruction of Power Relations in *Animal Farm* Based on Critical Discourse Analysis Theory

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Abstract: Based on the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) proposed by the linguist Norman Fairclough, this paper attempts to study the totalitarian discourse mechanism of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* from three dimensions: text, discursive practice and social practice. Through the analysis of the text level, the narrative of the discourse practice level and the legitimacy of power at the social practice level, it reveals the operation mechanism of totalitarian discourse and criticizes the abuse of power and ideological manipulation. It demonstrates the robust functionality of the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model in deconstructing discourses totalitarianism.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis; *Animal farm*; George Orwell; text analysis

1. Introduction

Animal Farm is a political allegorical novel published by George Orwell in 1945, which has attracted wide attention since its publication. The novel tells the story of a group of animals on the farm who successfully launched a revolution and finally won the victory under the influence of the idea of resisting human slaughter. They will drive their "human masters" out of the farm and want to build an equal animal world without human beings. But eventually animal leaders, some clever pigs, usurped the fruits of the revolution and became more authoritarian and totalitarian than "human masters" and in the process have been so-called domesticating other animals to convince them that they are still subservient to the imagined utopian world. Animal leaders eventually sit with humans and can't tell whether it is a pig or a human. This thesis aims to use Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis theory to explore the complex relationship between language, power and ideology, and to interpret *Animal Farm* from a new perspective. Through this analysis method, we can not only understand the literary value of the novel more deeply, but also reveal its critical significance to social reality.

2. Critical discourse analysis and its related theories

"Critical linguistics" also known as "critical discourse analysis", is a discipline related to discourse analysis, which first emerged in the early 1980s. It aims to examine the ideological meaning behind the language structure by analyzing the linguistic features of texts and the social and historical backgrounds they generate, and then reveal the complex relationship between language, power and ideology. Its methodology is mainly based on Systemic Functional Linguistics represented by Halliday, which holds that discourse is the result of the speaker's choice in both formal structure and ideological meaning. Language has an intervention effect on the real world and exerts influence on the user's world view^[1]. For example, we use semiotics to classify "wild animals" and "domestic animals", but this classification does not exist in nature. This classification comes from the interest of people in daily life and agricultural culture, and is encoded by Chinese and other languages^[1]. Based on this, Fowler and other critical linguists believe that discourse or discourse analysis is necessary. Critical linguistics originated from Foucault's theory of the relationship between discourse and power in the 1970s. He believed that discourse was not only a tool for expressing ideas, but also a medium for the operation of power, which had a profound impact on critical linguistics. Then in 1979, Fowler formally proposed the concept of "Critical Linguistics" in his book *Language and Control*. He emphasized that language is not only a neutral communication tool, but also a carrier of power and ideology. In the 1980s, Fairclough put forward the concept of "Critical Linguistic Analysis" (CDA) in his book *Language and Power* on the basis of critical linguistics. He summarizes the important concepts of CDA as discourse, power, ideology, social practice and common sense^[2], and emphasizes the complex relationship between language and society and the role of language in social change. In his book *Critical Discourse Analysis*, he argues that

CDA contains three basic attributes: relational, dialectical and interdisciplinary. Among them, relational is the core, which enables CDA to explore meaning, meaning creation, and meaning reproduction from the complex relationship between discourse and social life^[3]. It is his two works that Fairclough combines linguistic text analysis, discursive practice analysis and socio practice analysis: at the micro level, he analyzes the grammar and rhetoric of the text; at the meso level, the study of discourse strategies and discourse interpretation; at the macro level, focusing on the complex role of discourse and social context, this three-dimensional analysis method makes CDA a highly operational analysis tool. In the domestic linguistic field, the introduction and research on critical linguistics appeared in the 1990s. In recent years, many domestic scholars have joined the ranks of CDA research. Domestic CDA research can be roughly divided into the following four aspects: First, theoretical introduction and review research. It is a summary and reflection of foreign CDA research theories in the field of linguistics, which has certain guiding significance and reference value for domestic research. Secondly, there are not many core papers on the critical analysis of specific discourse, but this is a new wave of domestic linguistics. With the help of the theoretical model of critical discourse analysis, many scholars have carried out critical analysis of popular texts and famous historical texts from different perspectives, or revealed the relationship between ideology and language, or revealed the influence of ideology on language, or verified the application value of critical discourse analysis model in discourse analysis. In addition, there are critical comparative analysis and extensive theoretical introduction and in-depth study of English and Chinese texts, which are still very few^[4]. Nowadays, critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis gradually integrate the theoretical methods of sociology, psychology, anthropology and other disciplines, and use corpus quantitative analysis and other methods to enhance the scientificity and objectivity of research. The field of critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis has expanded from political discourse and media discourse to education, health care, law and other aspects. As far as this paper is concerned, the paper discusses the second point mentioned above, the critical analysis of specific discourse. As Van Dijk has stated, "Critical Discourse Analysis is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context". It serves to offer a critical attitude, perspective, as well as position within the interdisciplinary approach as it seeks to uncover hidden ideologies in social practices. Therefore, the primary focus of CDA is to reveal and expose how the application of power in discourse can be used to control and confront the thoughts and actions of the suppressed groups and at the same time uphold and perpetuate the dominant group's interests. As such, the CDA places great emphasis on illuminating and revealing how the discourses and actions of certain groups and even are legitimized, rationalized and justified among certain ideological beliefs^[5]. The purpose of this paper is to use CDA as a research tool to explore the influence of micro-level text analysis in *Animal Farm* on the social context of the work and its secular role, so as to criticize the operation mechanism of the power subject's cognitive approach through abnormal discourse manipulation and reflect the modernity of literary works.

3. Text analysis of *Animal Farm*

In *Animal Farm*, the author skillfully uses a large number of rhetorical devices, so the article is more expressive. The author expresses the abstract theme that he wants to insinuate through the specific image of animals, which not only increases the readability of the work and enhances the reader's interest in reading, but also further deepens the theme that the work wants to express. Each animal in the work has its special symbolic significance. Napoleon is an outright totalitarian tyrannical ruler in the book.

"The three hens who had been the ringleaders in the attempted rebellion over the eggs now came forward and stated that Snowball had appeared to them in a dream and incited them to disobey Napoleon's orders. They, too, were slaughtered. Then a goose came forward and confessed to having secreted six ears of corn during the last year's harvest and eaten them in the night. Then a sheep confessed to having urinated in the drinking pool—urged to do this, so she said, by Snowball—and two other sheep confessed to having murdered an old ram, an especially devoted follower of Napoleon, by chasing him round and round a bonfire when he was suffering from a cough. They were all slain on the spot. And so the tale of confessions and executions went on, until there was a pile of corpses lying before Napoleon's feet and the air was heavy with the smell of blood, which had been unknown there since the expulsion of Jones."^[6]

Here Napoleon's crazy and brutal image is displayed at a glance. He symbolizes the totalitarian leader in this animal society. He tries to use this kind of wanton killing means to maintain the absolute surrender and trust of this animal society to him. He does not know that his face has been the same as the human beings who wanted to escape desperately at that time, even more ruthless and thorough than them. He expelled competitors through violent means, monopolized all decision-making power of the farm to

establish his absolute authority, enjoyed his own privileges and constantly revised the rules to serve his own interests, which has long run counter to the original revolutionary ideal. Orwell's naming of the totalitarians by Napoleon itself has its special symbolic meaning. As a famous French revolutionist, Napoleon finally embarked on the road of autocratic monarchy. The author had already hinted at its end when he named the animal leader at the beginning.

Another typical character in the book, Squealer, as Napoleon's lobbyist, has a profound ironic effect. In the book, Squealer says: *"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 organisation 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."*^[6] While other animals suffer from hunger, pigs use their health as an excuse to take their privileges for granted and brainwash other animals. Animals must not think that their identity has quietly changed. All animals advocated in the Seven Commandments are no longer equal to the law that is universally applicable to all animals, but become a sub-case discussion. The image of pig, which is considered to be dull, clumsy and lazy in real life, is portrayed as a shrewd, insidious, ruthless and cold-blooded animal in the book. It imitates the appearance of human beings to dress up, drink and play, and finally sit together with human beings. This subversive portrayal itself has a particularly profound irony.

Another major rhetoric used in the text is exaggeration. The author makes the character more prominent by exaggerating the truth. In order to consolidate his ruling position, Napoleon constructs his competitors, and his ambition and greed are self-evident.

"Suddenly, early in the spring, an alarming thing was discovered. Snowball was secretly frequenting the farm by night! ...Whenever anything went wrong it became usual to attribute it to Snowball...Curiously enough, they went on believing this even after the mislaid key was found under a sack of meal. The cows declared unanimously that Snowball crept into their stalls and milked them in their sleep. The rats, which had been troublesome that winter, were also said to be in league with Snowball."^[6]

The unreasonable and baseless description of Snowball's destructive power in the article is obviously an illusion created by Napoleon. He preached his conjecture and slander in the manor, aiming to make the animals in the manor in this way. He camped with him and regarded Snowball as a complete villain, thus consolidating his dominance. Napoleon is skilled in calculation, cunning and insidious image more vivid on the paper. Other animals are also portrayed as ignorant and ignorant. They don't care what the truth is, they only believe what they are willing to believe, which is easier to believe.

In addition to rhetoric, there are many expressions of passive voice in the article. For example, when the living conditions of animals deteriorate, the narrator often uses passive voice to describe these changes, such as *"The corn ration was drastically reduced, and it was announced that an extra potato ration would be issued to make up for it"*^[6], which blurs the subject of responsibility and suggests how the power class uses language to cover up the truth. The author adopts the form of fable story, which enables the author to convey complex and profound social criticism with relatively simple plots. The story begins with the uprising of the animals, through the change of rights, and finally returns to the similar or even worse situation of human rule, forming a complete circular structure. It not only enhances the dramatic nature of the story, but also hints at the cyclical and ineradicable nature of totalitarianism.

4. Discursive practice analysis of *Animal farm*

The creation of *Animal Farm* is not accidental. It is Orwell's response to the political reality of Europe in the first half of the 20th century. The author has experienced the Spanish Civil War and witnessed the rise of Stalinism. These experiences have profoundly affected the creation of the novel. Orwell chose the form of allegorical stories, on the one hand, to avoid British political censorship, on the other hand, to spread his political ideas more widely. Orwell once showed that Benjamin in the text was his own innuendo. He knew the ills of the whole farm, and even at the beginning he had foreseen the tragic ending of the farm. However, one percent of himself was sober in the face of ninety-nine percent of chaos. It is minimal and helpless. What he can do is to maintain his life in the manor. Just like Orwell, he put a mask on himself with the appearance of the fable. The current social background determines the critical and allegorical characteristics of novel production. The reason for Orwell's far-reaching influence is far from his innuendo of political life. There are many possible interpretations of the text. On the surface, this is a story about animals rebelling against human domination; further, it is a direct criticism of the Soviet

Stalin model; more broadly, it reveals the operating mechanism of rights under any totalitarian regime. It is the structure of multi-level meaning that enables the novel to transcend time and space and resonate in different historical backgrounds. In the book, the author turns language into a tool for manipulation and power construction. The most representative is the constant revision of the Seven Commandments. As a ruler maker, Napoleon does not respect the rules, does not revere the rules, let alone abide by the rules. In his eyes, the rules are only a tool to make his totalitarian hedonism more reasonable and reasonable, and to make other animals even less aware of them. The Seven Commandments are the results of their revolution in the eyes of animals and the dogma they believe in. Now Napoleon is constantly revising the rules in order to rationalize his behavior. The rules are subject to him, and the animals are subject to the rules. The animals thought they were guarding or the ideal world portrayed by the old Major for them, but they had been shrouded in Napoleon's totalitarian rule. *All animals are equal*^[6] changed to *All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others*^[6]. Here, language is used to tamper with history and reality, concealing the inequality of power, so that animals cannot question the privilege of pigs. Secondly, language is also used in the book to promote ideas and create panic. At the beginning, as a leader, pigs did not have a positive and reasonable solution to the key problem that animals did not understand the content of the Seven Commandments. Instead, it was derived into a simple slogan of "four legs good, two legs bad"^[6]. The simple and easy-to-remember feature makes this slogan quickly become the creed of animals, and this simplification of language weakens the critical thinking of animals invisibly. Animals do not understand the connotation of the Seven Commandments, and the slogan even turns its essence into a superficial phenomenon of judging good or bad through the number of legs, which also paves the way for the subsequent ruling power to easily fall into the hands of pigs. As the spokesperson of pigs, Squealer constantly emphasizes the wise leadership of pigs through speeches and publicity. Once the animals have resistance, he will warn them that Mr. Jones will come back. This language strategy creates a fear of external threats to animals, thus strengthening their loyalty and conviction to the rule of Napoleon, and language has become a powerful ruling tool. In addition, language is also used to suppress dissent. Any animal that dares to question the rule of pigs is labeled as a "traitor" and an "enemy", and is spit on like a Snowball and even executed. This kind of discourse violence oppresses the thoughts of animals, makes them dare not to express different opinions, and further consolidates the dominant position of pigs. From this point of view, when language is manipulated by power, it will become a tool of rule.

5. Social practice analysis of *Animal Farm*

Animal Farm profoundly reflects the social power relations in the 20th century. Through the change of rights in animal society, Orwell reveals how the revolution began and how it moved towards autocracy. The evolution of this power relationship is not only a criticism of specific historical events, but also a revelation of the operation mechanism of universal power. As a clever animal, the pig naturally becomes a leader; the struggle between Napoleon and Snowball is the classic factional struggle in the power society; Napoleon finally expelled the Snowball from the manor and realized his dictatorship; secretly cultivate ferocious dogs as armed forces to suppress resistance and consolidate rule; through the Seven Commandments to control the thought, this manor is just like a human society. Specific elements have profound expressive significance in the book. As a derivative of animalism, the Seven Commandments controls the thoughts and ideologies of animals. Whether it is the initial revolutionary drive or the subsequent power rule, ideology is the most critical factor in society. Benjamin and Boxer's final awakening also relies on memory and questioning to resist ideological manipulation. As a lobbyist, Squealer explains and glorifies Napoleon's policy, controls the whole society through public opinion and speech, and assists Napoleon in reconstructing the ideology of animals and finally achieve its ruling purpose. House, whiskey, clothes and other human supplies symbolize privilege and desire. From the beginning, there is social stratification in the manor. Pigs, as leaders, can drink milk and eat apples without labor. With the passage of time, this stratification becomes more obvious and eventually becomes a new social class. Many economic resources of human beings are in the hands of pigs. They wear clothes, live in houses, drink whiskey, and even trade with people. The expansion of power has also solidified the class. The reconstruction of ideology mentioned above also makes this solidification not only stay on the material level, but also more on the cultural and psychological level. Animals are blind to this inequality, even think it is justified, and gradually accept their position and division of labor in society. The windmill represents progress and hope, but in fact it has become a tool for oppressing animals. At first, the windmill was built to improve the lives of animals and improve efficiency. However, the windmill was destroyed and rebuilt many times. Animals were forced to carry heavy labor on their backs and even pay for it. Until the end, the windmill was still illusory. The ruling class concealed the essence of its oppression through false promises and propaganda. *Animal Farm* has had a profound social and cultural impact since

its publication. It has become a symbol of anti-utopia and anti-totalitarianism. Many concepts and expressions in novels have also become common words in political discourse. This cultural influence also proves that literary discourse can transcend the text itself and become a driving force for social change.

6. Conclusion

Based on Fairclough's critical discourse analysis theory, this paper systematically studies the power discourse system of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* from three levels: text, discursive practice and social practice, deconstructs the generation logic and power reproduction path of totalitarian discourse in *Animal Farm* and finds that Orwell, through the surface narration of animal language, implanted the text into the field of purity and labor alienation of revolutionary rhetoric, performed the narrative of historical revisionism, and achieved the semantic manipulation of the concept of equality at the social and cultural level, thus criticizing the operation mechanism of the power subject's cognitive approach through abnormal discourse manipulation. This not only exposed the drawbacks of totalitarian rule, but also revealed the duality of ideological manipulation. Napoleon relied on the explicit mechanisms of discourse, such as the slogan of "Four legs good, two legs bad"^[6], to quickly unify the leadership of the manor, and with the help of the invisible penetration of symbolic capital to achieve the purpose of totalitarianism. By incorporating text analysis into the interdisciplinary perspective of power criticism, the study proves that the CDA model has a strong explanatory power in deconstructing discourse totalitarianism, and also expands our thinking for future analysis methods. It can go beyond the traditional literary analysis method and deeply explore the complex relationship between text and real society. By using this method to reveal the important role of literary discourse in social change, the CDA model is more widely used in more fields.

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