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Allegory and imperial power in Orwell's Animal Farm: A postcolonial critique of U.S. hegemony in the Middle East

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ABSTRACT

Animal Farm has too often been secured within a closed Cold War referentiality, as though its force depended entirely on translating pigs, horses, and slogans back into the chronology of Soviet communism. This essay argues that Orwell's novella remains politically exact in a different way. Its afterlife lies in the formal intelligence with which it narrates the capture of emancipatory language, the conversion of law into exception, the management of fear, and the normalization of hierarchy under the sign of collective necessity. Reading the novella through postcolonial criticism, allegory theory, discourse analysis, and a contrapuntal method indebted to Edward Said, I treat Animal Farm not as a prophetic key to later history but as a portable allegorical grammar through which certain mechanisms of U.S. hegemony in the Middle East become legible. The argument does not identify Orwell's characters with specific states or leaders, nor does it flatten Iraq, Palestine, Gulf security regimes, and the post-9/11 order into a single script. Rather, it shows how the novella's slogans, revised Commandments, developmental spectacles, staged emergencies, and final crisis of visible difference illuminate recurring imperial procedures: elite capture, proxy sovereignty, epistemic management, legal elasticity, and the narration of violence as protection. At the same time, the essay keeps the limits of allegorical transfer in view and reckons with Orwell's own Cold War appropriation by Anglo-American power.

KEYWORDS: George Orwell, Animal Farm, postcolonial criticism, allegory, empire, U.S. hegemony, Middle Eastconsumer protection

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I. Afterlives of a Closed Allegory

The last scene of Animal Farm is usually read as the end of an argument that was finished before it began. The animals look through the farmhouse window and discover that pig and man can no longer be told apart; readers close the book reassured that Orwell has completed his anti-Stalinist parable, and that the scene's interpretive work consists in one final disclosure of hypocrisy (Orwell ch. 10). Yet the scene is more disquieting than that familiar closure allows. What it stages is not simply corruption but the political success of resemblance. The revolutionary rulers have not merely betrayed the old order; they have learned to occupy its gestures so thoroughly that domination no longer needs to announce itself as restoration. It can speak as novelty while repeating structure. The animals do not merely discover that the pigs have become bad. They discover that power has become formally continuous across the break that once promised emancipation.

This distinction matters if the novella is to remain critically alive. Animal Farm has often been treated as though its meaning were exhausted by the chronology of Soviet history, its animals lined up against historical originals in a classroom exercise of allegorical equivalence. There is truth in that framework. Orwell wrote in unmistakable proximity to the Russian Revolution, the Stalinist purges, the betrayal of socialist ideals, and the bureaucratic consolidation of terror. Morris Dickstein's phrase "history as fable" is apt precisely because it preserves both the historical density and the stylized economy of the work. Yet the critical problem begins when "history as fable" hardens into "history as code." A code can be solved and then retired. A fable, especially an allegorical one, has a more troubling afterlife. Its power lies less in the transparency of one referent than in the durability of a form capable of organizing later recognitions without collapsing into timeless moral banality.

That durability should not be confused with universal applicability. There is nothing especially critical in claiming that Animal Farm can "fit" any instance of political corruption. Such elasticity merely empties the text of history. Nor would it be enough to replace Stalin with Washington and call the job done. The question is subtler and more demanding: what in Orwell's literary form makes the novella available for a postcolonial reading of U.S. hegemony in the Middle East without reducing either the region or the novel to a caricature? Put differently, what survives when the Soviet referent is neither denied nor treated as sovereign? I argue that Animal Farm offers not a transferable cast of characters but a transferable political grammar. Its afterlife lies in the procedures it renders legible: the seizure of emancipatory language by managerial elites, the monopolization of interpretation, the transformation of law by qualification, the use of developmental spectacle to convert labour into sacrifice, the production of emergency as a permanent civic atmosphere, and the achievement of rule through resemblance to the power one claimed to overthrow.

To read Orwell in this register is necessarily risky. The Middle East is not one text, one war, or one imperial scene. Iraq, Palestine, the Gulf monarchies, the infrastructures of oil, and the post-9/11 security order cannot be collapsed into a single allegorical tableau without repeating the totalizing violence that postcolonial criticism has spent decades exposing. Aijaz Ahmad's resistance to master allegories remains indispensable here. So does Ella Shohat's warning that "post-colonial" language can become ideologically soothing when it implies that coloniality has already passed. If a postcolonial reading of Animal Farm is to avoid becoming another imperial simplification, it must proceed by pressure rather than substitution. It must ask not which animal "stands for" which state, but which operations of rule become newly audible when the novella is read beside U.S. power in the Middle East: occupation narrated as liberation, client sovereignty staged as autonomy, infrastructure narrated as futurity, and violence redescribed as security.

There is an additional reason to proceed carefully. Orwell himself has an imperial afterlife. Samantha Senn and Daniel Leab show, in different ways, how Animal Farm was recruited into Anglo-American propaganda, especially through the Cold War adaptation and circulation of the text beyond Orwell's own intentions. A postcolonial reading must therefore reckon with an irony almost too exact to ignore: the same fable that can illuminate imperial techniques has itself been made available as an instrument of imperial culture. That fact does not disqualify the novel from criticism. It deepens the task. What must be recovered is not an innocent Orwell uncontaminated by geopolitics, but a literary form more unruly than the uses to which it was put. Read in that spirit, Animal Farm discloses something larger than a cautionary tale about revolution gone wrong. It becomes a concentrated study of how power survives historical change by changing its language first.

II. Allegory After Reference: Form, Transfer, and Orwell's Cold War Afterlife

The first task is to resist the lazy confidence with which allegory is often handled. In common critical shorthand, allegory appears as a stable exchange mechanism: one figure in the text equals one figure in history, and interpretation is the act of restoring the missing proper nouns. Orwell's novella certainly invites that procedure. Old Major evokes Marx and Lenin in compressed form, Snowball carries Trotsky's revolutionary energy into exile, Napoleon consolidates power through bureaucratic terror, and the purges unmistakably recall Stalinist spectacle. Jeffrey Meyers's influential account of the novel as political allegory captures much of that historical precision. Yet the very neatness of such readings can obscure the reason the novella continues to circulate outside the context that produced it. If allegory were only substitution, Animal Farm would have become a useful historical teaching aid and little more. That it has not done so suggests that its form works otherwise.

Angus Fletcher remains valuable here because he refuses to treat allegory as ornament or puzzle. Allegory, in his account, is a symbolic mode structured by doubleness: the narrative moves on one plane while a second, conceptually charged sequence shadows and disturbs it. The point is not simply that one thing means another. It is that the relation between thing and meaning is made durable through patterned recurrence, ritualized phrasing, and the persistence of emblematic scenes. Fredric Jameson's insistence that narrative functions as a socially symbolic act sharpens the point. Literary form does not merely reflect history; it concentrates historical contradictions into figures that can continue to think after their first occasion. Animal Farm's continuing force belongs to that concentration. It renders visible a cluster of political procedures—capture, qualification, attrition, mimicry, emergency—that do not belong to Stalinism alone even if Stalinism supplied their immediate theatre.

That claim needs more than theoretical permission; it requires historical self-consciousness. One cannot simply detach Orwell from his anti-Stalinist horizon and redeploy him elsewhere as if no politics attended that movement. John Rodden's work on Orwell's reputation and Senn's study of literature as Cold War propaganda both demonstrate that Orwell's public afterlife has been anything but neutral. Animal Farm was absorbed into an Anglo-American moral geography in which totalitarianism became a problem elsewhere and imperial power could present itself as its natural antidote. Leab's account of the CIA's involvement in the 1954 film adaptation is especially instructive. The novella was not merely celebrated; it was edited into ideological service. That history matters because it means any contemporary political use of Orwell must first pass through the recognition that Orwell has already been made usable by empire.

Once that history is admitted, the stakes of allegorical transfer become more exacting. A postcolonial reading of Animal Farm cannot proceed as though Orwell were an uncomplicated ally waiting to be retrieved. It must begin with the possibility that the text's accessibility to imperial critique is bound up with a contradictory history in which the same text helped authorize imperial innocence. Said's Culture and Imperialism offers the right discipline here. Contrapuntal reading does not rescue literature from history; it places literature in the dissonant field of histories it did not intend but cannot escape. The farm must therefore be read in two directions at once: backward toward Soviet reference and outward toward later imperial formations whose logic it can illuminate only because its own form exceeds the Cold War uses later imposed upon it.

What, then, actually travels? Not characters. Not plot in any direct geopolitical sense. What travels are procedures of intelligibility. The novella is built from miniaturized acts of political conversion. A revolution becomes a management problem. Equality becomes a principle that survives only through amendment. Labour becomes a test of loyalty. Memory becomes a contested archive. The enemy becomes most politically useful when absent. Development becomes a spectacle whose primary product is obedience. The ruler becomes credible by appropriating the habits of the old oppressor while narrating those habits as necessity. None of these operations requires a Soviet setting in order to remain readable. They belong to modern political domination more broadly and to imperial domination in particular wherever rule must narrate itself as protection, expertise, modernization, or emergency.

It is at this level that the Middle East enters the argument. The point is not that Orwell "foresaw" Iraq, Palestine, or the war on terror; such claims would be intellectually unserious and historically vain. The point is that U.S. hegemony in the region has repeatedly depended on exactly the kind of conversions the novella renders with satiric economy. Douglas Little's American Orientalism shows how the United States inherited and reconfigured older imperial habits of representing the Middle East as tutelary space: unstable, insufficiently modern, vulnerable to fanaticism, and therefore available to discipline in the name of order. Rashid Khalidi's

work on Palestine and on America's regional trajectory reveals how intervention is repeatedly narrated as stabilization while deepening asymmetry. Joseph Massad, in a different register, shows how liberal discourse manufactures its others by producing Islam and the Arab world as scenes of civilizational failure against which Western virtue can appear self-evident. These histories do not need Orwell in order to be understood. But Orwell's fable offers a way of reading their cultural logic at the level of form. It reveals how power becomes believable when it captures the very language that ought to expose it.

This is why the present essay speaks of allegorical grammar rather than allegorical map. A map promises location. Grammar governs relation. Maps tempt critics into equivalence; grammar forces attention to operations. It asks how the sentence of power is formed, what kinds of qualification convert prohibition into permission, what narrative tenses allow sacrifice to be postponed into virtue, and what kinds of repetition turn fear into common sense. Animal Farm matters because it writes those operations at the level of prose. If the novella can travel, it does so not because history repeats itself in crude visual duplication, but because domination recurrently depends on the same small linguistic mechanisms by which legitimacy is stolen from those who first produced it.

III. The Capture of Emancipation: Revolutionary Grammar and Internal Empire

Animal Farm begins by making exploitation morally intelligible before it makes revolt dramatically satisfying. Old Major's speech does not first ask the animals to hate; it asks them to understand the relation between labour and appropriation. Man is identified not simply as cruel but as the creature who consumes without producing, commands without working, and prospers by converting the animals' vitality into his own comfort (Orwell ch. 1). Orwell is careful here. Rebellion gains force because exploitation has been named as mediation: a class of beings stands between labour and life, extracting nourishment, time, and authority from those who actually sustain the world. The dream of emancipation that follows is therefore not abstractly egalitarian. It is a fantasy of restored immanence, a world in which what one produces and how one lives would no longer be separated by parasitic command.

The novella's political bleakness depends on taking that dream seriously. Too many cynical readings treat the early chapters as if their only function were to prepare a lesson in inevitable corruption. Orwell does something more uncomfortable. He allows collective exhilaration a brief but real presence. The harvest succeeds. The animals discover capacities in themselves that Jones's regime had only wasted. Work, for a moment, appears transformed by ownership and purpose (Orwell ch. 3). That temporary brightness matters because it makes clear what later domination must capture. Revolutions are not defeated only by repression from without. They are also defeated when the language, affect, and legitimacy generated by collective liberation are appropriated by those who learn to govern in its name.

The pigs' earliest victory is thus hermeneutic. Before they monopolize violence, they monopolize interpretation. The episode of the milk and apples is the novella's first completed lesson in ideological government. Squealer does not simply announce privilege; he narrates privilege as burden. The pigs, he says, do not even like milk and apples. They consume them unwillingly because "brainwork" is necessary to the farm's survival, and if the pigs fail in that duty, then Jones will return (Orwell ch. 3). The genius of the move lies in its structure. Inequality is not denied. It is moralized. Class differentiation enters the revolutionary order not as betrayal but as reluctant stewardship. Privilege is redescribed as the physiological condition of collective safety. At that moment, empire is already present in miniature. Rule no longer needs to justify itself by naked superiority; it justifies itself as protective intelligence.

What makes this scene powerful is not merely its satiric bite but its understanding of how hegemony begins. Althusser's notion of ideology as the material organization of lived relation is useful here. The pigs do not implant false ideas into otherwise untouched minds; they reshape the conditions under which experience can be interpreted. The animals know scarcity. They know vulnerability. They know that Jones once ruled them. Squealer does not invent those conditions. He arranges them into a syntax where criticism of emerging privilege appears indistinguishable from courting catastrophe. Fear is not the opposite of reason; it becomes reason's administered horizon. That is why the animals' first consent does not feel like surrender. It feels like prudence.
Spivak helps sharpen the violence of this transformation. Her distinction between representation as speaking-for and representation as re-presentation clarifies how power on the farm passes through a seizure of voice.

The animals are not silent in any simple sense. They chant, remember, hesitate, grumble, and sometimes object. But their experience counts politically only when it can be translated by those who claim to know what the collective really needs. Boxer's two maxims—I will work harder and Napoleon is always right—are the novella's most devastating examples of this seizure because they preserve sincerity while evacuating agency (Orwell chs. 3, 5). Boxer is not stupid; he is disciplined into a form of moral speech that can never become judgment. Clover perceives betrayal with greater subtlety, yet literacy and authority remain unevenly distributed, so that what she knows cannot quite become incontrovertible knowledge (ch. 6). Orwell's point is not that the masses are easily duped. It is harsher: domination becomes durable when the capacity to name reality is expropriated from those who live it most fully.

That expropriation also has a spatial and social form. The farmhouse is crucial not merely as symbol but as architecture. Once the pigs occupy it, they establish within the revolutionary order a protected interior from which interpretation can issue with the prestige of administration. The distance between rulers and ruled is no longer the overt distance between species under Jones; it is the internal distance between those who continue to work and those who increasingly manage, count, read, and decide. Here Bhabha's account of mimicry becomes unexpectedly clarifying. In colonial situations, mimicry names a relation of resemblance that is never simple imitation; it is a strategy through which authority reproduces itself by demanding likeness under conditions of asymmetry. In Animal Farm the process is inverted but no less revealing. The pigs consolidate local legitimacy by taking on the habits, spaces, and instruments of the human they overthrew. They sleep in beds, handle money, trade with men, drink alcohol, wear clothes, and eventually walk upright with whips (Orwell chs. 6, 8, 10). Resemblance is not a lapse from revolutionary purity. It is the very medium through which managerial power becomes legible as power.

That movement outward toward the human is what allows the fable to illuminate imperial formations in the Middle East without degenerating into cartoon. U.S. hegemony in the region has rarely functioned only as direct external command. It has depended on intermediary sovereignties, client architectures, local elites, military and bureaucratic classes, and regimes whose authority is exercised locally but stabilized within a wider imperial field. Khalidi's histories of Western and American power in the region, Little's study of American tutelary narratives, and Massad's critique of liberal political sorting all show, in different ways, that domination often survives by becoming native in appearance while remaining imperial in grammar. The pigs condense this process with terrible precision. They do not become foreign occupiers. They become internal rulers whose authority increasingly derives from their successful approximation of an older structure of mastery. What the animals lose, then, is not only equality. They lose the right to imagine that internal rule cannot itself become imperial.

The force of Animal Farm resides in how quietly this transformation occurs. There is no single coup that exhausts it. Instead there is amendment, explanation, necessity, fatigue. The revolution is not reversed in a spectacle of obvious betrayal; it is translated into a new regime of obligation. That is why the text remains so politically dangerous. It suggests that domination does not always arrive against emancipatory language. More often it learns to speak that language more fluently than those who first uttered it.

IV. Squealer's Sentence: Law, Exception, and the Imperial Production of Truth

If the pigs seize power by appropriating revolutionary legitimacy, they maintain it by mastering the sentence. Squealer is the novella's crucial political technician not because he lies flamboyantly, but because he administers the relation between memory and plausibility. Orwell's famous description of him as capable of turning black into white is often cited as shorthand for propaganda. The phrase deserves slower attention. It does not imply that reality disappears. It implies that contradiction can be made inhabitable. The farm does not cease to know hunger, labour, wounds, and death. What changes is the interpretive climate in which those experiences are narrated. Squealer's work consists in arranging words so that suffering can appear as proof of necessity, privilege as evidence of burden, and coercion as the natural extension of principle.

The sheep's chant intensifies this regime of managed speech. "Four legs good, two legs bad" is politically effective because it is prosodically stupid in the most strategic way possible: short, rhythmic, repeatable, and hostile to qualification. It is language purged of syntax in favour of beat. Later, when the slogan becomes "Four legs good, two legs better!" the revision is almost comically small, yet it performs the entire history of the farm

in one comparative adjective (Orwell chs. 3, 10). The chant has taught the animals to inhabit simplification so thoroughly that reversal can arrive as improvement. Orwell is not only satirizing propaganda; he is showing how metre can become a technology of obedience. Once politics is reduced to recitable sound, contradiction no longer appears as rupture. It arrives as a new refrain.

His most efficient instrument is repetition under the sign of fear. "Surely, comrades, you do not want Jones back?" is not merely a manipulative question; it is a machine for narrowing historical imagination (Orwell chs. 3, 5, 7). The phrase reduces politics to a forced choice between existing domination and the return of a prior horror. Critique is thereby converted into recklessness. One no longer has to show that current authority is just. One only has to stage every objection as complicity with catastrophe. Orwell understands the elegance of this mechanism. It is economical, endlessly reusable, and psychologically exhausting. It asks subjects not to love the regime, only to fear the alternative more. Hegemony at this point no longer depends on conviction in any robust sense. It depends on foreclosure.

The Commandments make this foreclosure visible at the level of writing itself. Their revision is one of Orwell's most brilliant formal inventions because it relocates tyranny from the scene of open lawlessness to the scene of amendment. "No animal shall sleep in a bed" becomes "No animal shall sleep in a bed with sheets" (Orwell ch. 6). "No animal shall drink alcohol" becomes "No animal shall drink alcohol to excess" (ch. 8). "No animal shall kill any other animal" becomes "No animal shall kill any other animal without cause" (ch. 8). Finally the entire promise of equality is condensed into the sentence that has survived the novel as political proverb: "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others" (ch. 10). These are not merely jokes about hypocrisy. They are a theory of legal form. Law does not disappear under domination; it becomes qualified until it ratifies the power that violates its apparent spirit. The miracle of exception is that it remains written as law.

Political theology offers a way of naming the force of these revisions. The sovereign, in Carl Schmitt's notorious formulation, is the one who decides the exception. Orwell's contribution is to show how exception can be laundered into ordinary syntax. The most terrible addition in the novella may be the phrase "without cause." It is grammatically modest and politically abyssal. Cause need never be defined in advance; it is simply whatever the rulers say it is after violence has already occurred. The animals are not asked to reject the commandment. They are taught to see killing as consistent with it. Here Squealer's labour converges with what David Spurr describes in The Rhetoric of Empire: the recurrent imperial habit of translating domination into the idioms of discipline, necessity, administration, and care. The sentence is not innocent description. It is the instrument by which violence acquires moral weather.

Said's Orientalism clarifies why this matters beyond the farm. Imperial power does not merely act upon territories and bodies; it produces explanatory frameworks in which those territories and bodies appear already knowable, already in need of management, already available to paternal violence. The altered Commandments belong to this broader archive of discursive production. Their job is not simply to conceal what the pigs do. Their job is to generate the reality in which what the pigs do becomes intelligible as prudence. Once the sentence changes, memory itself becomes unstable. Clover can feel that something has been lost, but the wall says otherwise, and the written law now stands against recollection. Authority thus wins twice: it changes the rule, then makes private memory answer to the revised text.

This is one of the places where Orwell becomes uncannily useful for thinking about U.S. power in the Middle East. American hegemony in the region has repeatedly required not only material force but lexical engineering. In Iraq, invasion was narrated as liberation and occupation as transition; in Palestine, dispossession and siege are continuously filtered through the vocabulary of security, self-defense, and process; across the region, allied repression is often redescribed as moderation, order, or counter-extremism. Butler's Frames of War shows how such naming practices structure which lives appear grievable and which deaths become administratively tolerable. Mbembe's necropolitics radicalizes this logic by showing that sovereignty is inseparable from the differential exposure of populations to death. What Orwell adds is a literary rendering of how these abstractions are experienced from below: not as coherent doctrine but as a series of syntactic adjustments through which one's own suffering becomes harder to describe in publicly legible terms.

The point is not that U.S. policy literally rewrites commandments on a barn wall. It is that imperial legality often works through the same procedure of qualified universals. Rights are universal, except where security

intervenes. Self-determination is a principle, except where regional order is threatened. Civilian protection is a norm, except where targets are embedded. Democracy is the stated horizon, except where electorates choose the wrong actors. The syntax of exception is familiar because it is structurally conservative: it preserves the prestige of principle while emptying principle into executive discretion. Animal Farm compresses that operation with a severity that many legal and policy discourses diffuse across jargon.

There is another reason Squealer matters. He is not simply a propagandist in the narrow sense of public messaging. He is the farm's manager of intelligibility. Statistics, explanations, memory corrections, enemy attributions, and moral intimidation all pass through him. He is therefore closer to a whole apparatus than to a single spokesperson. Orwell anticipates something crucial here: domination is most secure when truth becomes infrastructural rather than spectacular. Subjects need not be persuaded by every claim; they need only be separated from the conditions under which contradiction could become collective knowledge. Once that separation is achieved, private doubt persists but political refutation weakens. The farm is full of suspicion and nearly empty of counter-authority. That is not the failure of reason. It is the success of administered language.

V. Windmills, Emergency, and the Futures Empire Requires

If Squealer governs the present by controlling the sentence, the windmill governs the future by controlling desire. It is the novella's most elaborate object because it does more than symbolize industrial ambition. It reorganizes time. Under Snowball, the windmill belongs to a speculative horizon in which labour might eventually diminish and life might become less punishing. Under Napoleon, it becomes something harsher: a perpetually deferred project whose main political function is to make present sacrifice appear morally compulsory (Orwell chs. 5–8). The animals are not asked whether the future promised by the windmill is one they still recognize. They are told that fidelity to the future requires obedience now. Development thus appears not as collective flourishing but as a disciplinary temporality. The future ceases to be what emancipation opens and becomes what rule repeatedly withholds.

This transformation gives the windmill a significance that exceeds its Soviet industrial referent. Timothy Mitchell's Carbon Democracy is helpful here not because Orwell is writing about oil but because Mitchell shows how modern political orders are inseparable from material projects—energy systems, infrastructures, technical plans—that seem merely developmental while profoundly redistributing power. Infrastructure is never only material. It is also narrative. It permits states and imperial formations to organize populations around a promised modernity whose arrival is always partial, delayed, and conditional. Orwell's windmill works in exactly that register. It matters less for what it produces than for what it authorizes rulers to demand: more labour, more patience, more silence, more willingness to treat exhaustion as destiny.

The windmill's repeated destruction and reconstruction are therefore not accidents in the plot. They are constitutive of the regime's temporality. Failure does not discredit the project; failure intensifies attachment to it. The animals have already given so much that abandonment would feel like betrayal of their own sacrifice. Orwell understands the cruelty of sunk cost before the term existed. Once labour has been moralized, the future can be endlessly deferred because the act of waiting itself becomes evidence of loyalty. The project survives not because it works, but because it converts disappointment into renewed obligation. Development, in that sense, becomes spectacle in Guy Debord's stricter meaning: not mere visual display, but a social relation mediated by a promise that continually substitutes representation for restitution.

This temporal economy speaks with striking force to imperial formations in the Middle East. U.S. hegemony has repeatedly justified violence, occupation, alliance, and securitization through futures that remain perpetually unfinished: democracy in Iraq, peace through managed asymmetry in Palestine, modernization through militarized stability in the Gulf, regional security through endless preparedness. Khalidi's Resurrecting Empire tracks the way intervention has been narrated through uplift and order even as it reproduces dependency and vulnerability. Mitchell's work on oil makes clear that technical and developmental narratives are central to political authority in the region. Little shows how American tutelary fantasies merge civilizational judgment with strategic interest. The windmill helps bring these strands together because it condenses how imperial and neo-imperial regimes govern by monopolizing the right to define which future counts as realistic and which present injuries must be treated as regrettable but necessary installments toward it.

Yet the future alone does not secure obedience. It must be paired with crisis. Snowball's political

usefulness begins after his expulsion. Once absent, he becomes infinitely available. Every broken window, every failed harvest, every unexplained difficulty can be attributed to his sabotage (Orwell ch. 7). The enemy becomes stronger as an explanatory figure than he ever was as a political rival. What matters is not whether the charge is believed in a literal sense. What matters is that it provides a reusable grammar through which contingency can be narrated as threat. Orwell here writes the anatomy of permanent emergency. The regime does not simply respond to crisis. It metabolizes crisis into routine legitimacy.

That mechanism has obvious analogues in the post-9/11 order and in the longer securitization of the Middle East. The war on terror did not merely identify enemies; it installed a political atmosphere in which exception could become durable administration. The category of threat grew elastic enough to absorb entire populations, legal norms, and territorial arrangements. Butler's account of framing shows how this atmosphere depends on differential recognizability: some populations appear as lives in need of mourning, others as background conditions of war. Mbembe's necropolitics names the sovereign privilege at work when entire spaces are governed through managed exposure to death. Animal Farm does not offer a sociology of these formations, but it does reveal the cultural logic by which emergency becomes ordinary. Once danger is ambient, criticism can always be redescribed as irresponsibility. Justice yields to management.

The purges in Orwell's novella belong to this same logic. Their function is not only punitive. They are theatrical confirmations that the regime alone can identify cause, guilt, and necessity. Forced confession collapses the distance between accusation and truth; public killing turns violence into pedagogy. What the animals learn is not simply fear. They learn that reality itself now arrives through ritualized declaration. This is why the revised Commandment matters so much: "without cause" does not merely justify prior killings. It installs a horizon in which future killings are already potentially legitimate (Orwell ch. 8). Empire often works in precisely this anticipatory tense. The target is dangerous because it may become dangerous; the population is punishable because threat is presumed rather than demonstrated; security is invoked not as response but as perpetual authorization.

The windmill and the emergency apparatus ultimately belong to the same political form. Both govern through deferral. One postpones justice into a promised future; the other postpones its arrival because the present is declared too dangerous for ordinary judgment. Between them, the animals are trapped in a regime where life is consumed by what has not yet come and by what is said never to cease. This is one of Orwell's sharpest insights into the cultural logic of domination. Empires do not survive by force alone. They survive by seizing the timetable of hope and the timetable of fear, until subjects can imagine neither a future outside rule nor a present in which rule may be judged by standards other than survival.

VI. The Farmhouse Window: Mimicry, Proxy Sovereignty, and the Limits of Allegorical Transfer

The final scene gathers the novella's dispersed procedures into a problem of vision. Looking through the farmhouse window, the animals see pigs dining with men, trading jokes, handling cards, and finally becoming impossible to distinguish from their former antagonists (Orwell ch. 10). The scene is often reduced to the obvious moral that power corrupts. Orwell's image is more exact. Corruption is only the visible outcome. The deeper event is the collapse of legible difference between revolutionary authority and the form of rule it once named as external domination. What the animals confront is not simply treason. They confront a political order in which emancipation has been so completely administered that its rulers now appear most authoritative when they resemble the older masters from whom legitimacy was first stolen.

Bhabha's account of mimicry clarifies the scene's force. Mimicry is never mere copying. It is a relation in which authority is stabilized by resemblance that remains formally incomplete yet politically effective. The colonized subject is asked to become almost the same, but not quite; colonial authority depends on this unstable nearness. Orwell's scene inverts the direction without losing the structure. The pigs do not become human in any biological sense. They become recognizably ruler-like by approximating the gestures, speech, and decorum of the human order they once denounced. The effect is not comic but constitutional. Their sovereignty has matured into legibility for power's older grammar. Rule now appears complete because its outward signs no longer carry the stigma of revolutionary improvisation.

This is where the novella becomes especially suggestive for thinking about U.S. hegemony in the Middle East. Imperial power in the region has often depended not on direct annexation but on architectures of proxy

sovereignty: states, regimes, authorities, and administrative classes that remain formally local while entering deep alignment with wider systems of military, economic, and diplomatic control. Such arrangements should not be reduced to puppet theatre; they possess their own histories, interests, and coercive capacities. Yet the concept of proxy sovereignty helps clarify a recurring imperial ambition: to make external power effective without requiring constant external visibility. The farmhouse dinner condenses that ambition with startling economy. Power no longer needs to appear foreign in order to preserve foreign-sponsored order. It has become internal to the scene of governance.

The Middle East offers many versions of this logic, though not one uniform instance of it. Khalidi's analyses of Palestine and America's regional role, Little's account of tutelary alliance, and Massad's critique of liberal sorting all demonstrate that U.S. hegemony often operates through regimes of alignment rather than through uninterrupted occupation alone. Security coordination, aid dependencies, diplomatic shielding, military infrastructures, reconstruction contracts, and developmental expertise produce a field in which formal sovereignty and effective autonomy do not necessarily coincide. Animal Farm makes this condition visible not by supplying a political diagram but by dramatizing a perceptual crisis: the subject looking from outside can no longer tell where local rule ends and inherited domination begins.

Yet this is also the point at which allegorical ambition must encounter its limit. If the novella is pressed too confidently into Middle Eastern history, the result will be a flattening that postcolonial criticism should refuse. Iraq is not Palestine. Settler colonialism is not identical to client authoritarianism. Gulf monarchies, occupation regimes, insurgencies, sanctions, counterterror wars, and petro-political infrastructures do not belong to one seamless narrative, and to speak of "the Middle East" as if it did would repeat the very orientalist homogenization that Said taught critics to resist. Animal Farm intensifies this danger because its satiric economy thrives on compression. The farm is closed, species are few, motives are streamlined, and the narrative's power comes partly from its willingness to simplify. That willingness is literarily productive and historically dangerous. For that reason, the proper use of allegory here is disciplinary rather than imperial. Allegory should not govern the history to which it is applied; history should test the allegory's reach. The relation must remain asymmetrical in favour of regional specificity. What Orwell gives us is not a theory large enough to master the Middle East, but a set of formal cues that sharpen attention to certain imperial procedures: the localization of external power, the capture of emancipatory rhetoric, the juridical normalization of violence, the rule of managed emergency, and the production of futures that ask the dominated to consent to their own postponement. Once the reading exceeds those procedures and begins to claim total explanatory power, it forfeits the critical scruple that made it defensible.

This limitation is not a weakness to be apologized for after the fact. It is the condition under which the essay's argument acquires intellectual credibility. Animal Farm is useful precisely because it is not adequate to the histories beside which it is read. Its insufficiency keeps the critic from confusing literary form with historical totality. Said's contrapuntal method depends on such insufficiency. Text and history do not merge into a single mastered field; they interrupt one another. Orwell's fable sharpens the imperial logic of resemblance, exception, and tutelary violence. Middle Eastern history returns the favour by exposing what the fable cannot contain: colonial genealogies that exceed Cold War frames, internal fractures irreducible to farm unanimity, and forms of resistance far more heterogeneous than Orwell's compressed satire can permit. The goal, then, is not to make the novella larger than history. It is to let literary form estrange the official prose of empire long enough that history becomes newly legible against it.

VII. Analytical Findings: What the Fable Makes Legible

Four major findings follow from this reading. First, Animal Farm remains politically potent because it is procedurally precise. Its afterlife does not rest on the crude portability of characters, but on the portability of mechanisms. Orwell isolates the small operations by which domination reproduces itself after the moment of seizure: privilege narrated as stewardship, fear narrated as prudence, law revised by qualification, labour moralized into sacrifice, and resemblance to former rulers translated into mature authority. These are not timeless abstractions. They are recurrent forms through which modern power, including imperial power, makes itself livable and often admirable to those it diminishes.

Second, the novella offers a particularly sharp account of imperial temporality. The windmill reveals

that domination does not only seize bodies and institutions; it colonizes the future. Populations are governed through promises whose repeated deferral becomes part of their disciplinary force. This insight matters for the Middle East, where democratization, reconstruction, modernization, and security have so often operated as futures that legitimize present violence while remaining structurally postponed. Animal Farm renders that logic in miniature. It shows how the future can become the ruler's most renewable instrument.

Third, Orwell's fable makes visible the intimacy between external domination and internal rule. The pigs succeed not by abolishing the human grammar of power but by inheriting and localizing it. The final indistinguishability of pig and man therefore illuminates a wider imperial truth: domination is often most durable when it appears in local dress. Read against U.S. hegemony in the Middle East, the scene clarifies why proxy sovereignty, client management, and aligned ruling classes matter so much. Empire need not always arrive as overt occupation; it can become ordinary through convergences of security, capital, expertise, and political style.

Fourth, the novella confirms that language is not ancillary to force but constitutive of it. Squealer's revisions, the Commandments' amendments, and the repeated invocation of danger show that discourse does not merely justify domination after the fact. It prepares the conditions under which domination becomes thinkable, legal, and emotionally bearable. Here Orwell stands in productive tension with postcolonial and critical theorists of empire. Said, Butler, Mbembe, Spurr, and Massad help explain the larger representational and necropolitical architectures of rule. Orwell supplies something different but no less necessary: a literary anatomy of how those architectures feel at the level of ordinary perception, damaged memory, and shrinking political speech.

These findings do not eliminate the limits of allegorical transfer. On the contrary, they specify the scale at which transfer remains defensible. Animal Farm cannot contain the Middle East, and any reading that asks it to do so will merely substitute literary mastery for historical understanding. What the novella can do is disturb the official idioms through which empire narrates itself. It can make certain familiar claims—security, order, moderation, reconstruction, necessity—sound once again like what they often are: the polished prose in which coercive asymmetries seek moral shelter.

VIII. When Empire Changes Its Accent

What Animal Farm finally offers is not a prophecy but a method of hearing. The novella teaches readers to attend to the moments when power begins to speak in a borrowed moral register: when liberation becomes the justification for hierarchy, when law survives only by being qualified into uselessness, when the future is held hostage to sacrifice, and when violence acquires the grammar of protection. Read postcolonially, the text does not reveal a hidden Middle East inside Orwell's barn. It reveals something more unsettling: that imperial power often survives historical transformation by altering tone before it alters structure. It changes vocabulary, allies, scenery, and administrative form, yet preserves the underlying sentence by which domination is narrated as necessity.

This is why the farmhouse window matters so much. The scene is not only a revelation of hypocrisy; it is a revelation of political style. The animals see that the new rulers have learned the old order's accent so perfectly that opposition can no longer rely on visible difference. That insight remains urgent in a region where U.S. hegemony has repeatedly been disavowed even as it has been institutionalized through bases, alliances, occupations, client regimes, legal exceptions, and developmental promises. Empire does not need to resemble its nineteenth-century forms in order to persist. It only needs to preserve the authority to decide whose fear counts, whose future matters, whose death is grievable, and which violences may be renamed as order.

At the same time, the value of Orwell's novella lies partly in what it cannot do. It cannot replace historical analysis, regional expertise, or the painstaking differentiation demanded by Middle Eastern histories. Its compression is both its brilliance and its limit. A responsible postcolonial reading therefore uses the fable not as a sovereign explanation but as a disruptive device. It interrupts the official prose of imperial legitimacy. It makes familiar justifications sound strained again. It returns politics to language at the precise moment when policy discourse tries to present language as transparent.

To read Animal Farm after the Cold War, then, is not to rescue Orwell for one side of a geopolitical argument. It is to insist that literary form can still expose the cultural logic by which domination persuades,

qualifies, amends, and normalizes itself. Long after its original referent, the novella continues to matter because it knows that power rarely abolishes ideals outright. It learns to conjugate them. Once criticism can hear that conjugation, empire becomes harder to mistake for order.

IX. Declaration of the Use of AI

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