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CHRONOTOPE OF UTOPIA: A BAKHTINIAN READING IN GEORGE ORWELL'S *ANIMAL FARM* (1945)

Abstract

This article uses Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of chronotope and carnivalesque to offer a reading of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. The aim of this article is to explore the shared context that influenced the two writers and yielded ways of approaching the Soviet Union and its politics. Circumventing the state censorious practices and contesting the Stalinist regime rather in an indirect engagement, Bakhtin studied the satiric genres and identified the subversive power of the medieval carnivals in which a temporary suspension of temporal hierarchies is enacted in attempt to use history to discretely entice revolutionary sentiments in the Soviets. Similarly, not only to avoid the precarious repercussions of a direct engagement with British foreign diplomacy, Orwell's chose the beast fable, which is intended to be satirical but also, as this article argues, in alignment with Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque. It is not only employed in the form of the fable genre, but in the exercise of carnival rituals by the farm animals that take on the role of the humans to manage their affairs in a Marxist manner. Furthermore, this article examines the concept of chronotope to allow for creating an intricate relationship between space and time in a given reality

and define a historical moment in the reality of the barn. It initially and satirically becomes a chronotope of utopia which does not last long to turn into a dystopian spatiality in which the fair and equitable society that has been earlier promised gets replaced by an authoritarian rule. This shows that Bakhtin's concepts of chronotope and carnivalesque in *Animal Farm* move the dialects of capitalism and socialism to a satiric genre meant to transcend its value of universality.

Keywords: Mikhail Bakhtin, chronotope, carnivalesque, George Orwell, *Animal Farm*, Soviet Union

1. Introduction

A link between the Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin and the novelist George Orwell could at first glance be of some surprise. The perspectives and outlooks of the two writers differed significantly, and their intellectual and literary lives seem not to have a major overlap. In the Western literary canon, Orwell has long been acclaimed to be an anti-Soviet Union author against a “perverted” Soviet version of socialism, notably in his major works *Animal Farm* (1945) and *1984* (1948). In the initial stages of formulation of the essence of this article, which attempts to read Orwell's fable *Animal Farm* in the light of Bakhtin's theory of humor and its subversive nature, a relevance of the proposal was perceived with regard to the power of laughter in the suspension of a hierarchal structure and norms of a society in a given interconnectedness of space and time, as can be seen in the Orwell's fable. John Reed, the author of *Snowball's Chance* (2002), a parody and sequel to *Animal Farm*, has, however, recently discovered that *Animal Farm* is entrenched in a folkloric Russian tradition and that Orwell's major works were inspired by the Russians, having pointed out the similarities between *1984* and Alexander Chayanov's *The Journey of my Brother Alexei to the Land of Peasant Utopia* (1920), both set in 1984. Reed further writes that *Animal Farm* was heavily inspired by *Animal Riots*, written by the founder of the Ukrainian national resistance Nikolai Kostomarov and first published in 1920. Kostomarov highlights the “conceptual equivalencies” between the two texts: they are both allegories about revolution in the form of a farmyard story in which a group of animals revolts against the farmer, but this effort amounts to nothing less than an utter failure. In *The Never End*, Reed relates the paragraphs verbatim, to almost paint Orwell as a plagiarist, whose apparent intention was to write a revisionist novella (101).

Despite his attempts to link Orwell either to those speaking Russian or being interested in the Russian culture within his own coterie, Orwell's connection to

Bakhtin, however, remained unexplored in Reed's research in *The Never End* (91). Nonetheless, Reed notes that Orwell was opaque about the way he sourced his book, attributing this to his journalistic method of researching and "pillaging." Orwell admitted that the idea for *Animal Farm*, intended to be written as a story to expose the Soviet myth, was inspired subsequent to Orwell's return from Spain, being related to a boy beating a donkey, unaware of its strength. Reed confirms that this scene is in fact a reworking of an episode from Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (136). This research's starting point is what forms a pertinent link between Bakhtin, who admired Dostoevsky's use of polyphony, in which multiple voices and perspectives coexist, reflecting complex human experiences and ideologies in his 1929 work *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, and Orwell, who incorporated a distinctly Dostoevskian style of heteroglossia and dialogism in *Animal Farm*. Loraine Saunders indicated this experimental overlap, reiterating that "where Dostoevsky seeks to proliferate meaning, Orwell seeks, rather soberly and conversely, to fasten meaning to the mooring of a distinct authorial consciousness" (5).

The fable as a genre is known for its inherently moralistic nature and didactic leaning through overtly symbolic attachment and discursive diversity: the issues that form the essence of Bakhtin's notion of novelistic discourses on polyphony and dialogism. Such notions have been extended to Biblical apologues to emphasize a dynamic multiplicity of voices and representational truth yielded by the form (Rawson; Aschkenasy 437; Garcia-Treto 47). This discursive multiplicity, however, is understood as a method of carnivalizing the text, by which a literal meaning (i.e., the heteroglossial one) is relinquished by a hidden but polyglossial discourse, and therefrom a moral is induced. Bettina Fischer's "Bakhtin's Carnival and the Gospel of Luke" explores a narrative strategy in the Gospel of Luke using Bakhtin's idea of the carnivalesque, arguing that "the Gospel is thoroughly carnivalized, making use of the dialogizing tool of both *syncretism*, or a comparison of contraries, and *anacrisis* in the presentation of various scenes as well as in Jesus' teaching" (35). As pointed out by Egon Schwarz in his essay "Kafka's Animal Tales and the Tradition of the European Fable," what remains in these fables, however, is "nothing bestial but only human," enabling us to perceive our "own situation, [our] own real desires and weaknesses with sudden clarity in the displacement onto the related but somehow inferior animals" (82).

Animal Farm undeniably transcends a narrow scope of the conventional Biblical and Aesopian parables. The direction of a moralistic and conservative

viewpoint is subdued by the breadth of political history embracing a wide range of perspectives within the fable. Morris Dickstein rightly argued that *Animal Farm* qualifies as political art through which Orwell offered “a model for an extended narrative on larger questions of human society” (135). *Animal Farm* is less concerned about the outcome of a historical Revolution or the overt message than with the canniness of a system that ensnares both the commoners and the intellectuals, with its foundational intent to reveal the subtlety and complicity of the intellectual’s role in facilitating the way for an autocratic ascension and refusal to condemn the outright or punish the forces of evil, aiming to instead expose the machinery of perpetuation of this kind of power in a Hegelian paradigm of history. Unlike traditional fables, *Animal Farm* thus avoids dictating a single moral lesson but attempts to historicize a reality in an allegorical form while remaining susceptible to a spectrum of creative (mis)interpretations.

Hereby, Bakhtin emerges as a direct authority behind the information about a chronotopic comprehension of *Animal Farm*, which is a quintessentially dystopian novel presenting an authoritarian world from an animal-centric perspective. Most literature on the dystopian novel emphasizes the role of a chronotopic memory, both personal and collective, and how it is always sabotaged by a totalitarian rule. Carter Hanson argues that, in dystopian novels such as Orwell’s *1984*, “totalitarian regimes maintain power over their subjects in part by controlling their experience and understanding of history and time,” making the past a “heterodox reality” that ought to be eliminated from the individual and collective memory (45). Liisa Steinby argues that the word “reality” is anchored in the (mis)understanding of Bakhtin’s concept of the chronotope as “a form of experience and of representation,” quoting Roderick Beaton’s definition of the chronotope as “the distinctive configuration of time and space that defines ‘reality’ within the world of the text, as conceptualized within that world itself” (“Bakhtin’s Concept” 107). However, what makes *Animal Farm* distinguishable from the classical “retrotopian” dystopias such as *1984* is that the idealized past is simply absent in the current collective chronotopic memory. This probably has to do with the imperatives of animal dystopias, which are quintessentially focused on “peripheral” consciousness, not on the logical boundaries of human memory, simultaneously encapsulating the consciousness of animals and the experientiality of humans.¹

200 ¹ For detailed studies on animal minds in dystopian fiction, see Norledge.

As a fable with a largely incidental presence, *Animal Farm* defies John Simons's classification of anthropomorphism (unlike those by Aesop), trivial anthropomorphism, in which the animals are portrayed as humans, without an aim to convey any specific moral insights or lessons, or strong anthropomorphism, which portrays the animals in human roles to highlight the differences between the human and nonhuman experiences or examines a degree to which these entities differ (119–20). *Animal Farm* therefore hybridizes the fable and strong anthropomorphism to induce an anthropomorphic representation concerned with an anthropocentric worldview without having the novel begin *in media res*, which is characterized as a basic formula of the dystopian storyline (Stock 8). This kind of dissimilarity is due to a polyphonic and dialogic dimension, which underpins the world of the text, leaving it with unfinalizability and openness to a myriad of potentialities. Such understanding moves *Animal Farm* from a story for children or a polemic to an anthropomorphic animal narrative by definition, responding to the dramatic changes. Saija Isomaa qualifies it as an “intellectual genre that calls for analytic thinking and catalyse[s] critical perceptions of society and its political and ideological tendencies” (3).

Orwell clearly used these terms to retell the history for obvious reasons (like Bakhtin), as detailed below through a space-time intersection, or through a chronotope configured in a narrative setting to correspond to the chronotope of the real world. James Lawson insightfully argues that such treatments of narrative chronotopes are the “bridges that engage with the parallel space-time frames in the real world,” rejecting a sharp divide between history and the fictional narrative (Lawson 387).

Despite the dialogic Dostoevskian nature of *Animal Farm*, the pertinence of Bakhtin's study of humor in *Rabelais and His World* (1965) to Orwell's fable cannot be ignored. In *Animal Farm*, a medieval tradition of the carnivalesque that Bakhtin highlighted in *Rabelais* is restored to replace a rituality of socialism with a carnivalized chronotope populated by the talking animals. This particular usage of the fable, Bakhtin notes, was employed in the seventeenth and eighteenth fable as the “parodies of wills,” such as “The Pig's Will,” “The Will of the Ass,” and other comic animal epics to replace the ecclesiastical imposition of biblical fables (*Rabelais and His World* 85). However, what characterizes the twentieth-century fable genre is its heightened complexity to project a relationship not only between the imaginative and the real but also a rebellious unconsciousness and a controlled consciousness. Sheila Roberts describes this

complexity and argues that “such stories have become infused with skepticism, irony, self-mockery, and a despair knotted with defiance” (67). The basis of this article is how Orwell manages to describe a moment in which the physics of the real world is suspended to be replaced by another spatiotemporal form of nascence to enact human action in an alignment with the politics of the external world. As indicated by Alastair Renfrew, Bakhtin’s idea of the carnivalesque is a continuation of the chronotope, emphasizing a state of “becoming” and the “process of how a person becomes the other” (129).

2. Bakhtin and Orwell in Context: Dialogic Readings

Both Bakhtin and Orwell have long suffered from a draconian exercise of censorship. To negotiate such complications, Bakhtin embarked on a study of satiric genres and wrote his famous book *Rabelais and His World* as a response to a decline of freedom and rapid Stalinization of the Soviet Union and its folklore. In the book, Bakhtin argues that, during the Renaissance, the new practices repressed not only certain qualities of the body but also of the language and catalyzed the emergence of carnivals, which he implicitly compares with the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin. Bakhtin chose François Rabelais because “the possibility of expressing in literature the popular, chthonian impulse to carnival” is most obviously apparent (*Rabelais and His World* xxi). An assent of carnivals in such a restrictive orthodoxy served to maintain a real power struggle, so carnival had temporal and spatial boundaries to negotiate those of the State. Therefore, Bakhtin’s vision of carnival is not only that of a safety valve for passions but also that of a festivity that can be directly turned into a revolution, of freedom and courage to establish a new order even if it is temporary, and this is what forms the idea of the chronotopic order of festivals. Renfrew observes that Bakhtin, through the retold history of Rabelais, highlighted the role of carnivalized literature “to oppose official truth,” replacing a socialist realistic mode of policed literary expression with the one rooted in the traditions of grotesque realism and organized around a dynamic power of laughter (131).

However, despite the essential differences between Bakhtin’s social history and Orwell’s novel, there are similarities in how both writers used language to subvert the ideologized reality. Both employed satire as a fundamental tool to write the critiques of historical and fictional realities through the potency of humor, an approach which not only highlights their aptitude of blending entertainment with a critique but which also underscores the transformative power

of laughter as a means to challenge and expose the absurdities and injustices of their respective times. Indeed, the observation that both texts written during the era of Stalinist terror share the characteristic of being “open” is insightful. This openness allows them to be filled with various meanings that not only reflect their own historical context but also extend beyond it, resonating with universal themes and concerns.

On one level, both Bakhtin’s and Orwell’s works are parables, or even guide-books, tied to their spatiotemporal contexts, and are therefore perplexing because they do not explicitly reference their association with the Soviet intellectual and political history. On another level, they offer an intellectually oriented interpretation in a valiant effort to bring the past worlds of Rabelais and the fable back into political works. The word *intelligentsia* originated in the Soviet Union and is best defined by Karl Mannheim in *Ideology and Utopia*: “In every society there are social groups whose special task is to provide an interpretation of the world for that society. We call these the ‘intelligentsia’” (9).

Subsequent to numerous failed attempts to publish *Animal Farm*, in the Preface to the original edition Orwell suggests that “the prevailing orthodoxy is an uncritical admiration of the Soviet regime” (6). For him, this created a tendency to treat Stalin as sacrosanct and exposed a cowardice to reveal the truth about the regime, as some officials claimed that the book would harm the British relations with the Soviet Union. Hence, these works are no longer restricted to a contextually defined chronotope, or to what Steinby terms a “heterochronic” chronotope (107), but to a universal one, characterized by a multitude and simultaneity of chronotopes, in which each requires its own way of construction, interpretation and time-space existence.²

What is strikingly similar between Bakhtin and Orwell is that they worked through their own experiences of revolution, which tethers their writings inextricably to the politics of their times. Their texts provided conceptual categories for the assistance of others, finding themselves in a similar position between different realities. These chronotopic determinants are created through a specific mode of language which encompasses a dialogic *weltanschauung*, as opposed to an exercised monologic sense of truth, and this is the essence of Bakhtin’s approach to the novelistic writings as a whole. In the foreword to Bakhtin’s *The*

² For an in-depth discussion of the different types of chronotopes, see Morson and Emerson 232.

Dialogic Imagination (1981), Michael Holquist asserts that Bakhtin offers “a highly distinctive concept of language,” a concept that has as its a priori objective the facilitation of an almost Manichean sense of opposition and struggle at the heart of existence—that is, a ceaseless battle between the centrifugal forces that seek to keep the things apart and the centripetal forces “that strive to make things cohere” (xviii). This is where the meanings come to be and where they could even be seen at the center of European carnivals, in which the fixed hierarchal boundaries were joyously inverted, while the official culture was opposed without objection.

Bakhtin responds to the given context with the term *heteroglossia* and links it to all of his projects on *polyphony* and *carnivalization* (Hirschkop 139). This overemphasizes the power of a particular context in which the text is made, creating a full distortion of its meaning if it is conceived dialogically, independent of context. Robyn McCallum likens the language in a particular context to the genre of the novel, as they are “structured by an interaction between monologic and dialogic forces” (17). Similarly, Renfrew notes that the novel is a vehicle of “dialogized heteroglossia” replayed in terms of “receptivity to the carnival spirit and grotesque realism” (140). Therefore, the novel, for Bakhtin, is a text liberated from monologism (such as the epic), which is “associated with the hegemony of authorial control” and celebrates dialogism “with the relinquishing of authorial control” (McCallum 17). This makes the novel inherently true to a heteroglot reality that opposes “the official story of the world’s elites” (Lawson 388).

As a satirical parodic text, *Animal Farm*, on the other hand, does not indulge in a unidimensional, official political voice but in a plethora of unmerged voices, disallowing a simple rendering of Orwell’s political thinking. This has drawn a wide range of responses and readings, which reflect the complexity of placing Orwell within a distinct political movement. C. J. Fusco argues that Orwell can be easily misinterpreted and aligned with the politics of the left and of the right alike (12–13). In 2010, Craig Carr similarly suggested that the text has been subject to an expropriatory project that aims to affiliate with a particular mode of political thinking. Carr demonstrated the readings of the text that differed from a traditional one, which supposed that Orwell offered more than a satirical account of the Russian revolution, and these ranged from the elitist reading, emphasizing a Platonic need for social organization, to a liberal fatalistic reading, which placed no faith in the proletariat and confirmed that such a revolution is unavoidably doomed to fail (59–84). Taken together, these perusals position

Animal Farm as a political novel different from the naturalistic fiction typical of the twentieth century but, as argued by Thomas Ricks, reflect “reality more directly than conventional novels often do” (49).

The polyphonic nature of *Animal Farm* allows a latent power of the employed language to subtly create multiple realities and space to be observed through eristic strategies, aiming to subvert what is seen on the surface of the official monologic worldview. In his essay “Why I Write,” Orwell describes his journey to becoming a writer whose biggest ambition is to turn political writings into art. He admits that his motives, as with any other writer, were fueled by a “political purpose,” as writing in general aims to “push the world in a certain direction, to alter other people’s idea of the kind of society that they should strive after” (*Collection of Essays* 312–13). These dialogic realities of a text are consciously established on a sort of implied dichotomization: the text’s intended meaning dichotomizes its symptomatic meaning.

This mirrors the tenet of Bakhtin’s “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity” (1990, written around 1920–23), in which he theorizes that a literary work is made up of a hero with ethical acts and experiences and an author from whom the aesthetics are derived. This is often a dialogic process with a carnivalized energy to move the language of a text from the orderly surface into a more altered discursive realm. It is based on identifying “literature, and indeed all discourse, with rhetoric in ways that imply that rhetorical deception (including self-deception) is a necessary part of every use of language” (Harris 7). Here, self-deception is a common practice between those participating in carnivals and reading a text. A desire to change and expose a corrupt institution or belief is at the heart of both the text and the carnival. Orwell states that what encouraged him to write was that “there is some lie, and I want to expose, some facts to which I want to draw attention, and my initial concern is to get a hearing” (*Collection of Essays* 319). This hearing can be achieved by implanting a polyphonic sense of the world in which parallel realities are launched, but the one which is forecast supersedes the one which is propaganda-oriented.

Animal Farm is seen as a turning point in Orwell’s relationship with the problematics of language. He admits that it “was the first book in which [he] tried, with full consciousness of what [he] was doing, to fuse political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole” (*Collection of Essays* 189). Such a dialogizing force of the language must be artistically crafted to deliver on its po-

litical agendas. This thought later evolved into the invention of Newspeak in 1984 as the official language of Oceania, used as a tool by the Party to attempt to control thought and therefore action. A deliberate equivocation of the political language in *Animal Farm* becomes dangerously corrupted to the extent that it suffocates the ideas and progress in a nation. In his essay "Politics and the English Language," Orwell asserts: "If thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought" (*Collection of Essays* 189). He demonstrates the validity of such an idea in the invention of Newspeak, illustrating how dictatorial governments systematically use language to constrain the ideas, rather than to broaden them. Similarly, in *Animal Farm*, the Seven Commandments lose their political vitality, becoming devoid of a literal meaning and dangerously turned into a tool of exploitation and control over other animals.

It can be concluded that both Bakhtin and Orwell have recognized the profound impact of language and its capacity to foster dialogue. Bakhtin perceived the language as a vehicle to reveal the dialogic rather than the monologic nature of the world, which can subvert the singularity of thought and optimistically foster change and resistance. By contrast, Orwell viewed the language more pessimistically, noting its ability to impose one reality over another. In *Animal Farm*, language becomes a tool for sloganeering and dogmatism, stripped of any quality that leads to truth, serving, on the contrary, as a mere instrument of ideology. This understanding reveals the differing perspectives of both writers on how language shapes societal discourse. Bakhtin, living under a totalitarian regime, saw language as a potential hope for liberation. Despite his critical stance, Orwell appeared somewhat reconciled with the established order and highlighted the risks language poses, especially to the British liberal intellectuals, who seek political change and reform. Their exploration underscores the relationship between space, time, and language as a critical site for understanding the dynamics of discourse, which will be further explored in the following section.

3. The Chronotope of "Becoming" in *Animal Farm*

The concept of the chronotope, defined by Bakhtin in the "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," indicates "the inter-intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (*Dialogic Imagination* 84). For Bakhtin, a traditional literary use of setting as the place and time in which a story is told is not sufficient to describe a way
206 in which the temporal spatiality of a literary world is conceptualized. Therefore,

the chronotope provides a strategic repositioning of the story within its given spatiality, since it functions as

the organizing center for the fundamental events of the novel. The chronotope is the place where knots of narrative are tied and untied. It can be said without qualification that to them belongs the meaning that shapes narrative. (*Dialogic Imagination* 250)

In Bakhtin's view, the significance of chronotope lies in the process of meaning-making, in which it organizes and concretizes information by "giving flesh and blood" to the "dry information and communicated facts" (*Dialogic Imagination* 250). In principle, Bakhtin (1981, 250) characterizes that the chronotope

emerges as a center for concretizing representation, as a force giving body to the entire novel. All the novel's abstract elements—philosophical and social generalizations, ideas, analyses of cause and effect—gravitate toward the chronotope and through it takes on flesh and blood, permitting the imaging power of art to do its work. (*Dialogic Imagination* 250)

Admittedly, the term *chronotope* has since remained an enigmatic label characterized by a mercurial nature. Nele Bemong and Pieter Borghart argue that there is a lack of analytical precision "which led scholars to use a plethora of different terms to designate as chronotopes" (6). This terminological imprecision allows characterization of the barn as a motivic chronotope as defined by Bart Keunen as "four-dimensional mental image[s], combining the three spatial dimensions with the time structure of temporal action" (421). In this light, the barn may be an application in which an ideological totality of space is formed and where events occur to a worldview through experimenting with the combination of time and space to "mirror" an external reality that ceases to be characterized by ideological stagnation but is driven by a "chronotopic configuration" that permeates the narrative (Bemong and Borghart 9).

It may in fact be useful to steer away from the reading of the chronotope of ancient fiction, applied to highlight the affinity of the history of the novel and the poetics of the genre, reducing it to the comparability of the ancient epic to the English novel (Beaton 2010). Divorcing such a chronotopic application from this historical tradition allows retention of a postmodern reading of the relational construct of time and space to yield an alternative worldview, more compatible with a transitory and catastrophic nature of dystopia. After being

overcome by a new convergence of space and time, or by a “threshold chronotope,” the barn carries its vital/official energy no longer (Lawson 389), allowing for the emergence of a new dimension to the experience of the anthropomorphic animals. This chronotope is “realized” only in terms of action and change in the natural world to constitute the events (Holquist 159). Consequently, the barn does not just serve as a backdrop but acts as a locality of centrifugal flux that disrupts and reshapes the ideological discourse, enabling the expression and representation of unmerged voices. This has to do with what Steinby called a “chairological” time, the right moment of action (120).

The allegoric/folkloric reworking of the Soviet sociohistorical context is necessary in both the emergence and comprehension of the chronotope. In his “Concluding Remarks” to the chronotope essay, Bakhtin writes about an intricate association between a work of art and its sociohistorical contexts:

The work and the world represented in it enter the real world and enrich it, and the real world enters the work and its world as part of the process of its creation, as well as part of its subsequent life, in a continual renewing of the work through the creative perception of listeners and readers. Of course, this process of exchange is itself chronotopic: it occurs first and foremost in the historically developing social world, but without ever losing contact with changing historical space. We might even speak of a special *creative* chronotope inside which this exchange between work and life occurs, and which constitutes the distinctive life of the work. (*Dialogic Imagination* 254)

“The social process of adaptation,” as Collington interprets this passage, is to rewrite “a familiar story according to existing social, cultural, and aesthetic norms [in which] the adaptor ensures it subsequent life in a new context” (179). Here, the chronotopic structure is meant to situate the story in a more accessible setting, albeit allegorical, in which the way that a new expression of an idealized system with a highly revered set of values is envisioned to be actualized by virtue of the convergence of a given time and a particular space. Collington rightfully argued that the chronotope in adaptation theory played a central role and qualified to be a “heuristic tool” to “examine not only the obvious shifting of the temporo-spatial setting of a given story, but also questions relating to the representation of this fictional world and to the narration of events” (191).

The basis of the contextual relevance of Bakhtin and Orwell offered earlier demonstrates how a personal experience of the author is reflected not in the life of a hero but remotely in a fictional chronotope. Collington's insight into the way the author's "lived chronotope" is directly involved in the chronotopic framing of "the work of art" (192), emphasizing a contextual transposition that simultaneously disassociates the fictional and real coordinates within an ideological end. Therefore, these Bakhtinian optics are essential to understand how *Animal Farm*, with a chronotope essentially fossilized by the contentious capitalist and communist dialectics, aims to vigorously assimilate a historical consciousness to the dynamics of the fable. This is shown through an adaptation in which the original temporospatial coordinates are flipped to destabilize and distort the essential chronotope in order to undermine the political outlook of its source.

The unpredictability of the change, stressed in Gary Morson and Caryl Emerson's analysis of the chronotope, disrupts the natural laws in a dystopian manner. Therefore, Urszula Terentowicz-Fotyga's notion of a "dystopian chronotope" (25) is apt to describe this temporal rupture resulting not only in an intersubjective, democratic social construction but also in a considerable gap between the subjectivity of the public sphere and of the private one. The subjective becoming(s) in the history of the farm revolution is eclipsed in the collective energy, which "social and political ideas about nightmarish reality find very marked, symbolic expressions in the construction of space; the spatial language of architecture functions as a visible expression of the social order" (25). The barn in *Animal Farm* epitomizes a dystopian space that not only reflects entrenched ideology but also serves as a dynamic organizing force within the narrative. This space is critical for understanding the novel's chronotope, in which time merges with spatial elements, fueling the transformation from private oppression to a public manifestation of collective unconscious ideals.

Michel Foucault's insights into the predominance of spatial concerns in our era underscore this interpretation, highlighting the barn as a symbolic "non-place," or, to use Foucault's term, a heterotopic place (22), to become a metaphor for clashing subjectivities determined by temporal and perceptual dimensions. The barn can be seen as a response to various models of spatiality within the passage of time. To borrow Ludmiła Gruszevska-Blaim's analysis of utopian mapping, the barn at the beginning of the novel is conceptually a dominant-dominated space, described as a "hegemonic, monologically oriented dystopian

model of spatiality for a master's project" (167). What characterizes these spaces is that they are completely controlled by the state/stasis and defined and determined by its rules and ideology. In the dystopian narratives, a master project attempts to control ever greater areas, as its principal aim is to "freeze altogether the inner dynamics of the semiosphere" (173) and impose a singular code upon the whole space. Under this stratum of time, the barn is dominated by the allegedly corrupt owner of the Manor Farm, but the novel offers little to describe this chronotopic fracture in relation to the animals' becoming consciousness.

The unpredictable change in time and order, by contrast, transforms the barn, albeit transiently, into an "appropriated space," which is described as a space that serves the needs and possibilities of a group of people (in the case of the novel, animals) and enables the introduction of codes different to those defined by the master's project. The transience of this space further moves the barn to a "reappropriated space," becoming the site of dissidence where "most counterfactual and liminal plotting originates and develops" (178). However, unlike the dystopian reappropriated spaces which are transient and temporary as born of the "utopia crime" committed by protagonists, the barn becomes a location to dream the utopian future with axiological relevance and immediacy.³ Old Major's prophetic discourse describes the reappropriated barn via the ethical decision of the "Great Rebellion," as a site categorically inhabited by the infallible who exercise total justice and selflessness. Reappropriation is predicated on absolute enmity towards man and the interaction with him, to be translated later into the seven commandments of the reappropriated space.

It is necessary to consider the question of whether or not this reappropriated space maintains its sustainability for the contested chronotope. In the novel, this reappropriation is diluted and reverts to a dominant-dominated space. This has to do with the chronotope of the fairytale which Orwell employs in the title, from which the events are moved into the chronotope of realism in which the "chronotopic object" (Smith 56)—that is, the barn—is the marvelous and the unreal but anchored to the animals' aspiration that is soon achieved. In his famous lecture "On Fairy Stories," delivered at the University of St. Andrews on 8 March 1939, John Tolkien described a four-part structure of the fairy tale: "[f]antasy, derived from the notion of unreality of freedom from the domination of observed fact," "[e]scape from such weariness [of that reality] and offering

210 ³ For a detailed study of this chronotopic mapping applied to *1984*, see Terentowicz-Fotyga.

a breakthrough into another reality,” recovery as a “return to the ordinary life with a renewed spirit,” and “[c]onsolation of the happy ending” (49). What defines these stages is their chronotopic framework which emphasizes the interconnectedness of space and time and determines the flow of events. The first two features, fantasy and escape, are clear in *Animal Farm*, while the notion of recovery occurs not in the positive sense explained by Tolkien, but a return to the banality of a previous life under the new rule of the pigs. The fourth feature, consolation (happy ending) and the promise of salvation, is absent, placing the tale in a chronotopic continuity which aims to construct a fairytale of an apocalyptic world in which idealized Marxism is timelessly and instantly convertible to the grotesque dictatorial (the Communist).

Therefore, the barn in *Animal Farm* serves as a significant chronotope that represents the central power dynamics and the constantly changing social order. In the beginning, the farm symbolizes the shared cause of liberation and the imagined prospect of rebellion. Fantasizing another reality is the principal force of this in which the chronotope (a spatiotemporal reality) of the barn changes the role and action of the animals and becomes more focused on the political landscaping of the place. It can be then characterized as, in Paul Smethurst’s terms, a “postmodern chronotope” which “registers a shift in sensibilities from a predominantly temporal and historiographic imagination to one much more concerned with the spatial and the geographic, as categories in their own right rather than as spatialized histories” (15). Thus, this chronotope initially suggests a hopeful metamorphosis from oppression to freedom, as the animals liberate themselves from human control, but as the narrative progresses, this chronotope also highlights the tragic aspect of “becoming”—the animals’ dream of an egalitarian society morphs into a tyranny mirroring or surpassing the cruelty of their former oppressors. The fairytale chronotope in *Animal Farm* thus serves as a critical framework for examining the cyclical nature of power and corruption.

4. The Rituals of Carnival Crowning and Discrowning

The chronotope of *Animal Farm* organizes activities that are used to manifest the shift of the power trajectory for the subjects of the barn through the enabled (inter)subjectivities driven by moral and ethical imperatives. The chronotope is intended, as Renfrew highlights, to focus on “time,” but the idea of the carnival laughter in *Rabelais* prioritizes “the material bodily principle” as a source for the “materialistic concept of being” (129). However, although time is not eliminat-

ed, its flow is paused to prioritize the “ritual spectacle” in *Animal Farm*. The shift to the power of role suspension effectuated by the animals reminds the reader that the ethical agency initially pertained to the lower class of creatures—animals. Therefore, the nature of the power struggles (first between the farm owner and the animals and later between the ruling class of the pigs and the other animals) moves *Animal Farm* in the direction of the carnivalesque style of action. As a fable, one of the most fundamental disruptions to established power structures is to inherently grant linguistic ability to the animals of the farm, an assault upon the long-established presumption of superiority possessed by humans over other life forms. Immediately, the animals begin to speak in their capacities, and the mode of discourse opposes that of the human characters. Readers should perhaps be prepared for this rejection of anthropocentrism by the action of the human who seeks to silence the animals by firing a gun to suppress any attempt to rebel.

Animal Farm contains no demonstration of celebratory gatherings or pageants that create the expression or the spirit of the carnival, and the word *carnival* is absent from the text. Bakhtin’s notion of carnival nevertheless appears germane to *Animal Farm*, which possesses a heterogeneous collection of characters belonging to the animal world (talking beasts) who allegorize political figures in the Soviet Union. Interactions between the animal characters leads to a *temporary* suspension of hierarchal ranks, creating a special form of gathering and establishment liberated from the tyranny of Mr. Jones. The result, however, intersects with the representation of the carnival which, as Bakhtin elucidates, is “filled with [the] pathos of change and renewal, with the sense of the gay relativity of prevailing truths and authorities” (*Rabelais* 10).

This disruption of hierarchy, or what Bakhtin calls “carnivalistic *mésalliances*,” associates “the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with insignificant, the wise with the stupid” (*Rabelais* 123). The observed outcome of this nascent reality is to abolish the class system and put into effect a Marxist parody to create “the carnival laughter” which is intended to be directed at the exalted figure of the capitalist elite Mr. Jones. Here, power shifts take place following “the peculiar logic of the ‘inside out’ (*à l’envers*), of the ‘turnabout,’ of a continual shifting from top to bottom, from front to rear” (*Rabelais* 10). The satirical utility and parody of the style of a children’s book allow for bringing the folk with its corrosive laughter back into the work of politics. It is for this

Hodgart’s explanation of the subversive (but childlike) laughter in *Animal Farm* is as follows:

He chose a very ancient *genre*, based on the animal story found in the folktales of all primitive and peasant cultures, and reflecting a familiarity and sympathy with animals which Orwell seems to have shared. The central figure is often the trickster, spider in Africa, fox in Europe and pig in Orwell He used the animal-story tradition with great confidence and deftness, and since he wanted to reach the widest possible world public, through translation, he also parodied the style of children’s books; but not patronizingly, since Orwell, I think, liked children as much as he liked animals. Although the betrayal of the revolution is a “sad story” it is told with the straightness that children demand, and with childlike cunning and charm. (138)

In *Animal Farm*, Orwell’s characters vividly illustrate the thin line between animal joy and Bakhtin’s concept of laughter. This connection positions the animals’ rebellion as a moment of “carnavalesque” upheaval, where the high social order collapses into chaotic, animalistic disorder—a stark inversion of established norms. The effect of festive laughter is also embedded in the denial of an animal nature and asserts animal agency, equating the fable with Bakhtin’s description of the laughter of carnival which is “ambivalent, gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding” (*Rabelais* 11).

Therefore, Bakhtin’s concept of the carnival becomes applicable in several ways, beginning with the endowment of animals with the power of speech, and continuing through the feasts, songs, and medals which accompany the birth of the revolution. Bakhtin believes the carnival is “the feast of becoming, change, and renewal” and “hostile to all that is immortalized and completed” (*Rabelais* 10). The birth of the “carnavalesque state” through the revolution depicts growth and change. In *Animal Farm*, the subversive qualities of the carnival and its suspension or inversion of hierarchical relationships are demonstrated after the revelation of Old Major’s dream and the new song which fundamentally revolutionizes the animals’ spirits:

The singing of [the Beasts of England] song threw the animals into the wildest excitement. Almost before Major had reached the end, they had begun singing it for themselves. Even the stupidest of them had already picked up the tune of a few of the words, and as for the clever ones, such

as the pigs and dogs, they had the entire song by heart within a few minutes. And then, after a few preliminary tries, the whole farm burst into Beast of England in tremendous unison. The cow lowed it, the dogs whined it, the sheep bleated it, the horses whinnied it, the ducks quacked it. They were so delighted with the song that they sang it right through five times in succession and might have continued singing it all night if they had not been interrupted. (33)

Here the carnivalesque state is a fundamental source of power stemming from the suspension of the class system which characterizes capitalism and enables the rule of the animals (or the proletariat). This moment of ideological fracture marks a new era on the farm whose subjects were previously loyal to the “Master” and are now rebellious against all humankind.

The power of language, with its role highlighted in the chronotopic structure of the farm, is instrumentalized in the carnivalesque. It becomes a means of suspension which allows for the emergence of a new structure. As Bakhtin describes, specific patterns of language are “filled with the carnival spirit, transform their primitive verbal functions, acquired a general tone of laughter, and become, as it were, so many sparks of the carnival bonfire which renews the world” (*Rabelais* 17). Such functionality of “the language of the marketplace” can be observed in Old Major’s speech as they share several characteristics. Old Major attacks the traditional power relations between humans and animals:

Our lives are miserable, laborious, and short, we are born, we are given just so much food as will keep the breath in our bodies, and those of us who are capable of it are forced to work to the last atom of our strength; and the very instant that our usefulness has come to an end we are slaughtered with hideous cruelty. (28)

This carnivalesque moment represents a festive atmosphere that aims to challenge the status quo and allows for a temporary reversal of power by which the animals adopt the role of governing the affairs of the farm.

Parody and mockery are carnivalesque characteristics of Old Major’s speech which he uses for catharsis as well as empowerment. After elaborating on the miserable conditions of the animals, in an attempt to subvert the authority of man, Old Major turns to the scarcity of man’s contribution to the farm, describing him as follows:

Man is the only creature that consumes without producing. He does not give milk, he does not lay eggs, he is too weak to pull the plough, he cannot run fast enough to catch rabbits. Yet he is lord of all the animals. He sets them to work, he gives back to them the bare minimum that will prevent them from starving, and the rest he keeps for himself. (28)

In his introduction to the translation of *Rabelais*, Holquist argues that the sway of parody and mockery are used as a power to destroy “the forces of stasis and official ideology” (xvi) or as Bakhtin illustrates that “the mock crowning and subsequent decrowning of the carnival king” (Bakhtin 1984, 124). The mockery of the carnival man in the novel becomes a form and expression of resistance and later a constituent of the complete system of thought known as Animalism. Much of the animals’ stupidity and apathy are mitigated by the attempt to set themselves apart from the mocked man. This is further emphasized in some of the Seven Commandments of Animalism: “No animal shall wear clothes, no animal shall sleep in a bed, [and] no animal shall drink alcohol” (42). The banishment of human behaviors and activities from the newly formed status quo is intended to suspend the carnivalesque elements and create a moment of stasis which is hoped to remain unchanged. The undertone connotes the opposite and engages the novel in a circle of the carnivalesque to negotiate the dialectics of capitalism versus socialism.

The replacement of the decrowned man with the crowned pigs begins with the dismissal of any carnivalesque exercise in which hierarchies are suspended. The disallowance of imitating the decrowned man is such that even the animals’ diet must be different from that of man. With time, the crowned pigs control the affairs of the farm and therefore its subjects. This control is reinforced by the fact that the pigs differentiate themselves from the other farm animals by violating these principles: dressing like man, eating like man and sleeping in beds. However, they justify all of this for themselves as they are the “brainworkers,” as stated by the spoked pig Squealer of the carnivalesque state once being discovered for stealing milk:

“Comrades!” he cried. “You do not imagine, I hope, that we pigs are doing this in a spirit of selfishness and privilege? Many of us actually dislike milk and apples. I dislike them myself. Our sole object in taking these things is to preserve our health. Milk and apples (this has been proved by Science, comrades) contain substances absolutely necessary to the well-being of a

pig. We pigs are brainworkers. The whole management and 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. Do you know what would happen if we pigs failed in our duty? Jones would come back! Yes, Jones would come back! Surely, comrades,” cried Squealer almost pleadingly, skipping from side to side and whisking his tail, “surely there is no one among you who wants to see Jones come back?” (50–51)

This manipulation by the pigs becomes another facade of the carnivalesque, which is employed to maintain the status quo. The pigs capitalize on a brilliant use of language characterized by simplicity and repetition to render it comprehensible for less intellectually advanced animals. Deception (or flattery) is also a characteristic of the pigs’ propagandistic assessment. For instance, when the pigs first alter the commandments, they use a clearer simple language manifested in misleading reasoning. The obvious example of such manipulation is the incident in which Squealer persuades Clover and Muriel that pigs can sleep on the beds of the farmhouse, which apparently contradicts the Fourth Commandment. He expounds:

“You have heard then, comrades,” he said, “that we pigs now sleep in the beds of the farmhouse? And why not? You did not suppose, surely, that there was ever a ruling against beds? A bed merely means a place to sleep in. A pile of straw in a stall is a bed, properly regarded. The rule was against sheets, which are a human invention. We have removed the sheets from the farmhouse beds, and sleep between blankets. And very comfortable beds they are too! But not more comfortable than we need, I can tell you, comrades, with all the brainwork we have to do nowadays. You would not rob us of our repose, would you, comrades? You would not have us too tired to carry out our duties? Surely none of you wishes to see Jones back?” (75)

The pigs routinely employ this strategy to create a sense of chaos and crucially of threat, which permits them to constantly change the rules and regulations of the farm and silence any dissenting voice, such as Snowball’s. The instilling of fear and uncertainty in other animals is optimally used as a foolproof tool to ensure they remain susceptible to manipulation and deception.

The spatial materiality of the barn plays a vital role in the carnivalesque representation of the Revolution. In the beginning, it is used as a site of a temporary

hierarchical disruption which is preserved in the seven commandments painted on the exterior walls. These walls represent the controlled and manipulable collective memory that, as Hanson describes in his study of 1984, characterizes dystopian literature concerned with totalitarian regimes in which “under domination, the false domination created by the imperatives of the system becomes true, or only, consciousness” (47). This logic of domination thwarts autonomy of thought and creates a one-dimensional subsumed memory serving the ideology of the ruling class. Upon such alteration, the empowered agency of the animals through the carnival spirit, as indicated earlier, is maintained through the space of the farm, and allows for the cultivation of a collective conscience that supersedes the classical structure of power.

Yet, the revision of the readily corruptible commandments ends with their ultimate summation into a single commandment inscribed on the wall: “ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS” (126), which changes the mechanics of the farm. It is now no longer a site of sheer democracy but a site of renewed oppression and the moment of the pigs’ crowning. Therefore, the interaction between the pragmatics of the pigs’ language and the spatial dimension of the farm becomes more focused on the symbolism of solidifying the reversed hierarchies and establishing a new structure. Ironically, Bakhtin’s conception of the carnivalesque is disarmed from its potentiality of positive change through self-dissolution into a collective spirit and turned upside down to become a tool of oppression. The barn is now exclusively accessible to the pigs, and they use it to hold their meetings, which represents their full authority and control. Interestingly, the barn becomes ever more impenetrable for the voice of the narrator, which detaches from the reality inside. This is projected through the use of a limited omniscient narrator to facilitate the reader’s identification with the oppressed animals. As Edward Quinn argues, “the narrator creates a vacuum, so to speak, into which the readers step” (32). Therefore, transformation unfolds subtly, unnoticed by the non-pig animals and even the narrator, culminating in the indistinguishability of the pigs from the humans in the final scene.

This blurring of lines between the oppressors and the initially revolutionary leaders resonates deeply with the readers, fostering a sense of identification with the betrayed animals who witness their dreams of equality dissolve:

That evening loud laughter and bursts of singing came from the farmhouse. And suddenly, at the sound of the mingled voices, the animals were stricken with curiosity. What could be happening in there, now that for the first time animals [the pigs] and human beings were meeting on terms of equality? With one accord they began to creep as quietly as possible into the farmhouse garden. (126–27)

Here, a carnivalesque cycle reverts to its beginning, and the animals do not know what to do with this change, but the reader recognizes the face which has been masked by the false promises of the communist manifestoes. This is Orwell's goal of the carnivalesque: to awaken English and American liberal intellectuals to their responsibility. They are encouraged not to emulate the deceived animals, who notice that their fellow animals have become identical to humans but lack the power to overturn the carnivalesque, or at least to perpetuate its cycle. The rhetorical conclusion of the carnivalesque is to show how the communists become state capitalists and that the pigs no longer identify with the rest of the animals but with the oppressive humans. The ending is a classic parody of the fairy tale motif where the beasts are transformed into handsome princes and leave the reader with a larger array of alternatives than the animals' two options: either obey Napoleon or bring Mr. Jones back.

5. Conclusion

George Orwell's *Animal Farm* is entrenched in the theoretics of Bakhtin's chronotope and the carnivalesque. A choice of the fable as a carnivalized genre clearly intersects with the pragmatics of humor and satire to create a human-like community governed by the Marxist principles, emphasizing a triumph of the proletariat. That is achieved initially by ascribing a subversive power inherent in the carnival festivals to oppose an earlier depiction of animal society, which was forced into a lower social structure. The dialectics of capitalism and socialism are then framed through an emergent reality defined by a peculiar multidimensional chronotope and a carnival experience, which shape a sociopolitical structure of the farm. The former is to create a specific interconnection between time and space as an organizing force of the narrative, which begins as one of the quasi-utopian genres. The farm is portrayed as a utopian space, temporally derived from a powerful desire for a better life of the animals. The temporal reality of the farm mirrors that of the Soviet Union to create a chronotopic association, reminding the readers of its political shades. Through its allegorically,

it transcends, however, its given spatiotemporal dimension to become timeless and to be evoked in any mass revolution to overthrow the governments around the globe.

The chronotope of nascence is ultimately subverted, and this is achieved through the tropes of the carnivalesque. On a basic level, the anthropomorphization of the farm animals grants them a subject status which can be equated with the elevation of the low and the insignificant. They are given human status to challenge a human-controlled world. Their revolt causes a suspension and an inversion of the hierarchal order of the farm to introduce a new structure governed by the Seven Commandments of Animalism in a given spatiotemporal reality. What this idea shares with Bakhtin's notion of the festival or carnival is that the farm becomes a site of temporary suspension in which man is discrowned, but, in a very short time span, the pigs become another version of humans. These cyclic carnivalesque characteristics suit a rhetorical conclusion that the novel implies: that the prospect of a just and equitable society turns out to be an exploitation-driven manipulation, which is not, of course, any better than the previous one. Here, the farm becomes a chronotope of a suspended utopia, in which the hierarchies are reinstated. With the benefit of hindsight, the readers (unlike the animals) should not have been deceived by the supposed glamor of the Soviet Union.

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KRONOTOP UTOPIJE: BAHTINOVSKO ČITANJE ŽIVOTINJSKE FARME (1945.) GEORGEA ORWELLA

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Rad rabi pojmove kronotopa i Bahtinove karnevalesknosti pri čitanju *Životinjske farme* Georgea Orwella kako bi istražio zajednički kontekst koji je utjecao na ta dva pisaca i iznjedrio njihove pristupe Sovjetskom Savezu i njegovoj politici. Nadilazeći državnu praksu cenzuriranja i neizravno osporavajući staljinistički režim, Bahtin je proučavao satirične žanrove i utvrdio subverzivnu moć srednjovjekovnih karnevala tijekom kojih nastupa privremena odgoda vremenskih hijerarhija kako bi pomoću povijesti pokušao diskretno pobuditi revolucionarni duh u Sovjetima. Slično tomu, Orwell je napisao satiričnu basnu ne samo kako bi izbjegao rizične posljedice otvorenog protivljenja britanskoj vanjskoj diplomaciji, nego i kako bi, kao što tvrdi ovaj rad, primijenio Bahtinov koncept karnevalesknosti. U Orwellovu tekstu nisu prepoznatljivi samo aspekti žanra basne, nego i karnevalski obredi što ih izvode domaće životinje koje preuzimaju ljudske uloge kako bi vladale na marksistički način. Također, rad propituje koncept kronotopa koji omogućuje stvaranje složenog odnosa između prostora i vremena u danoj stvarnosti i definira povijesni trenutak u stvarnosti staje. Ona u početku satirično postaje kronotop utopije koja se ubrzo pretvara u distopijski prostor u kojoj ranije obećano pošteno i ravnopravno društvo ubrzo zamjenjuje autoritarna vladavina. To pokazuje kako Bahtinovi pojmovi kronotopa i karnevalesknosti u *Životinjskoj farmi* unose dijalekte kapitalizma i socijalizma u satirični žanr koji nadilazi njegovu univerzalnu vrijednost.

Ključne riječi: Mihail Bahtin, kronotop, karnevalesknost, George Orwell, *Životinjska farma*, Sovjetski Savez