



George Orwell's *Animal Farm*: A metonym for a dictatorship

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It seems, to warp George Orwell's elegant phrase, that "All animals may speak freely but some may speak more freely than others" (Ronge, 1998:13).

It is the lesson of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, a little book I am sure much of the ANC leadership would have read, if not always taken to heart (Carlin, 2001:4).

Abstract

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George Orwell's ***Animal Farm*** is traditionally read as a satire on dictatorships in general, and the Bolshevik Revolution in particular. This article postulates the notion that the schema of the book has attained the force of metonymy to such an extent that whenever one alludes to the title of the book or some lines from it, one conjures up images associated with a dictatorship. The title of the book has become a part of the conceptual political lexicon of the English language to refer to the corruption of a utopian ideology. As an ideological state, ***Animal Farm*** has its vision, which is embedded in its constitution; it has the vote, a national anthem and a flag. It even has its patriots, double-dealers, social engineers and lechers. In this way the title ***Animal Farm***, like Joseph Heller's ***Catch-22***, or Thomas More's ***Utopia***, functions metonymically to map a conceptual framework which matches the coordinates of the book. The article concludes with a look at contemporary society to show how Orwell's satire endorses the words of Lord Acton, namely, that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

1. Introduction

The critic John Wain, who has written prolifically on Orwell's work, testifies to the prescience of *Animal Farm* as a reflection on contemporary reality:

Animal Farm remains powerful satire even as the specific historical events it mocked recede into the past, because the book's major concern is not with these incidents but with the essential horror of the human condition. There have been, are, and always will be pigs in every society, Orwell states, and they will always grab power (quoted in Williams, 1974:111).

As we enter a new millennium and dictatorships continue to flourish in some parts of the world, the echoes in Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) acquire an ominous resonance. Voted as one of the top hundred works of fiction in the twentieth century by the Modern Library List and the Radcliffe Publishing Students' List, *Animal Farm* is traditionally viewed as a satire on dictatorships in general, and the Bolshevik Revolution in particular. Critical studies of the book generally draw parallels between certain animal characters in it and real people involved in the Bolshevik Revolution. Whilst acknowledging the allegorical dimension of Orwell's work, this article makes a radical departure from traditional readings by proposing that the book has become a part of the conceptual political lexicon of the English language, in much the same way as the term "Orwellian" has earned its pseudonymous writer a place in the *Oxford Concise Dictionary*. This paper posits the notion that the schema of *Animal Farm* may be read as a metonym of a utopian vision that has gone horribly wrong. In metonymy (Greek for a "change of name"), the literal term or the schema of one phenomenon is mapped onto another with which it is closely associated, because of contiguity in common experience. Thus, "reading Milton" would signify reading his works, or the word "crown" may be used to stand for a king. Viewed from this perspective, invoking the title *Animal Farm* to describe a situation resembling the one in the book, would approximate to a metonymic utterance. The animals are not only representative of certain historical figures in the Russian Revolution, but are also archetypal of tyrants, bigots and sycophants in all dictatorial regimes down the ages.

2. Theorizing metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche

Until quite recently, Gerard Steen (1994:3) avers, metaphor was seen by most linguists, philosophers and other researchers of language as a linguistic oddity. Metaphor was seen as "deviant", a term that finds its legacy today in the label "semantic deviance" by linguists. Metaphor as a

field of study was firmly established by the early works of John Middleton Murray (1931), I.A. Richards (1936) and Max Black (1962). By the end of the 1970s, with landmark publications by Ricoeur (1978), Ortony (1979), Honeck and Hoffman (1980) and Lakoff and Johnson (1980), the ubiquity of metaphor and metaphorical discourse seems “no more mysterious than singing or dancing – and, one might add, no more improper or deviant” (Black, 1993:21).

Discussions around metaphor since the time of Aristotle have traditionally been contextualized within the rhetorical domain of poetry rather than prose. The terms “metonymy” and its related concept, “synecdoche”, have generally been subsumed by the concept of metaphor either explicitly or implicitly. American literary scholars Cleanth Brooks and Robert Warren do not even mention the terms “metonymy” and “synecdoche” in their publication of 1938, *Understanding Poetry*. Neither do the words appear in their later work, *Modern Rhetoric* (1972), although both books have a chapter each on metaphor. Wellek and Warren (1963) refer to metonymy and synecdoche as “tropes of poetry” which could be divided into “figures of contiguity and figures of similarity”. According to them, the traditional figures of contiguity are metonymy and synecdoche. The relations they express are logically or quantitatively analysable: the cause for the effect, or the contrary; the container for the contained; the adjunct for its subject (Wellek & Warren, 1963:194).

The importance of the metonymy/metaphor distinction was first suggested by Roman Jakobson in an essay published in 1956, titled, “Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances” (quoted in Lodge, 1977:77-78). By observing the speech patterns of patients suffering from speech disability, Jakobson was able to distinguish between metaphor and metonymy. He found there were two types of aphasia: one characterized by the inability to select or substitute; the other, by the inability to combine and contextualize. The patient who could not select or substitute would make metonymic mistakes such as “fork” for “knife”, “table” for “lamp”, “smoke” for “pipe”. Patients who suffered from a contexture deficiency or a contiguity disorder would make mistakes of a metaphoric nature such as referring to a “microscope” as a “spyglass”, or “gaslight” for “fire”. Jakobson’s conclusion was that metaphor belongs to the selection or substitution axis of language, and metonymy to the combination axis of language.

Jakobson’s work has been central to the theoretization of metonymy as a distinct trope in literary discourse, especially structuralist theory. The metaphoric and metonymic poles constitute a fundamental binary opposition in the literary system (Selden, 1989:72). David Lodge, in his seminal work, *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and*

the Typology of Modern Literature (1977), uses Jakobson's theoretical construct to analyse works of fiction in terms of their predominant metaphoric or metonymic styles. The metaphoric mode, according to Lodge (1977:111), offers us a plethora of possible meanings, whilst the metonymic text deluges us with a plethora of data. However, Lodge is cautious about drawing a strict boundary between the two, as the metonymic is subsumed by the metaphoric: "The metaphoric work cannot totally neglect metonymic continuity if it is to be intelligible at all. Correspondingly, the metonymic text cannot eliminate all signs that it is available for metaphorical interpretation" (Lodge, 1977:111).

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's pioneering work *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), to which this study owes its origin, was the first major publication in the field of cognitive linguistics to give serious attention to metonymy, devoting an entire chapter to it. Whilst conceding that metonymy has primarily a referential function, allowing us to see one entity for another (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980:36), the authors point out that it also serves the function of providing understanding. "Thus, like metaphors, metonymic concepts structure not just our language but our thoughts, attitudes, and actions. And, like metaphoric concepts, metonymic concepts are grounded in our experience" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980:39). Lakoff and Johnson (1980:40) conclude their chapter on metonymy by asserting that symbolic metonymies provide an essential means of comprehending religious and cultural concepts. This study extends this paradigm of metonymy to include our political and social domains as well.

In a postmodern study of the novel, Ronald Schleifer (1990:4) defines metonymy as the figure of speech that substitutes something that is contiguous to whatever is being figured for that thing itself: in this way the king can be called the "crown", a presidential statement a "White House" statement. Schleifer points out the problem of uniting metonymy and synecdoche under the name metonymy, as Jakobson does. Synecdoche (Greek for "taking together") is a figure of speech in which a part is substituted for the whole, or the whole for the part. For example, "ten hands" can mean ten workmen, or "a hundred sails" could refer to a hundred ships. Schleifer views metonymy as a species of synecdoche in that it always abstracts only a part of the figure to stand for the whole. Thus, the speech of the president of the USA can be figured as a White House statement only in so far as that *part* of his speech is "official". "Metonymy traffics in what is accidental and random (such as the accidental color of America's presidential mansion), while synecdoche emphasizes what is necessary and essential" (Schleifer, 1990:5), such as "sails" for "ships" to function. For the purpose of this article, the term

“metonymy” is being marshalled to stand more generally, synecdochically, for the materiality of language. In other words, the discourse of *Animal Farm* possesses meaning at the point of articulation but also provokes feelings and emotions which go beyond the immediate text.

In recent times, the term “metonymy” has appeared in poststructuralist and postcolonial discourse. Homi Bhabha (1994:77) suggests that metaphor and metonymy are “tropes of fetishism” which are an essential part of the construction of colonial discourse to stereotype and fetishize the colonized. Referring to the various ways in which the term “metonymy” has been employed by Barthes, Lacan, Derrida and Du Man, Bhabha (1994:54) insists that the term must “not be read as a form of simple substitution or equivalence”, but understood as a double movement: it is a substitute but also a mark of an emptiness which has to be filled through sign and proxy. The process by which this lack or emptiness is inscribed “gives the stereotype both its fixity and its phantasmatic quality” (Bhabha, 1994:77). The stereotype requires for its successful signification a continued and repetitive chain of other stereotypes. Bhabha’s arcane point seems to be that it is through metaphor and metonymy that such stereotypes are perpetuated. The other postcolonial context in which the term “metonymy” has appeared is in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1989:53) who view language variance in postcolonial writings as metonymic of cultural differences. As an illustration they cite words such as “obi” (hut) used by African writers of English, or “kurta” (shirt) used by Indian writers of English. These words, they contend, seem to carry the oppressed culture.

3. From allegory to metonymy

The poststructuralist/postcolonial constructions of metonymy are not helpful for an understanding of how *Animal Farm* functions as a metonymy for a dictatorship. For such an endeavour it would be necessary to appropriate insights from recent cognitive linguistic theory to support the thesis of this article. In 1999, Klaus-Uwe Panther and Günther Radden edited a publication titled *Metonymy in Language and Thought*, based on a collection of papers which evolved from a workshop on metonymy held at Hamburg University in June 1996. This conference, according to the editors, was “probably the first international meeting of scholars from Europe, North America and Asia which was exclusively devoted to the study of metonymy in language and thought” (Acknowledgements). In the opening sentence of their introduction, Panther and Radden (1999:1) take cognisance of Lakoff and Johnson’s “seminal work” on the role of metaphor in conceptualization, but contend that since then “it has become increasingly apparent that metonymy is a

cognitive phenomenon that may be more fundamental than metaphor". Most of the contributors to this volume share the assumption that metonymy is not merely a matter of the substitution of linguistic expressions but a cognitive process that evokes a conceptual frame (Panther & Radden, 1999:9). One such contributor, Anne Pankhurst (1999:385-399), who bases her essay on Jakobson's theory of metonymy as well as Riffaterre's theory of metonymy in narrative, proposes that metonymy may also have allegorical functions when it is consistently used to structure the events of a fictional narrative intended to represent a real-world situation such as in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (Pankhurst, 1999:389).

Animal Farm has traditionally been categorized as an allegory, which is defined by Abrams (1993:4) as narrative fiction in which the agents and actions, and sometimes the setting as well, are contrived to make coherent sense on the "literal", or primary level of signification, and at the same time to signify a second, correlated order of agents, concepts, and events. In her allegorical reading of *Animal Farm*, Jenni Calder (1987:18) claims that the political allegory in the twentieth century has become a particularly important genre, because in situations of repression and censorship, which affect many populations, it is often the only means of self-expression, let alone comment, on political circumstances. A sub-type of an allegory is the fable, such as in *Aesop's Fables*, and a further sub-type is the beast fable. According to Abrams, in *Animal Farm* George Orwell expanded the beast fable into a sustained satire on the social and political situation in the mid-twentieth century. In just over half a century since its publication, this work of satire has acquired the impact of a metonymic trope to signify an ideological state corrupted by a few in power. A symptom of this corruption is the debasement of language through equivocation and deceit by those wishing to entrench their power. Judging by the frequency with which the book or its setting is alluded to, a case could be made for the evolution of this book from beast fable to metonymy. Launching a scathing broadside against the ruling African National Congress for its tendency to overlook the venality of its party members, the *Mail & Guardian* (2001:22), a South African weekly noted for its radical views, editorialized:

Some South Africans are, indeed, more equal than others. It seems that, if you manage to achieve a certain rank in the African National Congress ... the chances of your being pursued for inept or improper behaviour are minimal.

Nowhere has the writer mentioned the title of the book because it is taken for granted that even the average reader would catch the allusion

to *Animal Farm* in the opening sentence of the editorial. In this respect, the book has attained the same status as Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, or Thomas More's *Utopia* – titles which function metonymically to embody contiguous experiences.

The notion that *Animal Farm* may be regarded as a metonym for a dictatorship is in accord with the ideas expressed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980:39) in their influential work, *Metaphors We Live By*:

When we think of a *Picasso*, we are not just thinking of a work of art alone, in and of itself. We think of it in terms of its relation to the artist, that is, his conception of art, his technique, his role in art history, etc. We act with reverence towards a *Picasso* ... Thus, like metaphors, metonymic concepts structure not just our language but our thoughts, attitudes and actions. And, like metaphoric concepts, metonymic concepts are grounded in our experience ...

As an example of a metonymic concept in which a place becomes symbolic of an event, Lakoff and Johnson (1980:39) present the following statement: Let's not let Thailand become another Vietnam. Hypothetically, if one laments the fate of one's country as it slides into dictatorship, with a similar statement, "Let not this country become another *Animal Farm*", then the title of the book acquires the status of a metonym. Metonymic concepts like these are systematic in the same way that metaphoric concepts are, allowing us to conceptualize one thing by means of its relationship to something else. Although *Animal Farm* may not be a place in the literal sense, it is a fictional construct representing a place.

4. The metonymic features of *Animal Farm*

Animal Farm has been variously described as a myth, an allegory, a satire, a moral fable and a beast fable. Whilst it answers to all these genre descriptions, the argument presented here is that the book may be regarded as having evolved from a myth or political allegory to a modern metaphor, and more specifically, a metonymy. Metonymic writing, according to David Lodge, eschews the obviously metaphorical. He refers to Dickens's *Bleak House* as a metaphorical novel, but to Forster's *A Passage to India* as a metonymic novel, even though it is metaphorical in parts. "It is metonymic writing, not metaphoric, even though it contains a few metaphors and no metonymies; it is metonymic in structure, connecting topics on the basis of contiguity not similarity" (Lodge, 1977:99). To illustrate, Lodge (1977:97) draws attention to Forster's presentation of the city of Chandrapore:

There is no painting and scarcely any carving in the bazaars. The very wood seems made of mud, the inhabitants of mud moving. So abased, so monotonous is everything that meets the eye, that when the Ganges comes down it might be expected to wash the excrescence back into the soil. Houses do fall, people are drowned and left rotting, but the general outline of the town persists, swelling here, shrinking there, like some low but indestructible form of life.

Although one may detect a simile in the last few words of this quote, the description is not metaphorical. Ideas are connected on the basis of contiguity, not similarity. In contrast to the excerpt from Forster, one may consider the celebrated passage in chapter one of *Bleak House*, beginning with the sentence, "Fog everywhere". For the next forty lines or so, the word "fog" appears no less than fifteen times, culminating in a description of the Lord High Chancellor sitting "with a foggy glory round his head ..." (Dickens, 1953:16). Unlike the Forster text in which the word "mud" is used contiguously to signify the muddy surroundings of the city, the Dickens text, with characteristic exaggeration, foregrounds the word "fog" to represent metaphorically the obscure workings of the Court of Chancery. Such writing, according to David Lodge, belongs to the metaphoric pole, whilst the passage from Forster belongs to the metonymic pole.

Consider the following passage from *Animal Farm*:¹

In April, Animal Farm was proclaimed a Republic, and it became necessary to elect a President. There was only one candidate, Napoleon, who was elected unanimously. On the same day it was given out that fresh documents had been discovered which revealed further details about Snowball's complicity with Jones. It now appeared that Snowball had not, as the animals had previously imagined, merely attempted to lose the Battle of the Cowshed by means of a stratagem, but had been openly fighting on Jones's side (Orwell, 1951:99).

According to Jakobson's distinction between metaphor and metonymy, certain cultural phenomena are classified as either "metaphoric" or "metonymic". Romantic and symbolist writing is predominantly metaphoric, whilst realist writing is predominantly metonymic (Lodge, 1977: 80). The style of the Orwell passage is realistic. Events are narrated in the style of reportage, with prominence given to the fact that Animal Farm has been proclaimed a Republic and that Napoleon is the

1 Henceforth referred to as *AF*. Page numbers refer to Orwell, George. 1951. *Animal Farm: A Fairy Story*. Harmondsworth : Penguin.

uncontested candidate. The rest of the passage contains details which support, by means of innuendo, the idea that *Animal Farm* is on its way to becoming a one-party state. These details acquire a metonymic force within the context of the novel as a whole. Terms such as “proclaimed”, “republic”, “president” and “candidate” relate contiguously to the ideology of a democracy with its concomitant structures to ensure transparency. Such a notion is immediately subverted by the discovery of “fresh documents” to prove Snowball’s complicity with the former oppressor, Mr Jones. These “fresh documents” are, of course, a fabrication to implicate Snowball who was unquestionably the hero of the Battle of the Cowshed. In terms of Lodge’s definition of metonymic writing, such details serve to unite into one meaning, which, in the case of the book *Animal Farm*, is a metonymic representation of a corrupt dictatorship.

Leatt, Kneifel and Nürnberger (1986) contend that ideology operates on four levels: from the most general level on which ideology is understood as an organic system that interprets reality from one perspective, such as nationalism, to the fourth level on which ideology operates as a totalitarianism. This is a total ideology operating with the fervour of a religious doctrine. Leatt *et al.* (1986:284) characterize this ideology as one which

... encloses the world, the real totality, in a narrow prison. To present the partial truth as the whole truth, it uses massive coercion and repression at all levels, physical, psychological, mental ... Defenders of a total ideology often present characteristics which are associated with irrationalism, emotionalism, fanaticism, scape-goating and rationalizing. It compels consent by a reign of terror to make up for what it lacks in real support by the people.

The schema of *Animal Farm* corresponds with the definition of a total ideology by Leatt *et al.* (1986). To appreciate the metonymic dimension of the book, it is essential to recall some of its crucial events and their satirical thrust. The actual revolution on *Animal Farm* is triggered off when the owner, Mr Jones, fails to return to the farm after a heavy drinking bout, leaving the animals hungry and restless. The figure of Mr Jones represents the dissolute, morally bankrupt despot who has been abusing his subjects for some time. “At last they could stand it no longer. One of the cows broke in the door of the store-shed with her horns and all the animals began to help themselves from the bins” (*AF*: 18). Prior to this seemingly random event, the animals are being prepared for that day when liberation will come. At the beginning of the book, old Major, a prize boar, outlines his vision of a utopian world – a vision he has received in a dream:

Now comrades, what is the nature of this life of ours? Let us face it: our lives are miserable, laborious and short ... No animal in England knows the meaning of happiness or leisure after he is a year old. No animal in England is free. The life of an animal is misery and slavery: that is the plain truth (AF: 8).

Major concludes his message with a denunciation of man, the enemy: "All men are enemies. All animals are comrades". The response from all the animals is a tremendous uproar. Hodge and Kress (1993) remind us that language is ideological in another, more political sense of the word: it involves systematic distortion in the service of class interest. Major knows his audience. It consists mainly of uncritical listeners, hence his language is contrived to appeal to their basic instincts, in this case, the allure of "freedom", one of the most emotive words in the English language. His conclusion, "All men are enemies. All animals are comrades", is couched in simplistic, binary terms, designed to appeal to the unsophisticated audience. Immediately after this a vote is cast to determine whether wild creatures such as rats and rabbits are friends or enemies. They are voted friends by the majority, but three dogs and a cat are discovered to have voted on both sides! The target of Orwell's satire here is the practice of some politicians to cross over to opposition parties just before an election.

In *Animal Farm*, with the rebellion over, what is required are the accoutrements of a new nation. The song "Beasts of England" which is sung several times over on important occasions becomes in effect a national anthem. The animals also have a flag depicting a hoof against a green background. The green symbolizes the green fields of England and the hoof symbolizes the future Republic of the Animals (AF: 28). The flag is hoisted every Sunday, after which there is always a meeting at which only the pigs put forward resolutions. "The other animals understood how to vote, but could never think of any resolutions of their own" (AF: 28). This is an early indication of the class struggle which will ensue between the intellectual elite, comprising the pigs, and the masses, comprising the rest of the animals.

Napoleon soon comes to embody the wiles and excesses of any tin-pot dictator. When thirty-one pigs are produced simultaneously by four sows, it is not difficult to guess who sired these piglets since Napoleon is the only boar on the farm. In human terms, Napoleon is not only a two-timer but a four-timer, having impregnated four sows in the same season! While the pig population grows, other groups are kept down by a subtle process of social engineering. Production has to be stepped up so the hens are expected to produce six hundred eggs a week for the pigs,

although they can barely hatch enough chickens “to keep their numbers at the same level” (*AF*: 97).

Finally, when most of the differences between the animals and their former oppressors, the humans, have disappeared, the song “Beasts of England” is banned and the name “Animal Farm” abolished. The farm reverts to its former name, Manor Farm. The final sentence of the novel is frightening in its inevitability, when the pigs have taken to drinking and gambling with their former oppressors, the humans: “The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which” (*AF*: 119). Pig becomes man, and man becomes pig, in a transmogrification that would be funny if it had not been redolent of the inversion of morality in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* in which “fair is foul” and “foul is fair”.

5. A metonymy of contemporary society

Asserting the relevance of *Animal Farm* to modern society Hammond (1982:168) observes:

One of the reasons why the book has such a wide appeal today is that it possesses those timeless qualities which enable readers of different generations and different cultures to apply its lessons to their own circumstances.

In recent times the relevance of Orwell’s political writing has been felt across a spectrum of social disciplines. Savage, Combs and Nimmo (1989:5) affirm: “... as social scientists we believe that the symbolic figure of George Orwell deserves political scrutiny and may be used to explore some of the major political questions of our present and future”. According to them, Orwell’s work survives because the political conditions and trends he foresaw threaten the world now more than ever. Among the most pertinent issues of concern to these scholars is the exercise of power by the state through the control of the mind. Savage *et al.* (1989:8), like Orwell himself, believe that this control and coercion are achieved through the use, or rather the abuse, of language. As an example, they refer to former US Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, whose use of language was “designed to control his environment, particularly in his interactions with media representatives”.

Animal Farm abounds with instances of verbal trickery. Squealer, Napoleon’s arch-propagandist, is a past-master of chicanery who can rationalize away any inconsistency or departure from the principles of Animalism – the seven commandments. He emblemizes the dissembling media spokesman when he has to account for the disappearance

of the old, faithful Boxer who was seen driven away in a knacker's truck. The words "Horse Slaughterer", he explains, appeared on the truck because the truck had previously been the property of a knacker before it was bought by the veterinary surgeon who had driven Boxer to the hospital where he had died praising Animal Farm with his last breath. "The animals were enormously relieved to hear this" (AF: 106). It was Orwell himself who cautioned us about such sophistry on the part of politicians:

Political language – and with variations this is true of all political parties, from Conservatives to Anarchists – is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind (Orwell, 1961:367).

With every violation of an important principle, there is an accompanying amendment to the constitution. When the pigs begin to sleep in beds, an abhorred practice forbidden in the constitution, the amendment reads, "No animal shall sleep in a bed with sheets" (AF: 60) – the phrase "with sheets" being the amended part. The original commandment, "No animal shall kill another animal", a sacred principle of the new regime, is amended to "No animal shall kill another animal without cause" (AF: 78) after the horrifying spectacle in which the animals are butchered for confessing to treason. This bizarre event recalls the purges during Stalin's reign when famous leaders of the revolution in Russia were tried on fantastic charges of treason, conspiracy and sabotage. Historians Lyon *et al.* (1969:724) comment that what was even more fantastic about this episode was that they confessed without a word of defence to crimes of which they were obviously innocent.

The creatures in the new domain of Animal Farm are divided into two main groups, namely, the pigs who are in control, and the "others", who constitute the work force of the regime. The former are also the thinkers, the ones who have literally creamed the best in the land to nourish their intellects. Now, in a fine exemplification of a Foucauldian notion, they possess both power and knowledge which they use to beguile the working classes. When the seven commandments are contracted to the Manichean binary of "Four legs good, two legs bad" (AF: 31), the birds complain that they have been marginalized. However, Snowball assures them that this is not the case because the distinguishing feature of man is his hand, the instrument of all mischief. "The birds did not understand Snowball's long words, but they accepted his explanation, and all the humbler animals set to work to learn the new maxim by heart" (AF: 31). Douglas Kerr (1999:238) comments:

In *Animal Farm* the pigs, who are the thinkers of the revolution, do not long remain animals. One of the first signs of the ominous kinship between pigs and people is not only the pigs' readiness to interpret and change the world, but also a concomitant ability to keep things to themselves, to nurse a secret mental life of their own, illegible to the entirely outward-orientated and merely bodily horses, sheep and hens.

6. Conclusion

The relation upon which metonymies are based is a conceptual one, and these concepts are contiguous to one another. According to Andreas Blank (1999:173), these concepts are parts of greater conceptual networks which may be described as frames, scenes or scenarios. These frames are static or dynamic mental representations of typical situations in life. Blank illustrates this diagrammatically by means of two frames, one figuring the English breakfast and the other the English lunch. Whilst the breakfast frame contains concepts such as toast, butter, milk and margarine, and the lunch frame contains concepts such as peas, steak, chips and pub, there is also an intersection between these two main frames. The two frames are contiguous when related concepts are linked. These concepts are drink, salt and ketchup, which are common to both. When any one mental frame is opened, all concepts with a specific frame are simultaneously activated. An obvious but important insight provided by Blank is that these frames and their contents are entirely culture-dependent.

Transferring these notions to *Animal Farm*, one may posit that the title constitutes a conceptual frame which contains ideas which find resonance within a specific cultural milieu. In a democratic society, the ideas that the title evokes are political propaganda, vote-rigging, corruption, lies, political expediency and brutal repression. There are, of course, several more concepts one could add to this list. However, taking a cue from Blank about the cultural specificity of frames, it must be mentioned that the title *Animal Farm* would not produce a similar response in all societies. An autocratic society will not register the same response as a democratic one. Such a contrapuntal reading of Orwell has been provided by Alok Rai (1988:153) who has drawn attention to the fact that the author's political writing was central to the propaganda of the capitalist West against the Communist East.

Brigitte Nerlich, David Clarke and Zazie Todd (Nerlich *et al.*, 1999:362) claim that metonymy enables us to say things quicker, to shorten conceptual distances. According to them metonymy "is a universal strategy of cost-effective communication" (Nerlich *et al.*, 1999:362). As

we enter a new millennium, the scenario of *Animal Farm* is never too distant. The title of the book has acquired the force of a metonym to evoke memories of Orwell's highly condensed critique of the misuse of language and power. The book remains "... an indictment of all fraudulent purveyors of supposed truth, justice and freedom. It is a devastating satire on the equivocation and deception practised by political ideologues" (Sewlall, 1991:63).

This article has postulated that the title *Animal Farm*, like other well-known titles such as *Brave New World*, *Catch-22* and *Utopia*, has become a part of the English political lexicon, functioning as a metonym to evoke a schema which can be mapped onto a part or a whole of a discourse. Lakoff and Turner (1989:103) argue that in metonymy, one entity in a schema is taken as standing for one other entity in the same schema, or for the schema as a whole. This article proposes that the title *Animal Farm* belongs to the schema of figurative political discourse as a whole, and as such, functions metonymically to evoke images of a dictatorship with its concomitant corruption of language and ideology.

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Key concepts:

Animal Farm (George Orwell)
cognitive framework
metonym for a dictatorship
political discourse

Kernbegrippe:

Animal Farm (George Orwell)
kognitiewe raamwerk
metoniem vir diktatorskap
politieke diskoers