Revue de Traduction et Langues Volume 23 Numéro 01/2024
Journal of Translation Languages **مجلة الترجمة واللغات**
ISSN (Print): 1112-3974 **EISSN (Online): 2600-6235**
DOI: https://doi.org/10.52919/translang.v23i1.989

Orwell's Animal Farm and Golding's Lord of the Flies: A Comparative Study

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To cite this paper:
Gning, M. (2024). Orwell's *Animal Farm* and Golding's *Lord of the Flies*: A Comparative Study. *Traduction Et Langues, 23(1),* 385-402.

Received: 12/03/2024; **Accepted**: 08/06/2024, **Published:** 30/07/2024

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Keywords

Animal Farm, Lord of the Flies, Animal society, Human society, Power relations, Societal collapse

Abstract

The main aim of this article is to compare two emblematic works of 20th century British literature: George Orwell's Animal Farm and William Golding's Lord of the Flies. This comparative study adopts a New Critical analytical approach, focusing exclusively on the textual aspects of the novels independently of any external context or ideology. We examine in depth the plots, characters, and settings of both works. The study is structured around three main themes. First, it examines the societies represented in the two novels. Secondly, it explores the power dynamics within these societies. Finally, it highlights the ultimate collapse of the societal ideals depicted in the two works. At the end of this analysis, several conclusions emerge: both works explore the creation of new societies emerging from those that have shown their limitations. The animals' ideal of society in Animal Farm and the children's societal project in Lord of the Flies fail because of similar power dynamics. Orwell's animals and Golding's children end up becoming the exact opposite of their initial aspirations. The animals in Animal Farm gradually adopt human behaviour, while the children in Lord of the Flies regress towards more animal behaviour. So, paradoxically and ironically, Animal Farm and Lord of the Flies share the same fundamental concern: the fragility of human society and the fine line between humanity and animality. By exploring in detail the themes and connections between the two novels, this analysis aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how literature reflects and critiques the complexities of human social dynamics and the fragility of societal structures.

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Mots clés

Animal Farm, Lord of the Flies, societé animale, Société humaine, Rapports de force, Effondrement sociétal

Résumé

L'objectif principal de cet article est de comparer deux œuvres emblématiques de la littérature britannique du XXe siècle : "Animal Farm" de George Orwell et "Lord of the Flies" de William Golding. Cette étude comparative adopte une approche analytique de type Nouvelle Critique, se concentrant exclusivement sur les aspects textuels des romans indépendamment de tout contexte ou idéologie extérieure. Nous examinons en profondeur les intrigues, les personnages et les décors de ces deux œuvres.

L'étude est structurée autour de trois thèmes principaux. Tout d'abord, elle examine les sociétés représentées dans les deux romans. Ensuite, elle explore les dynamiques de pouvoir existant au sein de ces sociétés. Enfin, elle met en lumière l'effondrement ultime des idéaux sociétaux dépeints dans les deux œuvres.

À l'issue de cette analyse, plusieurs conclusions s'imposent : les deux œuvres explorent la création de nouvelles sociétés en remplacement de celles qui ont montré leurs limites. L'idéal de société des animaux dans "Animal Farm" et le projet sociétal des enfants dans "Lord of the Flies" échouent en raison de mécanismes de pouvoir similaires dans les deux romans. Les animaux d'Orwell et les enfants de Golding finissent par se transformer en exact opposé de leurs aspirations initiales. Les animaux d'"Animal Farm" adoptent progressivement des comportements humains, tandis que les enfants de "Lord of the Flies" régressent vers des comportements plus animaux. Ainsi, de manière paradoxale et ironique, "Animal Farm" et "Lord of the Flies" partagent la même préoccupation fondamentale : la fragilité de la société humaine et la frontière ténue entre l'humanité et l'animalité.

En explorant en détail les thèmes et les connexions entre les deux romans, cette analyse vise à fournir une compréhension approfondie de la façon dont la littérature reflète et critique les complexités des dynamiques sociales humaines et la fragilité des structures sociétales.

1. Introduction

George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954) are among the major works of contemporary British literature. *Animal Farm*[1] is a fable about a revolution gone sour. Indeed, no longer able to withstand the cruel treatment to which their human master, the capitalist Jones, subjects them, the anthropomorphic animals of the farm, invigorated by the revolutionary speech of Old Major, revolt against their owner, chase him from the farm. They rename the place “Animal Farm” and attempt to establish a new communist regime to replace the tyrannical capitalism of their former owner. However, under the authority of a new oligarchy formed by the pigs headed by Napoleon, a true bloodthirsty tyrant, what should have been a true liberation turns out to be a nightmare.

[1] From now on *Animal Farm* will be abbreviated *AF* in the rest of the work

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Lord of the Flies[2] features English schoolchildren who survive a plane crash while they were being evacuated from their country in the grip of a deadly war. Finding themselves alone on a virgin island and waiting for probable help, the young boys try to organize themselves to preserve their cultural values inherited from their native England. Thus, they establish some rules after having elected a leader named Ralph to lead the new society. Very quickly, however, the organisational system put in place collapses. Indeed, under the leadership of Jack, a violent young anarchist who has never accepted Ralph's authority, the children flout all established social rules, destroy the beautiful island and descend into cruelty and savagery.

Beyond the violence that forms their backdrop, Orwell's and Golding's novels deal with issues that are, at first glance, different. *AF* highlights the limits and dangers of ideological discourses or systems. *LOF* questions the very nature of the human being. While AF is a hyper-focused critique, *LOF* evalulates the psyche of people (Gradesfixer). In other words, Orwell's novel has an explicitly political message, whereas Golding's poses a metaphysical and ontological problem. Yet, on first reading the two novels, we are quickly struck by the similarities between them. There are besides many comparative works between these two novels. A good number of them stress the political allegory, totalitarianism, anti-utopia, revolution, patriarchy, and the language arts surrounding these themes in *AF* and approach *LOF* from a variety of perspectives, including semiotics, colonialism, psychology, mythology, and archetypal criticism (Peng 910).

The aim of this article is to highlight the points of convergence between AF and LOF through a primary technique centred on a rather close reading of the text and which recalls New Criticism in its beginnings. Thus, we will primarily focus on the two narratives irrespective of the context of their production or their ideological implications. Nonetheless, the emphasis in this work will not be on the aesthetic dimension or the poetic qualities of language, in accordance with the methods of analysis specific to New Criticism and Russian Formalism. Rather, we will use the sequences of events (the plots) and the characters' actions and thoughts (characterisation) in their various environments (the settings) in order to establish a dialogue between Orwell's *AF* and Golding's *LOF*.

From this perspective, we have identified three points around which we can structure this textual dialogue. In the first section, we examine the two new societies that are formed in the two novels, i.e. the process of their formation and the principles that govern them. The second one examines the major traps that undermine these social organisations, with a focus on the operations of these traps. The final section is a look at the ultimate failure of the animal and human societies in AF and LOF, respectively.

2. Two new societies

One of the most striking similarities between *AF* and *LOF* is the advent of new forms of social organisation. In both novels a new form of society is born from the ashes

[2] From now non *Lord of the Flies* will be abbreviated *LOF* in the rest of the text

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of an old one. The animals in *AF* have chased away the farm owner and their oppressive master, Mr Jones Manor, to become the new managers of the farm and, theoretically, have their destiny in hand. Likewise, the boys in *LOF,* accidentally deserted on a virgin island, are now free from the chaos that prevail in England ravaged by a nuclear war, free from the supervision of adults, and are henceforth entirely responsible for the organisation of their life. Though the rebellion of animals was envisaged, it was not clearly planned. It "was achieved much earlier than anyone had expected" (*AF* 11). It takes place, almost by accident, out of the carelessness of Mr Jones who gets drunk and forgets to feed his animals. As such, the animal revolution in Orwell's novel can be compared to the plane crash that gives birth to the children's society in *LOF*.

The animals in Orwell's novel and the kids in Golding's are delighted at their new situation. The animals "gambolled round and round, hurled themselves into the air in great leap of excitement" (*AF*13). Golding's boys express their joy by smiles, bursts of laughter, bathing in the lagoon and various games. The reason for their over excitement is almost the same. The animals cannot believe that they are now free from the oppression of Mr Jones Manor. More importantly, they are overjoyed that the Manor Farm, now baptised "Animal Farm", and "everything they could see was theirs" (*AF* 13). Their dream to "become rich and free" (*AF* 5) seems to have come true. Like these animals, Golding's children look to be overcome by the delight of a realized ambition (*LOF* 8). They are glad to know that the inhabited, much beautiful and rich island, full of fruits and wild pigs, is really theirs. They exclaim: "This is our island. It's a good island" […] there's pigs, there's food […] and bathing-water" (LOF 38).

Now that the animals and the young English schoolchildren are free, they will have to organise themselves to create and attempt to maintain an ideal society. The societal formation in the two novels follows a similar process. In *AF*, it is Snowball and Napoleon, the two pre-eminent young boars among the cleverest animals, the pigs, (9) who try to organise this new society before and after the fall of Mr Jones. When Old Major dies three days after his memorable revolutionary speech, Snowball and Napoleon, supported by Squealer, summon the animals to frequent secret meetings in the barn to expound the principles of the Revolution contained in Old Major's speech (10). In this way, they prepare them for life after the revolution. In *LOF*, too, it is a duo, Piggy and Ralph, who undertake to organise the new children's community. "I expect we'll want to know all their names […] and make a list. We ought to have a meeting" (11) suggests Piggy to Ralph. The two kids use a discovered shell (conch) to summon all the children lost on the virgin island. At the meeting called by Old Major prior to the revolution, the animals arrive gradually in groups at the platform now officially set up as the meeting place after the revolution. In an analogous way, the young survivors in Golding's novel, guided by the "deep, harsh note" (18) made by Ralph's hard blow into the conch, appear one by one at the beach platform, the place where they now assemble on a rather regular basis.

Thanks to their intelligence, the group of pigs led by the two undisputed leaders, Snowball and Napoleon, constitute the political body of the animal society. As for

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Golding's children, they must elect a leader. “Seems to me we ought to have a chief to decide things” (23), Ralph proposes. As in *AF*, there are two leaders vying for power, Ralph, who has called the meeting, and Jack Merridew, the leader of the choir, who appears rather strangely with his group. “I ought to be chief”, said Jack with simple arrogance, “because I’m chapter chorister and head boy. I can sing C sharp” (23). At Roger's suggestion, the children vote to break the tie and Ralph is elected leader.

Unlike the children, the animals have a clear awareness of the kind of society they want theirs to be. They strive to found a classless, fair and free society in which everyone will benefit from the common good, from the fruits of their collective labour that once made the capitalist Jones rich. Such a society is only possible if animals manage to eradicate human evil. “There, comrades, is the answer to all our problems. It is summed up in a single world – Man. Man is the only real enemy we have. Remove Man from the scene, and the root cause of hunger and overwork is abolished for ever” (4), teaches Old Major. The rules governing animal society are based on the chief principles of Old Major's revolutionary thinking which Snowball, Napoleon, and Squealer have summed up in a philosophy called Animalism. They reduce this system of thought to the following Seven Commandments:

- Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy.
- Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend.
- No animal shall wear clothes.
- No animal shall sleep in a bed.
- No animal shall drink alcohol.
- No animal shall kill any other animal.
- All animals are equal. (15)

These Seven Commandments inscribed on the wall of the barn by Napoleon constitute “an unalterable law by which all the animals on Animal Farm must live for ever after” (*AF* 15). In *LOF*, there are no clearly formulated ideological principles, a form of constitution, as is the case in *AF*. This is normal since the kids’ society is in a rather primitive state, while the animals are only setting up a new liberating political system to replace the old one which denied them all dignity. The concern of the children in LOF, Ralph and Piggy in particular, is twofold. Their ultimate aim is to create the conditions to be rescued by the adult worlds. The other major concern is to preserve a certain social order on the island, an honourable way of life, especially as they boast of being the products of the best civilisation, that of Victorian England (*LOF* 47). They need rules for they “have got to do the right things” (47), waiting to be saved.

The kids first begin by regulating speaking during the assemblies convened whenever the elected leader Ralph feels the need. "We can't have everybody talking at once. We'll have to have 'Hands up' like at school" (36), Ralph asserts. The shell is the main element regulating their existence. As well as being the means by which Ralph calls

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meetings whenever there are problems or issues to be discussed, it regulates who can speak. No one is allowed to speak unless they have the conch. You always have to raise your hand to receive it and be authorised to speak. They then suggest organising the work by assigning each group of young people a specific task. The task of hunting and providing meat falls to Jack and his group. At Jack's suggestion, part of his group takes charge of watching over the signal fire lit on the mountain to attract a possible rescue ship. Finally, all teenagers should get involved in building shelters to protect themselves, specifically the smallest boys called the "littluns", against the vagaries of the climate and against a possible attack by the beast that would prowl the island.

Snowball and Napoleon undertake a similar social organisation in *AF*. As in *LOF*, meetings are systematic. A general assembly takes place every Sunday in which "the work of t he coming week was planned out and the resolutions were put forward and debated (19). The Sunday meeting is always preceded by the official ceremony of the flag hoisting. "The flag was green, Snowball explained, to represent the green fields of England, while the hoof and horn signified the future Republic of the Animals which would arise when the human race had been finally overthrown" (19). The ceremony, symbols and vision give an official character to the society of animals which the community formed in LOF is deprived of. Nevertheless, work organisation brings the two societies closer together, alongside the democratic rules. In fact, Snowball proposes the establishment of Animal Committees, each with a specific mission, which recalls the works assignments in *LOF*. « He formed the Egg Production Committee for the hens, the Clean Tales League for the cows, the Wild Comrades' Re-education Committee […], the Whiter Wool Movement for the sheep, and various others, besides instructing classes in reading and writing" (20).

Even if they do not explicitly express the same communist vision, the children maintain an ideal of society quite similar to that of the animals. Like the animals, they want a democratic and fair society that corresponds to the imagined moral standards of their mother country. "Driven by his instinct of civilization and democracy, Ralph wants to set up a civilized utopia for all the boys on the island" (Li & Wu 119).

What further connects the two societies is the ultimate quest for happiness. To achieve this ideal, animals must work body and soul after getting rid of their enemy. Most of the boys in *LOF* refuse work and favour the pursuit of happiness through gambling, bathing, hunting, and eating since the rich island provide them with all they need to live decently. Hence, they seem to illustrate Old Major's idea according to which "man is the only creature that consumes without producing" (*AF* 4). Finally, an essential principle of life both unites and differentiates the two societies. This principle is that the kids in Golding's novel must be careful not to adopt uncivilised or animalistic attitudes, while the animals in Orwell's book must avoid acting like human beings.

The pursuit of the moral and democratic ideal through the established rules is, however, compromised by the desire for domination noted on both sides. In effect, no sooner do the animals and the boys set up their societies than the germs of their own destruction manifest themselves in the form of power relations.

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3. Power relations

According to Foucault (38), power relations "are multiple; they have different forms, they can be in play in family relations, or within an institution, or an administration". These power relations are one of the common features of the two novels under study. Personal ambitions are born from the very first hours of the political revolution in *AF* and the social adaptation in *LOF*. In each novel the question arises as to who should be the leader of the new society. This leadership question opposes Snowball and Napoleon in *AF*, and Ralph and Jack in *LOF* and poses a threat to the stability of both social entities. Like Napoleon and Snowball who "disagreed at every point where disagreement was possible (*AF* 31), Ralph and Jack have antagonistic positions. The ideological battle between the rivals in both novels is a form of quest for power defined by Weber as "the opportunity to have one's will prevail" (qted Berenskötter 4). Succeeding in getting one's point of view accepted is tantamount to establishing one's power at the expense of the opposing party.

A look at the contradictions between the rivals establishes another link between the two novels. For example, Snowball believes that the entire liberation of animals requires the acquisition of a minimum amount of linguistic expertise. It is this knowledge that gives pigs their power as leaders. "With their superior knowledge it was natural that they should assume the leadership" (17).

For Snowball, all animals must at least learn to read and write. In addition to organising animals in committee, he institutes "classes in reading and writing (20), which prove to be on the whole fruitful. Napoleon, for his part, does not believe in the effectiveness or importance of adult education. "He took no interest in Snowball's committees. He said that the education of the young was more important than anything that could be done for those who were already grown-up" (22). However, the most serious controversies between the two is about the project of windmill building proposed by Snowball to provide the farm with electrical power, alleviate the work of animals and improve their living conditions. As usual, Napoleon contends that Snowball's projects will come to nothing. He "argued that the great need of the moment was to increase food production, and that if they wasted time on the windmill they would all starve to death" (33).

The clash of views between Snowball and Napoleon in *AF* is very similar to the difference between Ralph and Jack in *LOF*. Ralph, officially elected leader, considers that the children's priority is to do everything in their power to be rescued. "The best thing we can do is get ourselves rescued" (58), "the fire is the most important thing on the island. How can we ever be rescued except by luck, if we don't keep a fire going? (88), he keeps insisting. He feels that looking after the fire on the mountain and building the shelters should take precedence over everything else. Jack has a different point of view. For him, hunting wild pigs and providing meat to everyone is the priority. "We want meat" (56), he says to Ralph, who reproaches him and the children following him for preferring hunting

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and playing to tending the signal fire and helping to build the huts. Their antagonism, implicit since their first meeting, becomes, as the narrator says, audible now (56).

Increasingly, Jack questions Ralph's authority and imposes his to the rest of the group.

The similarities in character and ideas between Napoleon and Jack, on the one hand, and Ralph and Snowball, on the other, quickly become apparent. Ralph and Snowball are visionaries and idealists. They both propose values and plans to give their societal projects a chance of success and improve the living conditions of their comrades. The idealism of these two leaders is matched by the pragmatism of their challengers, Jack and Napoleon. The latter are concerned with efficiency. They propose concrete things that can be achieved right now, such as increasing food production for the animals and hunting and finding meat for the children.

However, Jack's and Napoleon's speeches do not immediately produce the desired effect on the crowd. As proof, Jack loses a second time to Ralph when he wants to take away the title of chief, arguing that Ralph does not have the courage it takes to be a leader. The children vote to renew their confidence in the elected leader. It is the same for Napoleon who is always dominated in debates by the very eloquent Snowball. Despite that, Napoleon and Jack manage to exert an almost irresistible influence on the others; an influence that the simple speeches of Snowball and Ralph, however relevant, are unable to arouse. The narrator of *AF* reveals that "at the Meeting Snowball often won over the majority by his brilliant speeches, but Napoleon was better at canvassing support for himself in between times" (31). This means that, beyond the food they hold out to their respective societies, Napoleon and Jack resort to maneuvers specific to professional politicians to rally everyone to their cause. Therefore, they succeed in isolating their adversaries and removing all power and strength from them.

The similarities of the malicious strategies used by Napoleon and Jack to rise to power brings *AF* and *LOF* closer together. Unlike Ralph and Snowball who share the same democratic ideals and work for the well-being of their fellows, Napoleon and Jack are both power thirsty. The ideas they put forward to thwart the project of their rivals, as we will see later, are only means to achieve their selfish objectives. Their machinations to defeat their respective opponents, Snowball and Ralph, and become leaders are based on Machiavellian tactics.

In his famous political treatise, *The Prince* (1974), the Italian thinker, Machiavelli, proposes strategies for acquiring and maintaining power. Starting from the principle that any means is good to achieve one's goals, he sees power as a game in which the Prince must reign supreme. Among the principles governing this game, Machiavelli believes that it is better for the Prince to be feared than loved. This is the game that Jack and Napoleon play. They both surround themselves with soldiers (Napoleon's fearsome dogs and Jack's group of hunters) who intimidate the masses into obeying the wishes of the two self-proclaimed leaders. While Napoleon keeps the masses at bay by having his dog soldiers publicly kill his real and fictional opponents, Jack relies primarily on his knife-wielding

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skills and hunting abilities to scare the others and establish himself as the undisputed leader. This is the effect he seeks in the action described by the narrator, which, among other things, leads Ralph to put him in charge of the hunters: "Jack slammed his knife into a trunk and looked round him challengingly" (36).

Moreover, given that in Machiavellian logic, "fear is necessary to keep people in perpetual servitude" (A Machiavellian R of LOF 11), Jack and Napoleon play on this register to acquire more power. They create fictitious dangers, an atmosphere of constant fear, and thus establish themselves as the only ones capable of averting these dangers at the cost of the total submission of those who want to be saved from them. To justify the surprising actions of Napoleon and sometimes of the pigs in general, which contradict the spirit of the revolution, Squealer, Napoleon's right-hand man, explains to the animals that there are necessary conditions without which Jones will return to the farm and subject them to new servitude. "Now if there was one thing that the animals were completely certain of, it was that they did not want Jones back. When it was put to them in this light, they had no more to say. The importance of keeping the pigs in good health was all too obvious" (23).

The threat of Jones' return is brandished to convince the animals that the pigs need a special diet and the necessary comfort to have the strength and intelligence to thwart the enemy's plans. The supposed complicity of certain animals with Snowball is put forward to justify the extreme cruelty shown by Napoleon towards animals suspected of rebellion. In so doing, he demonises his adversary, sets himself up as the saviour and at the same time transforms himself into a dangerous and feared leader. He thus creates a cult of personality around himself, perfectly reflected in the beautiful hymn invented to praise the leadership (63) of the man now called "Father of All Animals, Terror of Mankind, Protector of the Sheepfold, Ducklings' Friend" (62).

Just as Jones and Snowball are fictitious dangers that Napoleon relies on to strengthen his power, the beast that would prowl around Golding's children's island and frightens the smallest children in the group gives Jack a great opportunity to assert himself more strongly against his challenger Ralph. In fact, at the heart of the leadership conflict between him and Ralph, and as a good opportunist, he takes advantage of this fear to weaken his opponent's authority. After arguing that the threatening beast on the island is merely a figment of the imagination of those who fear it, Jack seems to have abruptly changed his position. He maintains that the beast may be real and offers to track it down and kill it, since he knows how to hunt, unlike Ralph. Jack offers the children what they need and what the elected chief is clearly unable to provide, i.e. food and safety as well as fun. His aim is to undermine Ralph's power by inviting all the children to join the new tribe, of which he is the self-appointed leader, in defiance of the power established by the vote. He makes this clear in the following terms: "I gave you food [...] and my hunters protect you from the beast. Who will join my tribe?" (166). Jack's strategy pays off since the children gradually join his tribe, draining Ralph's power of all its substance.

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The strategy of the two deceitful figures of *AF* and *LOF* is essentially based on what Arendeth calls lying in politics and that takes various forms in Machiavelli's thought. One of these forms is the one that Machiavelli makes explicit in the following lines:
It is not therefore necessary for a prince to have all the qualities described above, but it is necessary to appear to have them [...]. It is by appearing to have them that they are useful; thus to appear merciful, faithful, humane, honest, pious, and to be so; but to have your mind turned in such a way that, if you must not be so, you can and you know how to change yourself into the exact opposite. You have to understand this: a prince, especially a new prince, cannot observe all the qualities for which men are recognised as good, because he is often forced, if he wants to preserve his possessions, to act against his word, against charity, against humanity, against piety (81)[3].

While pursuing the quest and maintenance of his power without any moral considerations, the prince must pretend to embody all possible virtues. The pretence of virtue that the prince must display is justified by the fact that, for Machiavelli, few people feel what you really are, while everyone sees what you pretend to be. This is the Machiavellian trick that Jack and Napoleon use to defeat their opponents. They both pretend to be good, fair, loving and concerned for the welfare of their fellow human beings, while secretly carrying out a sadistic plan to consolidate their power. For example, the education of young animals which Napoleon says he prefers to the adult education proposed by Snowball, is a plan to liquidate his opponent. The animals did not know that, by willingly taking on the task of educating the nine puppies, Napoleon was preparing dangerous soldiers not only to drive Snowball from the farm, but also to use them as guards to quell any hint of opposition. Like Napoleon, Jack hides an insurrectionary plan behind the idea of the hunt, which he considers more important than Ralph's proposals. By entrusting Jack with the responsibility of supplying meat to the children's society, Ralph could not imagine that Jack would use this official position to debunk him. He begins by undermining Ralph's authority by making it clear that he is useless to the society because he cannot hunt: "And you shut up! who are you, anyway? Sitting there - telling people what to do. You can't hunt, you can't sing" (100). Jack soon turns the group of hunters into a veritable army which he uses to overthrow Ralph. Like Snowball who is hunted down by Napoleon's fearsome bull dogs before melting into the wild forever, Ralph is hunted down in the jungle like a wild pig by Jack's soldiers after they kill his lieutenant Piggy and manage to cut him off completely.

[3] Il n'est pas donc pas nécessaire pour un prince d'avoir toutes les qualités décrites plus haut, mais il est bien nécessaire de paraître les avoir […]. C'est en paraissant les avoir qu'elles sont utiles ; ainsi de paraître clément, fidèle, humain, intègre, pieux, et de l'être ; mais avoir l'esprit tourné de telle sorte que, s'il faut ne pas l'être, tu puisses et tu saches te changer en l'exact opposé. Il faut comprendre ceci : un prince surtout un prince nouveau, ne peut observer toutes les qualités pour lesquelles les hommes sont reconnus bons, parce qu'il est souvent contraint s'il veut préserver ses possessions d'agir contre la parole donnée, contre la charité, contre l'humanité, contre la piété (81).

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Jack uses Machiavellian strategy to overthrow his opponent, while Napoleon uses the same political stratagem to maintain his totalitarian power after eliminating his opponent. This is one of the major differences between the two novels. *AF* essentially reveals the cruel face of political totalitarianism, whereas *LOF* highlights the process of shifting from civilisation to barbarism, from social order to anarchy. This explains why Golding's novel closes just after Jack has definitively put an end to the established order, whereas the most important part of Orwell's novel seems to begin in the fifth chapter after Napoleon has driven Snowball from the farm and established his absolute power. But it is fair to say that both novels end on a note of failure.

4. The Degeneration: what are we? Humans? Or Animals?

As we announced above, personal ambition and the power struggles that it generates are the main threat weighing on the new societies that the animals in *AF* and the children of *LOF* are trying to establish. More precisely, the above development clearly indicates that Napoleon and his band of pigs in *AF* and Jack and his tribe in *LOF* are, in their despotic logic, the direct causes of the collapse of these societies. What is particularly striking here is the opposite situation which occurs in the two novels. The pigs, the political elite of animal society in *AF*, have become humanized, while the young English schoolchildren end up sinking into animalism.

To fully appreciate the irony behind these changes, it is necessary to recall the major principles that preside over the birth of the two societies. In *AF*, in accordance with Old Major's teachings, the animals must not come to resemble man, to adopt his vices even when they have conquered him (AF 6). In *LOF*, it was mainly a question for the young English boys, while waiting for a possible rescue, to remain human or civilised. In other words, the new society of animals is supposed to be the antithesis of the society of humans that has given birth to it, while the community of children aims to be in the image of the great society from which it emanates.

The society project in *AF* and the ethical order of children in *LOF* both end in failure because those who carry such a project are shaped by the capitalist spirit which characterises the two original societies, namely the world of Mr Jones and England. The animals are familiar with Mr Jones's world, which they seek to eradicate. As for the children, they seem unaware of their original world that they idealise. It is understandable, as they have not yet reached the level of maturity needed to better understand reality.

To illustrate, Piggy considers that, contrarily to the kids on the island, “grow-ups know things [...]. They ain’t afraid of the dark. They’d meet and have tea and discuss. Then things’ ud be all right-» (103). However, unlike the positive image that Piggy, and to a lesser extent Simon and Ralph, still have about their mother country, this one is striken by war. It is in chaos as a result of the capitalist spirit that shattered the ethical foundation of all its traditional values[4]. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that when Ralph expresses

[4] For more details see my online article: Gning, M. (2020). The Ethical Void or the Parody of Western Modernity in Golding’s Lord of the Flies. Revue Traduction et Langues 19 (2), 50-66.

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the wish that the adult world would send them a sign, a dead pilot descends by parachute on the island (pp 103-104).

This image is proof that the adult world is far from being an El Dorado or a universe where everything is under control, as Piggy and her friends naively believe. It is a world of war and disorder, “a mysterious kind of unsafe place” (Chougule, 49). The children on the island are the product of this civilisation of chaos. The narrator makes it clear when he remarks that "Roger's arm was conditioned by a civilisation that knew nothing of him and was in ruins" (67). This is why, just as the adult world has sunk into barbarism, the children's world will quickly descend into chaos, as if to show that man is truly incapable of extricating himself from his Hobbesian state of nature, marked by perpetual violence.

Just as the society forming process of animals in *AF* is similar to that of the children in *LOF*, so the destruction of the social ideal on both sides is very comparable. Like the pigs, who, under Napoleon's leadership, gradually violate all the seven commandments, the children in *LOF*, under Jack's influence in particular, row against the tide of the decisions taken at the assemblies. "We decide things. But they don't get done" (86), remarks the elected leader. They gradually deviate from the guidelines laid down and become anarchic.

In both novels, a set of signs indicates that the new societies will not be much different from the old ones, or can even be worse. The first sign in *AF* is the “speechless admiration” (14) the pigs are filled with on discovering the luxury in which their former master lived:

They tiptoed from room to room, afraid to speak above a whisper and gazing with a kind of awe at the unbelievable luxury, at the beds with their feather mattress, the looking-glasses, the horsehair sofa, the Brussels carpet, the lithograph of Queen Victoria over the drawing-room mantelpiece (*AF* 14).

It is almost impossible not to give in to the temptation of living in such a luxury. The desire to be wealthy at the expense of others, a desire that the pigs reveal early on, is the source of the unjust and criminal social system they have put in place, trampling underfoot the ideals of an egalitarian and just society of the revolution. The second warning sign of the collapse of the societal ideal of animals is the pigs' decision to learn from the books discovered at Mr Jones’. Indeed, aware of the dialectic relation between power and knowledge[5], the pigs, who are already « recognized as being the cleverest of the animals » (*AF* 9), waste no time to learn to read and write. They « revealed that during the past three months they had taught themselves to read and write from an old spelling book which belonged to Mr Jones’s children » (*AF* 15). They also learn from Jones’s books the art of war. These “self-assigned special privileges” (Hirvisaari 1) clearly

[5] Foucault sustains that power and knowledge are closely linked. He uses the concept power/language to mean that the two cannot be separated, one implies the other.

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indicate that the pigs will assume and perpetuate the legacy of their former master, their new enemy and who, strangely enough, is at the same time a role model for them.

As if to give the signal for a new form of domination, Napoleon and his clique divert the milk intended, in principle, for all the animals. What is more, the pigs don't take part in the work on the farm. They merely supervise the other animals that they urge to work harder. To top it all off, they set up their headquarters in the room where Mr Jones kept the harnesses, collars, ropes and blinkers, among other degrading objects with which he exercised all his domination over the animals. What this image shows is that oppression has now taken on an animal form. From this headquarters, the pigs, that form the new ruling class in flagrant violation of the principle of equality of their proclaimed communist ideology, will dictate their law to the rest of the animals.

In *LOF*, too, the signs of the failure of the children's social ideal are visible from the very first meeting Ralph calls. The strange arrival of Jack and his gang at the meeting place is the first clear threat to the order that Ralph and Piggy want to establish. This is how the narrator describes the appearance of the atypical group:

Within the diamond haze of the beach something dark was fumbling along, Ralph saw it first, and watched till the intentness of his gaze drew all eyes that way. Then the creature stepped from mirage on to clear sand, and they saw that the darkness was not all shadow but mostly clothing. The creature was a party of boys, marching approximately in step in two parallel lines and dressed in strangely eccentric clothing. Shorts, shirts, and different garments they carried in their hands: but each boy wore a square black cap with a silver badge in it. Their bodies, from throat to ankle, were hidden by black cloaks which bore a long silver cross on the left breast and each neck was finished off with a hambone (21-22).

The narration reveals the danger posed by Jack and his group. They are associated with a dark thing, a bizarre creature that emerges frighteningly from nothing. The eccentric nature of this group, which is fully reflected in their peculiar clothing, is clearly a negation of the quest for social harmony that is the subject of the meeting. The group's leader, Jack Merridew, a “tall, thin and bony” (21) young man, soon reveals his authoritarian nature, which immediately intimidates Piggy. Jack is not the type to take orders, but to give them. "I ought to be chief" (23), he says arrogantly. What his character suggests, beyond the leadership conflict that later pits him against the elected chief, is that he will seek to challenge established values and draw all the children into a kind of culture of anarchy and cruelty.

The signs of this anarchy keep multiplying. Jack often denies wise Piggy the right to speak and misses no opportunity to humiliate him to the amusement of the other children. In their excitement and under Jack's influence, the children, with the exception of Ralph, Simon and Piggy, set the whole island on fire by trying to light a signal fire at Ralph's suggestion to attract a possible rescue ship. We learn later that a child has perished in the flames. All this leads one to fear the worst. “Ralph realized that the boys were failing still and silent, feeling the beginnings of awe at the power set free below them” (49). Like

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Ralph, Piggy makes no secret of his fears: “we ought to be more careful. I'm scared” (49), he says, before asking the children: "How can you expect to be rescued if you don't put first things and act proper" (50).

Ralph and Piggy's concern seems well-founded. Disorder is looming on the horizon because the children are not conforming to the decisions taken at the meeting. They would rather play, eat and bathe than work. They don't take part in the construction of the shelters, which Ralph and Simon are doing on their own. Worst of all, those who were responsible for looking after the signal light let it go out, jeopardising their chance of being rescued. As well as being a sign of distress to attract potential rescuers, the fire lit is reminiscent of the Promethean fire, the mythical fire stolen from the god Zeus by Prometheus and which will enable mankind to emerge from ignorance, disorder and confusion. It is also the fire of civilisation, since it lifts man out of his bestial condition and gives him the means to ensure his perfectibility. It is essentially this civilisational dimension of the fire that justifies Ralph's almost obsessive attachment to the idea of keeping it lit. For him, extinguishing the signal fire is synonymous with man's return to the darkness of bestiality: "We shan't keep the fire going. We'll be like animals. We'll never be rescued" (101), he insists. What Ralph fears is cultural regression, which seems to be irreversible, as Piggy notes with regret: “the world, that understandable and lawful world, was slipping away. Once there was this and that; and now - and the ship had gone” (99). The children are adopting behaviours that increasingly deviate from accepted cultural standards. They drink directly from the river like animals, instead of using coconut shells as instructed. The youngest children do their natural business next to the shelters that have been built. So Piggy seems to be right to ask: “What are we? Humans? Or animals? Or savages?” (99).

Just like Piggy who notes that children are running more and more wild, the reader of *AF* quickly realises that Napoleon and his gang are inexorably moving away from their philosophy of Animalism to espouse the lifestyle and ideology of man, their declared enemy. In fact, after chasing Snowball from the farm, Napoleon begins to perpetuate, with the collaboration of the other pigs, the work of Jones whose cruel and unjust nature had justified the revolution. Sunday meetings in which all the animals participated are now canceled. Instead, Napoleon sets up a committee made up entirely of pigs which meets privately, makes decisions before communicating them to the rest of the animals. The latter no longer have the right to express their opinions. All that is now expected of them is to carry out the orders of the new executioner who freely determines the agenda for the week with the help of his accomplices. The slightest opposition to his will or even a hint of rebellion is synonymous with death. Under Napoleon's rule, animals, except pigs, suffer and work more.

The new leader's reign is worse than Jones'. All the symbols of the revolution such as the anthem (the Beast of England) the flag, the open debates are either removed or modified. The pigs, led by Napoleon, end up being like Jones and even worse than him. The analogy reaches its climax when, to everyone's surprise, they stand on their two hind

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legs, supervise the other animals on the farm, holding whips in the other two legs which act as hands.

Like in *AF*, the collapse of the social system in *LOF* begins after the sidelining of one of the protagonists. Indeed, the beginning of the children's total slide into the darkness of savagery, what the narrator calls the “great change” (145), comes when Jack openly challenges Ralph's power, proclaims himself leader and decides to rally all the children to his cause. He is determined to put an end to the established order. «Bollocks to the rules! We’re strong” (100), he exclaims triumphantly. Thus, after having pushed Ralph aside, he sets out to destroy the two major symbols of this order, namely Piggy and the shell. Known for his extremely violent nature Roger, one of Jack's closest associates, pushes a boulder down onto Piggy, killing him on the spot and destroying the conch that he held.

Piggy's death and the destruction of the conch mark the definitive end of the order. Jack and his group reveal the barbaric side of man hidden behind the mask of social laws. To free themselves further from all traces of social weight and to be able to act in complete freedom, they paint their faces and set up their headquarters in the dark forest. The mask inspires them with a feeling of non-being or, to use a term of the existentialist philosopher Sartre, a being-in-itself. This state of being frees the painted kids from the awareness of their social obligations. Speaking of Jack who faces Ralph's camp, the narrator says this: “he was safe from shame or self-consciousness behind the mask of his paint and could look at each of them in turn" (155). Jack and his gang become, so to speak, fearsome savages, “demoniac figures with faces of white and red green” (154). They are both humans and savages, a rather disturbing reality that the narrator expresses in these terms: “they were savages it was true; but they were humans, and the ambushing fears of the deep night were coming on” (*LOF* 205).

In *AF*, it is this same feeling of confusion mixed with astonishment that the strange scene closing the novel inspires the animals that witness it: « The creatures outside look 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” (95). The scene shows the pigs, led by Napoleon, sealing an alliance with humans, local farmers, in a festive atmosphere that has clearly blown up the dividing line between ruling pigs and humans. Now the pigs behave exactly like the humans they had declared their number one enemy and whose lifestyle they had promised to never adopt.

5. Conclusion

Thanks to a textual analysis of a new critical nature focused precisely on narrative elements such as characters, plots and settings, we have been able to establish strong links between Orwell's *AF* and Golding's *LOF*, two classics of British literature. These similarities are established at three main levels which correspond to the proposed three-section outline.

In the first point, we have showed that in *AF*, as in *LOF*, a new form of society has emerged. The society of animals in *AF* and that of children in *LOF*, born accidentally,

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inspire on both sides a feeling of liberation and happiness. The two social entities pursue a similar democratic and community ideal that Orwell's animals and Golding's children attempt to materialize through an identical organisational system. This democratic ideal is, however, undermined by conflicts whose stakes are the quest and maintenance of power. The second point of our work devoted to these power relations reports, among other things, the same Machiavellian strategies used by the dominant figures in the two novels to achieve their objectives of domination.

The victory of these two Machiavellian figures over their idealistic and non-pragmatic adversaries marks the death of the two social projects. The third and final point of this study examines the failure of the social ideals in the two novels. It reveals that the social entity of the animals in *AF* and that of the young English boys in *LOF* have become similar to the societies that gave rise to them. The proclaimed communist society of animals has turned into tyranny like the dictatorial regime of their former master Jones from which they had freed themselves. Comparatively, the community of young English people has fallen into the chaos that is consuming English society from which they were extirpated. Schematically and ironically, we can say that the animals in *AF*, precisely the oligarchy of pigs led by Napoleon, have become humanized, while the humans in *LOF* have become wild. It is therefore in a way that is both contradictory and similar that Orwell and Golding ironically convey the fragility of our societies.

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Acknowledgements
I am grateful to ASJP managers for providing me with this valuable opportunity. I extend special thanks to my colleagues at Gaston Berger Unversity of Saint-Louis for their steadfast support and collaborative spirit.

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Declaration of conflicting interest
The author declared no conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of the article.

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