

From Beast Folk to Great Apes. About the Significance of Animal Others in Dystopian Literature

Ulrich Schaeffer

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Master's Thesis from the year 2013 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Literature, grade: 1.0, University of Leipzig (English studies), language: English, abstract: Fictional animals constitute a unique literary device to let familiar things appear in a new light. Yet despite the fact that a number of dystopian texts utilise animals to convey manifold criticism, very little scholarly attention has been paid to this. The present research paper discusses the varied effects and overall significance of animal 'Others' in eight relevant dystopias from late Victorianism to Postmodernism in consideration of Edward Said's 'Otherness'. The results reveal that dystopian animal 'Others' represent a powerful tool to convey manifold social criticism. Moreover, most of the selected literature deconstructs animal 'Otherness' by jeopardising the otherwise generally unquestioned Western animal-human paradigm. This effect intensifies the dystopian impulse and, even more importantly, potentially sparks off a thought process that exposes the pejorative mechanisms underlying non-fictional 'Others'. While real-life social out-groups may benefit from the emancipatory analogy, anthropological self-criticism by questioning one's own judgmental authority appears to be even more significant.



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