

Ideology and the American Marxist Novels

Siyaswati

University of PGRI Adi Buana Surabaya

siyaswati@unipasby.ac.id

Abstract—In ideology, the problem is something the subject does, than what they (do not) know; post-ideology. In literature, authors criticize social problems, especially foremost ideology, but unable evading from the symbolical realms ideologically. yet, it is so rigid with anti-capitalism, the authors must have paradoxes; (1) the ideological resistance, (2) the enjoyment of ideological critics. To see it, three recent American novel(ist)s such as Collins' *The Hunger Games* and Roth's *Divergent* are used to see how far Marxist critics operate in the works. Through that way, it can be assumed that ideological criticism in literary works question a consistency; the critics are a way for author to gain a legitimacy.

Keywords— *Ideology, Post-Ideology, Author, Symbolic and Legitimacy*

I. INTRODUCTION

Definition of ideology is still ambiguous. Compressing the meanings of ideology into a comprehensive definition can be difficult, although it is thinkable. The term ideology, some may say, is a like text, interlacing different conceptual components; it is traced through by contradictory histories and it is certainly more important to analyze what is valuable or invaluable in each of these lines than to combine them forcibly into some grand general theory of ideology. To designate this diversity of meanings, it needs some things to consider, just like to Eagleton's list some definitions of ideology which present to now (Eagleton, 1991: 1-2)

To see it out, those point out into a core of how ideology defines itself. Ideology is seen as a production of ideas that constructs the structure of society into classes. Political powers control these ideas for a purpose and it hides its false ideas. Society is easily trapped because they are subject, subjected of discourses then subjects falls in to the illusion. This illusion changes to be belief and the belief becomes the reality. Subjects are the actors that reproduce social structure.

Ideology works in psycho-condition of subjects while they are tied up with social (un)consciousness. It shows that Marxism cannot be put in separation with psychoanalysis, especially in discussing ideology. The familiar phrase about ideology in Marxist tradition is "they do not know it, but they are doing it" (Žižek, 2009: 24; 1994a: 312). It explains that subjects do not know what they are doing. It is a condition marking real reality that is distorted by the illusion of what they know. Žižek calls it as naïve consciousness. It is the procedure of critics over ideology; symptomatic (Setiawan, 2016: 28). The symptom refers to the condition of subject's abstraction to what they know. Thus, the illusion is isolated to what subject knows and the reality is concealed in what subject does know.

This is what makes subject still does it although subject does not know it and this is the symptom which irritates Marxists, like tickling itches to scratch. However, for Althusser's concern, ideology is not a synonym for the notion of society's intellectual superstructure containing the totality of cognitive forms or representative practices. He rather infers an idea of ideology "which refers to one particular form of cognition as the product of one particular type of signifying practices" (Bennett, 2005: 121). The points are, (i) ideology has a material existence, (ii) ideology functions so as to secure the reproduction of the relations of production, (iii) ideology has no history, (iv) all ideology hails or *interpellates* concrete individuals as concrete subjects, by the functioning of the category of the subject, (v) ideology is a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence, (vi) Ideology is as such an organic part of every social totality (Bennett, 2005: 121-6).

These all wrap ideology in a crucial pivotal point to understand, that ideology is not as plain as we consider; it interweaves individual to becoming subjects under such powers directing subject to the inability to know the real reality behind the illusion. Just take a look at a very simple case of how ideology works; there is a stupid man works hardly with low salary but he still works as if he enjoys it. The question is, why does he enjoy it while he suffers for doing it? This is how ideology functions; it works with polishing the reality (that he is stupidly bullied, intimidated, persecuted, oppressed, tormented, terrorized and persecuted by his boss with low salary) with the illusion (morally I am good father, socially I am not jobless, naturally it is for living, and so on). There is capitalism ideology works behind it and society does not know that their social system economically has been dictated, agitated and controlled by a powerful dominance which makes subjects keep an eye on without being able to ignore and deny it. Another question is, when the man suffers it very well, how can he ignore and deny it as if he does not know (realize) it? This is the key of the problematical interrogation.

For classical Marxists, as it is inclined previously, ideology is symptomatic (tracing something concealing), while they have been simply mistaken to overlook the pre-condition of what they know. Subjects pre-consciously have already know what they are doing (the man must have known that he suffers and he should have stopped working), but the problem is, they cannot (or do not want) stop doing it. It has the relation with unfulfilled desire; desire has no object, it is only the desire for something missing and it contains a continual pursuit for the missing object, "in the absence of a real object, the infant reproduces the experience of the original satisfaction in a hallucinated form" (Laplanche & Pontalis 1986: 24). This is the

trick, the man always search for reasons (objects) to sustain the way he keeps doing it while it is just the hallucinated form, it is just the way the desire keeps striving to be fulfilled. Desire refers to lack, when the lack gets fulfilled, no desire, no purpose and the illusion is gone. As a subject, getting filled with symbolical meanings sustaining the abstraction of creating those illusive objects, ideology can give the pleasure of how the illusion comforts subject and avoids subjects for being lost to what subject desires of the non-existence. Ultimately, this is how the man keeps doing it even if he knows it very well how suffers he is.

There is important problem of ideology. It is not only about what people know, but it is also about what people do. It is not only about the symptom that works the illusion hiding the reality, but it is fantastical (in Lacanian term) that works with illusion. So, we keep doing it because our unconsciousness is already fake. Thus, the relationship between fantasy and desire is that, “fantasy is not the object of desire, but its setting” (Laplanche & Pontalis 1986: 26). It functions “as an empty surface, as a kind of screen for the projection of desires” (Žižek, 1992: 8). Ideology is always ideology of ideology. Each effort to escape of ideology already has ended in (another) ideology. It is like chain of signifiers.

In the context of literary field, there are a lot of works showing critics such as Orwell and Bradbury. It contains of satires against dominant ideology. This exposes the writers’ critics against ideology. The purpose is to criticize, but it can fall into the reproduction of the criticized thing. Theoretically, there is no pure action to abandon ideology with symbolical attacks because ideology is symbol. So, the only way out of it is by doing non-symbolic. It is radical action. Novel is symbolic. It is easier for a writer criticizing such as capitalism, but they receive money from what they criticize. It is what happens to the recent American novelists who write Marxist critics on their works. For example, Collins with her class struggle and Roth with social structure.

II. DISCUSSION

As an opening discussion, this part is explained in elaboration about how this logical thinking of this research in its theoretical application works. Simply to say, this contests the conceptual framework of this research proposal in its analysis.

First of all, it should be noted that what is called as subject is a symbolical *creature*. The unconsciousness is structured like language. They cannot precede ideology because ideology precedes them. Subject is a void. Subject grows with ideology. It means that, subjects have been adapted and adopted with ideology, this is what makes subjects live with ideology and social system is ideological. So, the problem is not on the illusion the subject sees, but the unconsciousness of subject to see the reality.

In Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games*, the point of the problem is the class struggle. The problem of class struggle is like honking in the traffic jam; class struggle emerges and induces as the critic to the dominant ideology while it is on its own ideology. It shows that class struggle is part of the ideology. It is just battle of ideology. The novel sets in the

destructive world of Panem in North America. It is centered to the Capitol. It is governed by President Snow who practices political control over the nations. The nations locate at Districts. 12 districts surround the Capitol. Capitol represents bourgeois, rich, and powerful apparatus people and Districts represent proletarian, poor, powerless people. The government controls people by using a game; called the Hunger Games. It is an annual event. In the game, there must be one boy and one girl aged 12-18 from each district selected by lottery to compete in a televised battle to the death. The couple is called as the tributes. If a district does not give the tributes, the Capitol will not distribute the bread. The people at the district can suffer for it. Katniss Everdeen, 16-year-old girl from district 12, shows the rebellion against the game and after all, thorough the series of this novel (*Catching Fire* and *The Mocking Jay*), Katniss is politicized by President Coin who represents districts against the Capitol. Katniss ends this clash by killing those presidents. She thinks, it is just the illusion.

It is understood that Katniss is not afraid to rebel the system. She wants class struggle. She sees the reality that people are fooled by the fake system ruled by Mr. Snow. So, once she says her ideological stuff, “My instincts have been to flee, not fight ... Stupid people are dangerous (Collins, 2008: 162). The last sentence can be the perfect proverb to symbolize the way Katniss encroaches people’s consciousness. This insistence represents the allegation of how Katniss offers her ideological business. She struggles to destruct the deceptive reality people realize (class and poverty) but still, she cannot strip off overly what she intends to pursue. This is how ideology works. It never just comes up openly in a totality. There is always something hidden which is distracted into other chains of other substantial illusions such as equality, society without class, and so on. This is still ideology. *The Hunger Games*’ ideological consciousness has to clarify that “ideology is not just mystification (that is, something that obscures the real relations of things in the world) but essential mystification: one could not imagine a human society without it (Dowling, 1984: 83). It is the mystification that works in unconsciousness, thus, people cannot see which one is real and which one is not.

Collins’ *The Hunger Games* sees its ideological scene in District, Roth’s *Divergent* shows different way, but similar end. It is also about society and the structure in a post-apocalyptic world, but it is specifically in Chicago. This novel features a social structure consists of survivors divided into five factions based on their dispositions; Abnegation (selfless people), Amity (peaceful people), Candor (honest people), Dauntless (brave people), and Erudite (intellectual people). Each year, all sixteen-year-olds take a talent test to determine the faction they are best suited and those who do not fit into their new faction will become factionless (living in poverty on the street of the city). The protagonist is Beatrice “Tris” Prior, born into an Abnegation family, but her talent test results for three factions; Abnegation, Dauntless and Erudite. This special result leads us to know that Tris is a Divergent which is so dangerous for the social system ruled by the government (see Roth, 2011: 23). Detached from the search of Tris’ identity or to her romantic feeling with another Divergent, Tobias Eaton (Four), this novel expects the utopian social structure without political instruments (factions) governing the people, because everyone

is Divergent. Moreover, the existence of the factionless also keeps and crystalizes the Marxist atmosphere inside of this ideological critic.

The basic Marxist critic refers to the dominant ideology that manipulates subject's consciousness to false consciousness. The phrase of this ideology in this novel is the phrase, "Faction before Blood" (Roth, 2011: 43, 176, 201, 357 & 362) that mostly appears to the conflicts. Faction is the ideological system put by the government to the people. It changes people's consciousness. This factional system authorizes the social system that constructs people in every faction. This functions to make the order of society. It is ideology. It is the false consciousness of the government to control people. The system is good for people, but there is freedom. In the story, being Divergent is disorder. So, Divergent is the class struggle. It is the something to break the system of faction ruled by the government. Divergent is not like poor or the factionless. Divergent is difference. It can cause problem for the ruling government.

Lastly, Marxism sometimes turns to be frightful (misinterpretation of political communism), but when people celebrate capitalism era, they still think of poor people, the ruling class, and political dominance. People are easy to give sympathy for poor, but people want to gain capital. It does not make sense to erase the class system by reproducing the system of class by capitals. Many authors start discussing the ruling class controlling us, but there is no real revolution. Marxist novels written by the recent American novelists criticize capitalism, but they are rich of it. Their ideas condemn social problem, people receive it popularly and read it passionately. It is Marxism in the capitalism.

CONCLUSION

The problem of critics through literary works is not about the character struggling against the system, but it is about the authors positions themselves in the critics of capitalism. Their ideas, forces, and criticisms are proven in the way they live in. Subjects are constructed by the consciousness, they just reproduce it. Thus, the critics are hiding the true practice the subject does. The characters are the authors' false consciousness, the author's practice is the true ideology.

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