

In the Name of God



Islamic Azad University-Tehran Central Branch

Department of Postgraduate Studies

Thesis Submitted to the Department of Postgraduate Studies as a Partial  
Fulfillment for the Degree of MA in English Literature

**Ideological Interpellation and the ISAs in George Orwell's Novels:  
A Marxist Althusserian Reading of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm***

By:

Wafa Rahimi

Supervisor:

Dr. Bakhtiar Sadjadi

Reader:

Dr. Reza Yavarian

Winter 2012

## Abstract

The present thesis seeks to critically read George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm* in the light of Louis Althusser's thought and theory. The present thesis proceeds to examine and demonstrate Althusser's major concepts including Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs), the Structure, the Subject, and Ideological Interpellation which respectively are elaborated. Althusser believed that in the modern capitalist society the state uses ISAs and RSAs as major apparatuses to maintain and reproduce their domination on the oppressed and unruling class of the society. Through ISAs, individuals are transformed into subjects and uncritically accept their subjection to the Subject whose power is exerted through the subjectification process. According to Althusser ideologies are not false consciousness but the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence. For Althusser ideologies have a material existence and are rooted in institutional rituals that reproduce them. In order to demonstrate a practical reading of concepts like Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs), the Structure, the Subject, and Ideological Interpellation in terms of an Althusserian approach the present study proceeded to apply them to Orwell's both novels which provide us to trace Althusser's ideas in application. Ideological Interpellation or the process of the subject formation as the dominant concept in the world of two novels is examined and discussed. At the same time ideological interpellation of the subjects by the ISAs is analyzed and explored. The state by ideology interpellates all the individuals into subjects except the bad subject.

**Key Words:** Interpellation, ISAs, RSAs, Ideology, Marxist Structuralism

## **Acknowledgements**

First and foremost, my sincere gratitude goes to my supervisor, Dr. Bakhtiar Sadjadi, whose clear, patient and constructive guidance and also his helpful knowledgeable comments helped me fulfill this study project. My sincere thanks also go to Dr. Reza Yavarian, my thesis mentor, for his comments and pragmatic advice. Then, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Professor Jalal Sokhanvar who I owe a debt of gratefulness. Finally, my thanks go to my family, my uncle, my aunt and true friends whose encouragement and motivation alert me to complete this thesis.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this thesis to F. M. and all of bad subjects who still resist.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	2
<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	3
<b>Dedication</b> .....	4
<b>Chapter One: The problem, Argument, and Framework: An Introduction</b> ...	8
1.1. General Overview.....	9
1.2. Statement of the Problem .....	14
1.3. Significance of the Study.....	19
1.4. Literature Review.....	21
1.5. Research Questions.....	26
1.6. Methodology and Approach.....	27
1.7. Definition of Key Terms.....	30
1.8. The Organization of the Thesis.....	34
<b>Chapter Two: Louis Althusser and Structuralist Marxist Criticism</b> .....	35
2.1. Introduction.....	36
2.2. Althusser and the Concept of Ideology.....	36

2.3. The Subject and Structure.....	47
2.4. Ideological State Apparatuses and Repressive State Apparatus.....	53
2.5. Structural Marxism of Louis Althusser.....	59
2.6. Ideological Interpellation.....	64
2.7. Conclusion.....	69

**Chapter Three: The ISAs Interpellating the Subject: An Althusserian**

<b>Reading of <i>Nineteen Eight-Four</i>.....</b>	<b>71</b>
---	-----------

3.1. Introduction.....	72
3.2. Investigating the ISAs in <i>Nineteen Eight-Four</i> : Major Representations.	73
3.3. Investigating the RSA in <i>Nineteen Eight-Four</i> : Major Representations.	86
3.4. The Subject, the Structure and Interpellation in <i>Nineteen Eight-Four</i> : A Critical Reading.....	92
3.5. Conclusion.....	102

**Chapter Four: Investigating the ISAs, RSA, the Structure, the Subject, and**

<b>Interpellation: An Althusserian Reading of <i>Animal Farm</i>.....</b>	<b>103</b>
---	------------

4.1. Introduction.....	104
------------------------	-----

4.2. Investigating the ISAs in <i>Animal Farm</i> : Major Representations.....	105
4.3. Investigating the RSA in <i>Animal Farm</i> : Major Representations .....	117
4.4. The Subject and Structure in <i>Animal Farm</i> : A Critical Reading .....	124
4.5. Interpellation in <i>Animal Farm</i> .....	137
4.6. Conclusion.....	146
<b>Chapter Five: Discussions and Conclusion.....</b>	<b>148</b>
1. Summing up.....	149
2. Findings.....	155
3. Suggestions for Further Research.....	160
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>162</b>

## **Chapter One**

---

### **The Problem, Argument, and Framework: An Introduction**



## 1.1. General Overview

Any reader who reads George Orwell's novels, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm*, might be concerned with the similarities between the novels and the theoretical doctrines proposed by Louis Althusser. The present study attempts to read Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm* in the light of Althusser's theories and ideas. Concentrating on Althusser's ideas and theories and tracing his essential notions of ideology, this study explores the ISAs, RSA, interpellation, the Subject and structure in these two novels make the body of this study. French Marxist philosopher, Louis Althusser, is often referred to as a structuralist Marxist, a new Stalinist, an anti-humanist and even the strangler of Paris, but to the researcher the best title which deserves him is a brilliant representative of Western European Marxism in the 1960s and 1970s.

Althusser was one of the best-known communist party theoreticians of the twentieth century, who latterly became associated with Eurocommunism. Althusser's most significant publications are *For Marx* (1965 [trans. 1969]), *Lenin and Philosophy* ([trans. 1971]1965), and *Reading Capital* (1967 [trans. 1970]), and *Essays in Self Criticism* (1976). In these and other works he advanced the thesis that Marx's work could be divided into two: the pre-1848 writings which were concerned with human nature, alienation and self-realization; and the writings of 1848 and after which outlined a scientific theory of history and society. These later works replaced the earlier pre-scientific ones and involved a rejection of any notion of human nature or of human beings as the crucial active agents of change in society. Rather, Althusser argued that society is composed of different structural levels that determine human actions and outlooks. Althusser offered a much more complex and sophisticated model of society and change based on multiple determining factors.

Key notions related to Althusser's theories are the Problematic, Overdetermination of a Conjuncture in which revolutionary change might occur, Ideology, the subject, structure, Ideological State Apparatuses, Repressive State Apparatuses and Interpellation. He attempted to reunite Marxism with Structuralism, an intellectual trend with which Althusser and his student Michel Foucault were associated. Althusser, attempted to save Marxism from two major threats: the frightful merciless record of Stalinism and the failure of Marx's revolutionary forecasts. Althusser's special contribution was to remove Marxism altogether from the realm of history, politics and experience, and thereby to render it invulnerable to any criticism of the empirical sort. Marxism to Althusser was a theory of structural practices: economic, ideological, political, and theoretical. These 'practices' determined history. Their respective importance, and their relationship to one another, varied with circumstances; the 'dominant structure' was sometimes 'economic practice' and sometimes 'political practice'.

In his *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus*, Louis Althusser summarizes his main concepts on the issues such as conditions of production, structures of society, the theory of the state, the role of individual, and the definitions and functions of the ISAs and RSA, Ideology and Interpellation. He investigates the ways in which a state controls its subjects through what he calls Repressive State Apparatuses and Ideological State Apparatuses. Althusser claimed that the State apparatus consists of two sets of institutions. On one hand, he argues, it consists of all that Marxist theory has so far recognized as part of the State apparatus, the repressive institutions through which the ruling class enforces its rule as such. Althusser calls this the 'Repressive State Apparatus'. He asserts that

The State Apparatus (SA) contains: the Government, the Administration, the Army, the Police, the Courts, the Prisons, etc., which constitute what I shall in future call the Repressive State

Apparatus. Repressive suggests that the State Apparatus in question ‘functions by violence’ – at least ultimately (since repression, e.g. administrative repression, may take non-physical forms. (1971: 136)

On the other hand, Althusser argued, the State also consisted of what he called the ‘Ideological State Apparatuses’ (ISAs). They are:

the religious ISA (the system of the different churches), the educational ISA (the system of the different public and private schools), the family ISA, the legal ISA, the political ISA, the trade union ISA, the communications ISA (press, radio and television etc.), the cultural ISA (literature, the arts, sports etc.). (1971: 136)

He then continues that the fundamental difference between the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) and the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) is that the RSA functions primarily ‘by violence’, whereas the ISAs function primarily ‘by ideology’ (1971: 138).

Althusser’s structuralist approach to Marxism was so distinctive and powerful that we continue to feel its latent effects among so many poststructuralist thinkers who have continued to work both inside and outside a Marxist perspective (e.g. Balibar, Badiou, Foucault, and Ranciere). Althusser’s Structural Marxism proposed a revised view of the role of economic determinacy with regard to the ideological, political, legislative and cultural structures present within capitalist social orders. Thus, he sought to displace the perceived emphasis in much of Marx’s work upon a classical model of political economy which, coupled with an empiricist model for the analysis of social relations, had been taken as providing the basis for the purportedly ‘scientific’ status of Marx’s conclusions. For Althusser, each of these structures

(ideological, political) pertains to a relative autonomy within the larger network of social relations which constitute capitalist society.

Althusser viewed capitalist society as a network of interrelated structures. The autonomy of these structures is, however, seen as relative rather than absolute since, in the last instance, economic factors exert a causal influence over the structure as a whole. The capitalist mode of production is marked by particular features including the commodification of goods, the notions of exchange and surplus value, and the organization of labour. Modes of production, in turn, evolve through history, and Marxism, on this account, becomes the historical analysis of the development of modes of production in their immanent relationship to the various social, political, cultural, ideological and legislative structures which make up the social totality. Althusser espoused the view that individuals do not in any sense exist independently of the constitution of economic and social structures.

George Orwell, considered as one of the greatest English political writers of the twentieth century, was born Eric Arthur Blair on June 25, 1903, in Bengal, India. He is famous for his two novels *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) and *Animal Farm* (1945). He was against imperialism and during the 1930s he called himself a democratic socialist. George Orwell hated inequality and political lying and had a desire for a society in which class privileges would not exist. This led him to divulge the political lie that what was going on in the Soviet Union had nothing to do with socialism.

Many of his works are semi-autobiographical in nature: *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933), expresses his experiences trudging and teaching in those two cities; in *Burmese Days* (1934) he has been inspired by the period working as an imperial policeman and is the most

fictionalized; *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) is a study of destitution in the north of England, but ends with an prolonged biographical essay of his experiences with poverty; and *Homage to Catalonia*(1938) narrates his experiences volunteering to fight fascism in anarchist Catalonia during the Spanish Civil War with the Workers' Party of Marxist Unification. Orwell wrote a large number of essays, editorials and book reviews during his lifetime. His insights into linguistics, literature, and politics \_ in particular anti-fascism, anti-communism, and democratic socialism \_ have continued to be influential decades after his death.

*Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a satirical political classic dystopian novel, published in 1949, which is set in the eponymous year and focuses on a repressive, totalitarian regime. The novel depicts a world which is controlled by three similar superstructures engaged in perpetual war with each other. They are Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia. The novel is set in Oceania and the story occurs in London. Oceania is ruled under the dictatorship of Big Brother and its people are in three classes-the Inner party (two percent of population), Outer party (eighteen percent of population) and the Proles (eighty percent of population). There are four ministries in huge pyramidal structures: 1. Ministry of Peace 2. Ministry of Plenty 3. Ministry of Truth 4. Ministry of Love. These names are ironic antonyms of the true nature of their actions and respectively concern themselves with War, Starvation, Lies and Torture. The story follows the life of one seemingly insignificant man (the last man in Europe), Winston Smith, a civil servant assigned the task of perpetuating the regime's propaganda by rewriting history and political literature and lives a restricted life in which all activities are aimed toward the good of the party. Political and intellectual freedoms are completely non-existent, there is no law separating right from wrong and all people live in fear that results easy control by the government. The government monitors and controls every aspects of human life to the extent that even having a disloyal thought is

against the party. Any violation against the party leads to capture, imprisonment, interrogation, torture, execution, and brainwashing. Smith grows disillusioned with his meager existence and his longing for truth and decency enforce him to a secretly rebel against the government that finally leads to his arrest and torture.

*Animal Farm* is a political fable and the most famous allegory of a communist revolution which attempts to create a communist societal society, based on the story of the Russian Revolution and its betrayal by Stalin, in which a group of barnyard animals overthrow and chase off their exploitative human masters and set up a democratic society of their own. Finally the animal's intelligent and power-loving leaders, the pigs, subvert the revolution and form a dictatorship whose bondage is even more oppressive and heartless than that of their former human masters. In general, it is also a political treatise that suggests larger lessons about power, tyranny and revolution.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

The present study seeks to demonstrate the ideological interpellation and the role of the ISAs and RSAs in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm* in terms of an Althusserian approach. Althusser questions the subject's obedience and absence of revolution in contemporary world of capitalism. His view of ideology and ideologies emerges from his understanding of the relations between the Subject and State .The State, for Althusser, is the kind of governmental formation that arises with capitalism, which is also determined by the capitalist mode of production and formed to protect its interests.

Althusser attempted to reunite the views of French structuralism with those of Marxism by refusing the primary role of the individual subject in social structures. In a structuralist view society cannot be comprehend through the subjective experience of individuals seen as in some way differentiated from the unfolding processes in which they are trapped. A society works as a single organism in a way which is determined by its technology and its modes of production. Every individual action is determined by its part in relation to that technology. In his *Lenin and Philosophy* [1969] (1971), Althusser investigates Gramsci's flourish but unfulfilled interest in the material institutions that manage ideology to the masses. This book's most influential chapter, *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, follows Gramsci's reference to capitalism's "need to elaborate a new type of man suited to the new type of work and productive process" (1971: 286).

According to Althusser the first task of any economic system is to reproduce its own conditions of production. This includes reproducing the types of people who will be able to participate in the process of production. The modern capitalist state's ability to do this relies on two types of institutions: the 'Repressive State Apparatuses', such as the police, prison, law courts and army, and the 'Ideological State Apparatuses', which include the Church, the family, political parties, the media and, most importantly, the education system. These are institutions which generate ideologies which we as individuals (and groups) then internalize, and act in accordingly. As we might expect, the difference between the 'RSAs' and the 'ISAs' is that the Repressive State Apparatus functions 'by violence' whereas the Ideological State Apparatuses functions by 'ideology'.

The main purpose of Marxism is to effectuate a classless society. Thus, the reason the present researcher chooses to study George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, is that its

characters share this same desire and determination. *Animal Farm* depicts the oppressed masses revolting and forming a 'classless' society of their own. While offering a critique of communism in general, the book also serves to act as a mirror of Soviet Russia under Stalin. As reflected throughout the text, it was no secret Orwell considered Russia, and consequently Communism, a counter-revolutionary force that would inevitably become corrupted by greed and power. Indeed, in offering a Marxist reading of the text, it is essential to assess the author's social, economical status and the epoch in which the book was written.

At the very beginning of the novel it is possible to see Orwell's criticism of Karl Marx, displayed through 'Old Major'. Many of the characters in the book symbolize real political figures. 'Old Major' is very much like Karl Marx, at times he appears single minded and unrealistic. Before his death 'Old Major' gave an unwavering speech stating no animal should ever "touch money, or engage in trade". This is clearly a direct criticism of Karl Marx's naivety, as shown later through Orwell's narration:

Never to have any dealings with human beings, never to engage in trade, never to make use of money - had these not been among the earliest resolutions passed at the first triumphant meeting when Jones was expelled?(1991: 56)

It soon becomes clear that the new created system cannot be maintained the way originally intended. The morals that, at first, rule on the farm later become the controls. The animals impressively divide themselves into 'classes'. This class categorization becomes admitted as normal through a process of Hegemony. As described by Raymond Williams, hegemony is a form of social control that becomes accepted as 'normal' after becoming the predominant influence. The notion of hegemony which initiated by Gramsci, is also closely related to a concept developed by the French Marxist Louis Althusser. Althusser's theory of Ideological



Structures becomes remarkably appropriate when applied to Orwell's political satire. These Ideological structures are effectively institutions that prevent the masses causing a revolution against the ruling class. In *Animal Farm* the pigs are keen to enforce their own ideology on to the other animals (proletariat). One gets the impression that in offering a true Marxist critique of the book, it is actually the case that the animals do achieve their top priority; In this sense they do become free (from man at least) and it is only their subsequent inability to grasp the prospect of equality that leads to another regime of dictatorship. Although at the same time it cannot be argued that the majority of the animals (or the 'masses' as they appropriately refer to themselves) are treated fairly, they are treated worse than ever before.

After the revolution, the animals, excluding the pigs, anticipate that the luxuries that were once taken away from them, such as milk and apples, would be shared equally among the group, however this is not the case:

You do not imagine, I hope, that we pigs are doing this in a spirit of selfishness and privilege. Many of us actually dislike milk and apples... milk and apples (this has been proven by science, comrades) contain substances absolutely necessary to the well being of the pig. We pigs are brainworkers. (1991: 29)

Consequently the animals find themselves in a situation of panic, disorder and confusion. The ruling pigs distract the masses from the 'real' (or perhaps relevant) problems that were occurring.

In reality the animals are living under a harsh dictatorship, under the veil of animalism. Engels refers to this as an illusion of democracy. By creating this illusion of democracy the ruling class (Napoleon/Stalin) can make sure they maintain in power, while everything will stay 'natural' to the proletariat. In fact, this illusion of democracy is further stressed when the animals are asked

questions by the pigs, questions to which there can be only one answer. In a sense the rhetorical questions act as a tool to reinforce the false class-consciousness:

It is for your sake that we pigs drink that milk and eat those apples. Do you know what would happen if we pigs failed our duty? Jones would come back! Surely comrades... surely there is no one among you who wants to see Jones come back? (1991: 23)

Althusser calls this Interpellation. A process whereby a person is made to feel like they have a choice, but actually the 'choice' does not exist.

*Nineteen Eighty-Four* has been considered to be a dystopian fiction. Dystopian fictions are fundamentally concerned with problems of the political and cultural context that produces them. It was written after the Second World War and the rise of totalitarian states on the right and the left. Orwell extrapolated specific ominous events and tendencies in the twentieth-century politics. He tries to caution against right-left wing fundamentalism, rigid dogmas that may be currently gaining a deceptive popularity. The depicted government in this novel takes control of everything by application of all ideological and repressive apparatuses to maintain and reproduction of its rule. This totalitarian state changes history, promulgates corruption and poverty among the working class (proles), manipulates the economy, has disciplinary and repressive institutions like, thought police, houses of detention and prison, deletes other thoughts that are threat to its own maintenance, has medias in its hands, has youth leagues of students in the schools and so on.

### **1.3. Significance of the Study**

Although we are at the threshold of the second decade of the twenty-first century, yet oppression, suppression, violence, exploitation, new forms of enslavement, terror, injustice and inequity are as specters haunting through the world. We witness promulgations, propagandas, agendas of attractive mouthful concepts like freedom, human rights, and egalitarianism, from states, international institutes and even universal public thoughts. Nowadays, however, we observe the real existence and dominance of non-democratic power willing inhumane totalitarian systems.

After the end of the cold war era and the dissolution of the Soviet Stalinist Communist System, many thought of the death knell for all social totalitarian systems and governments. Their reasons were the dominance of liberal democracy and freedom discourse that all the governments and social systems willingly or unwillingly had to accept those concepts. The noteworthy subject here is that if the death knell met those regimes, how do we still witness the existence and reproduction of those kinds of totalitarian systems throughout all corners of the world? Social liberal democracy itself has become an instrument to violate and demolish the real democratic principal. In some of western countries, the relationship between government and citizens, market and democracy, hidden and unspoken policies of governments to the masses and silence of the individuals, reproduce this totalitarianism and in some others, the relations between traditional social contexts and liberal democracy led to its reproduction. To find a deep analysis and contingent achievements to the causes of these phenomena, it requires putting behind simple apparent justifications. Instead of being slaved in chains of abstract axiomatic concepts, we should stick to objective realities and social, political, ideological relations as our analysis guide, to reveal and expose the paradoxical silence of subject, knowledge, praxis and theory.

European Marxist intellectuals and thinkers, after the world war two lost their hope to their altar (USSR), and indulged in a crucial theoretical crisis and took different directions. Some of them like Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Sartre who had been influenced by Hegel, sheltered in humanist existentialism, Étienne Balibar and Jacques Rancière suspected his claims, Pulanzen committed suicide, Michael Peszcho died in threshold of his fame. Foucault and Derrida joined to Nietzsche and Heidegger. Allan Badiou joined to the camp of French Lacanians. However, courageously the only Marxist philosopher who kept his Marxist theoretical principles and had a new rereading of Karl Marx, was Louis Althusser who made an epistemological revolution in the world of Marxism. Through referring to works of this great thinker, we can analyze, interpret and make clear the situation and unspoken hidden truths of contemporary human societies.

Both *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm* share thematic likeness with each other. In the essay *why I write*, Orwell explains that all the serious works he wrote since the Spanish Civil War in 1936 was written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism. The worlds of both novels prescribe patterns of life based on frugality, conformity, censorship, corruption, fear, terror, cynical manipulation of masses, surveillance, imprisonment, torture, execution, brain washing, and all the usual terms of existence enforced by totalitarian states. Both novels symbolize and demonstrate the difficulties of establishing a well-functioning communist community in massive oligarchical collectivist ideological society or capitalist world. Orwell depicts a world in which the states have ability to reproduce themselves and incorporate into themselves the forces of resistance and opposition.

The researcher seeks to demonstrate that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* along with *Animal Farm* have been able to question the axioms of social relations, relations between the citizens and government to reveal and expose the realities and the reasons of reproduction and reappearance