

## Post Marxist Reading of Leviathan: Sinfield `s Ideology

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### **Abstract:**

*The present research shows how a political ideology reading can be perceived by a Post Marxist reading in the Leviathan. In Leviathan, the characters dealt with the important Marxists concepts such as lack of justice and social discrimination and their following effects on people including disillusionment, hopelessness and aimlessness. These effects have stultifying influence on the individuals and make them unaware of their talents and in the end lead them to a life full of misery and hopelessness. Characters and the author himself struggle in a capitalistic society and consciously or unconsciously they are trying at stand against the dominant ideologies and from other hand they themselves are totally dominated by those ideologies and there is no way out, in Leviathan by Paul Auster.*

### **Keywords:**

*capitalism; ideology; language; power*

## I. Introduction

In this research, the researcher tries to analyze one of Paul Auster's novels through the Sinfield perspective. In doing so the researcher is going to highlight different layers of the selected novels under observation to show how it criticizes capitalist societies and their ideologies which propagate false consciousness. Second, it analyzes how the writer himself has been affected by those ideologies and his works are entangled in the web of capitalist ideologies. Therefore, the core issue of this research is the writer's double-edged attitude toward capitalism and ideology. Paul Benjamin Auster, as one of the great American writers has criticized the capitalist system ruling over America. In his works, he consciously or unconsciously shows different people's situation in a money-based society and shows how much poor people suffer in these capitalist societies. Cultural domination can also be understood in terms of ideology; in a capitalist society, the bourgeoisie uphold and perpetuate a liberal ideology through various cultural media. The critical theorist Alan Sinfield therefore analyzes the culture industry to show how popular culture reproduces liberal ideology and intensifies reification in late capitalist society. He comments on how the city invokes a demand for pleasure and work, which sustain commodity in capitalist society.

According to Alan Sinfield based on ideology all people behavior is taken from their ideology. Taken from their behavior system part comes from the culture you are living in and grown in so cultural materialism culture is a matter important and highlighted. Behavior is taken from the ideology of the culture under which you are trained, educated and grownup. Life has many layers and it is related to the society in which we are living in and the culture we are trained under nothing is separated. Plausibility refers to this because it is quite real. Plausibility comes from the real life of man that is why it is plausible in all lagers of man's life. Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of

existence. In this research, the main features are the application of Alan Sinfield theories on Auster's novel.

## II. Review of Literature

Jonathan Boulter in his book, *Melancholy and Archive; Memory, and History in the Contemporary Novel*, talks about the meaning of archive for the characters of Auster and three other contemporary writers. The focus of the Christopher Donovan' *Postmodern Counternarratives* is on the realism, postmodernism and literary theory. It tries to bridge the gap between accessible storytelling and literature. Next, we see the reconciliation between traditional realism and postmodernism. Tom Whatley in his essay in title of *Ghosts: A Pure Marxist's Dream* (2012) focuses on the idea of capitalism has clearly influenced the way the world works. Nearly everywhere one turns, in every corner of the globe, there is without a doubt some form of capitalism, such as free trade, open markets, a class ruled society, and in Blue's case, an employer and employee. However, Karl Marx, the mastermind behind the concept of Marxism, believed that capitalism is inevitably the road to communism. In "The Communist Manifesto" Marx explicitly states how the Bourgeoisie and Proletariats are the two opposing classes in society. Bourgeoisies are considered to be the manipulators, while the Proletariat's are the industrial working people. Marx states, "The Bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honored and looked up to with reverent awe. *Connecting the Dots: Paul Auster's Representation of Invisible Characters in Selected Novels*" is a dissertation by Joane F.Gous in which she discusses how characters meet each other by chance but afterwards these encounters gain importance. It also compares Auster's novels to each other and show how they interact with each other. The parallel discussed in the book makes readers to have a better understanding of the situations and characters. It shows how the characters are misled about the world they live in. In a journal "Narrated Self and Characterization" Anne Marti Berge inspects the importance of nation with regard to characterization. It illustrates how some postmodern conflicts are in act inside Auster's Novels.

## III. Research Methods

The accurate consideration of the characteristics of Cultural Materialism makes obvious that Cultural Materialism is different from other approaches like orthodox Marxism and New Historicism. For example, New Historicism deals with "the analysis of power relations in past societies, but Cultural Materialism explores literary texts within the context of contemporary power relations, or Cultural Materialism advocates the political commitment, whereas New Historicism claims to have no political agenda" (Selden 100). Cultural Materialism has arisen from the struggles of identity politics in the United States, such as Afro-American studies, women's studies and gay studies. Cultural Materialism values the ability to transcend politics; its politics thus have remained latent or implicit rather than explicit. But in New Historicism the ultimate meaning of text is just articulated from the negotiation of distinguished oppositional factors which would culminate in the process of conflict between subversion and containment. Of course, some characteristics and debates about power and ideology, the role of the state and the relation of cultural production to hegemonic regimes are similar in Cultural Materialism and New Historicism.

However Cultural Materialism has root in Marxist instructions, but is totally different from Marxism. Marx believes that the ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class, and economics is the fundamental determining factor in any society or culture. In other words, "the ruling mode of economic production determines the ruling mode of

cultural production” (Lodge 265). Thus, capitalism produces its own ideology and expands it on the whole part of man’s activities.

But Cultural Materialism under the influence of Antonio Gramsci establishes various ideas than Marxism. Cultural Materialism contrary to Marxism denies the basic role of economy in determining ruling culture. It asserts that bourgeois dominates the peasants by means of ideology. Ideological hegemony, according to Williams, is “a complex system with internal structures, contradictions and processes of change that works deeply on the consciousness of society” (Barry 191). The concept of hegemony in detail suggests that capitalism maintains control not only through violence or political and economic coercion, but also ideologically through a hegemonic culture in which the values of bourgeoisie become the common sense values of all people. Thus, an agreed culture developed in which people in the working class identified their own good with the good of the bourgeoisie and helped to maintain the status quo rather than revolting. Concisely hegemony is defined as the means of maintaining the capitalist state. Cultural Materialism with respect to the process of ideological hegemony attempts to activate the dissidence and subversion which is hidden in any textual manifestation of ideology.

The concept of dissidence and reaction against the dominant subculture is the most significant point in Cultural Materialism. In capitalistic context the concept of dissidence is very near to the recognition of Other as the result of resistance against ruling class’s norms and orders. Consequently, the destiny of Other is suppression or punishment. Most of the time this part of society becomes marginalized or excluded, because the rest of society during ideological hegemony has lost its concerns towards them, and look at them as the outsiders or enemies:

The capitalist lacks an ideological state apparatus ensuring the eventful reproduction of an exploitative mode of production for the ruling class. Yet, in political commitment to, and identification with, ‘the other’ –an identification that takes the form of an avowal of critical partiality- lies the danger that cultural materialistic critic will not fail to attempt to fill out the lack, the partiality, that ‘the other’ occupies in his or her desire for the desire of the institutional Other. (Wilson 15)

Cultural Materialism is considered as a post-Structuralist approach because it aims to displace, deconstruct or even just somewhat to disrupt the previous delivery system. Cultural Materialism as a poststructuralist critical approach has been successful in displacing traditional humanist and formalist readings of literature with readings which pay attention to historical and political contexts, and more sensitive to the representation of oppressed and marginalized groups in literary and cultural debate. Cultural Materialism has also showed the extent to which conservative interpretations ignore the problems of race, gender and injustice in literary texts. Some part of Cultural Materialistic critical practice focuses on relating texts to the problem of representing ‘the other’. This emphasis in Cultural Materialism has promoted the world of criticism and explores the representation of women, black authors and social marginality.

The last important point about Cultural Materialism is the idea of how the condition of a text affects its reading. Cultural Materialism tries to understand the text in its form as materiality in the process of production and reception. The text for *Sinfield* is “incorporated in the power structures which comes to materiality; otherwise, it becomes marginalized outside the social structure” (Higgins 169). In Cultural Materialism the text is owned and

read by either the dominant culture or the dissident critic. In this case the Allegiance of the text is distinguished by the critic who reads the text. Allegiance is another crucial term in perception of Cultural Materialistic theory of reading text. Cultural Materialism insists on the “transforming the allegiance of a text from dominant to dissident by bringing that text to the discourse of dissident critical conditions” (Brannigan 178). Therefore, the marginal issues come to the central evaluation, and in this way the transmission of text to its contemporary context takes place: “this is not just the communication between past and present, but between text and context” (Ibid 180).

Cultural Materialism sees the very complex relationship between text and context based on its poststructuralist tendencies. It regards that there is no absolute or singular reading; always the meaning is in relation to another meaning as we see that dissidence feeds endlessly the dominant and vice versa. Alan Sinfield in his article *Reading Dissidence* declares: “the inter involvement of resistance and control is systematic: it derives from the way language and culture gets articulated. Any utterances bound by the other utterances that language makes possible” (qtd in Newton 247), but it does not mean that the outcome of the inter involvement of resistance and control or dissident and dominant must be the incorporation of the subordinate

## IV. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Political Ideology in *Leviathan*

Many philosophers believe that it is not that simple to generalize all kinds of human behaviors as something destined or doomed, for many actions or even reactions to what is imposed on human beings are not necessarily defined by the rules or what we may call common sense. Besides, there is resistance to even fixed and never-able-to-be-resisted ideas which show that determinism cannot be the whole story and the final point of human life. For example, many people and experts believe that in order for a government to be successful, it is important to make people ignorant of what is happening to them. In other words, keep your people busy to something and do whatever you want to do, though unlawful. Society will follow what the men in power had decided. But the second reaction to this policy is spontaneous awareness of a group of people mostly intellectuals who not only do resist and criticize the policies but also, they try to go against the mainstream of ideological values that the society presents. In Raymond Williams’s view, the way of regarding people as doomed creatures, just ignores the resistant powers, the ideas and concepts which actually do not confirm and are willing to break the dominant ideology. Though he believes that these opposing forces are not simply against the grain but there is a complicated web like form is just present. (qtd. in *Theory and Criticism* 139). Williams writes: “The reality of any hegemony, in the extended political and cultural sense, is that, while by definition it is always dominant, it is never either total or exclusive. At any time, forms of alternative or directly oppositional politics and culture exist as significant elements in the society” (qtd. In “*Marxism & Literature*” 113).

*Leviathan* is politically loaded from the beginning. Sachs does not become a radical that blows up replicas of The Statue of Liberty until late in the story, and, most of the narrative is about how Sachs tries to live with having taken someone’s life (*Leviathan* 153), where again he acquires the dangers of freedom. But the political backdrop is always present. He takes his victim’s belongings, and even chooses to borrow his life as a family father (*Leviathan* 172). He bonds with Dimaggio’s daughter, and eventually with his wife, and they all play happy family for a couple of months, knowing it would last. However, it is when Sachs borrows and affects

Dimaggio's political agenda and convictions that he comes to occupy the subject position of a terrorist. He finally becomes the version who woke up figuratively while he was inside the Statue of Liberty at the age of six (*Leviathan* 33). Political aspect is only noticeable towards the end of the novel and the political aspect is clear in every comment Sachs makes. Whereas living with Dimaggio's wife, Lillian, Sachs goes through the final period of his political transformation. It is clear that Dimaggio's critique is "...a study of Alexander Berkman...the anarchist who shot Henry Clay Frick...Frick survived the attack, and Berkman was thrown into the state penitentiary for fourteen years" (*Leviathan* 223). Benjamin Sachs rented a cheap apartment "...on the South Side of Chicago, which he rented under the name of Alexander Berkman" (*Leviathan* 234) Sachs is here borrowing the name of someone he thinks he can identify with, someone who, in Sachs' mind might have taken a similar way through ideology and discourse to get to where they can no longer sit uselessly by and do nothing.

Aaron stresses that the book he writes about Sachs "...is not a biography or an exhaustive psychological portrait..." (*Leviathan* 22) but this is exactly what the narrative about Sachs ends up becoming. Aaron breaks the trust between them by first writing about him, and then by helping the FBI confirming Benjamin Sachs was Reed Dimaggio's killer and The Phantom of Liberty. Aaron has no choice but to write the story about his friend. Even though he wants to keep his reputation as a good man, he cannot keep this secret for a long time. The secret is kept between Aaron and the pages he writes for as long as he is the only one reading them, but the moment he gives those pages to someone else (*Leviathan* 245), he has broken the trust and betrayed his friend. However, that trust was broken between them when Sachs left friends and society behind. They both broke each other's trust, but only Aaron remains to tell the tale, and it is only fitting that he does. Aaron admits that the observations he has made when writing the story about Benjamin Sachs "...are subject to any number of errors and misreading" (*Leviathan* 30). Aaron has only Sachs' recollections of his past to rely on when he is talking about Sachs' childhood. There is only one story Aaron trusts to be true (*Leviathan* 31), and that is the story about when Sachs went with his mother to visit the Statue of Liberty. He was six years old at the time (*Leviathan* 32) and the episode changed his life completely, for two reasons. Firstly, they were visiting this symbol of freedom, and Sachs was not allowed to wear what he wanted. He felt like he was "in chains", and he managed to bargain with his mother that if he was the only one in little boys' clothes, he would be allowed to wear whatever he wanted from that moment, giving the young Benjamin Sachs a taste of democracy (*Leviathan* 33). Secondly, because his mother had a serious anxiety attack in the stairs while they were on their way up to the torch. She had to crawl back down. Sachs himself said that his mother's panic attack was his first real "...lesson in political theory...[he] learned that freedom can be dangerous. If you don't watch out, it can kill you." (*Leviathan* 35). This lesson is a lesson Sachs keeps learning throughout the novel. He goes to jail for refusing to go to war (*Leviathan* 19), and as mentioned above, Sachs writes the book *The New Colossus* while in prison, which, according to Aaron, is an angry book, angry at America and angry at political hypocrisy (*Leviathan* 40).

Sachs is always in a massive conflict with himself. He tries hard to fit in to the society he is a part of, but he fails, and that is also why he cannot remain. This is his tragic flaw, a flaw that makes it easy for Aaron to deduce that it was Sachs who blew himself up and not anyone playing with fire. Having said that, Sachs has played with fire his whole life, and when he finally got burned, it very well might have been intentional. One could claim that every individual is at some point in a massive conflict with the self, and that is difficult to manoeuvre in a society that has different expectations to the individual at different points in a life. But this conflict is very strong within Benjamin Sachs.

## 4.2 Ideological Language in *Leviathan*

Marx saw both language and ideology as tightly interwoven with social and material reality and processes of social reproduction. Marx had a modern interactional and concrete view of the role of consciousness and language, and he emphasized, in particular, their connection to the material world:

language is practical, real consciousness that exists for other men as well, and only therefore does it exist for me ... Consciousness is, therefore, from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all. (*The German Ideology* 74)

Linguistic pragmatics provides a framework compatible with a Marxist approach as pragmatics focuses on language in its social context and includes implicit meaning in the account of language and communication. Ideologies give reasonable and rational interpretation to people's behavior or reactions. Eagleton talks about and precisely reasons the robber's anger:

Ideologies can be seen as more or less systematic attempts to provide plausible explanations and justifications for social behavior which might otherwise be the object of criticism. These apologias then conceal the truth from others, and perhaps also from the rationalizing subject itself . . . all theoretical ideology becomes a kind of elaborate rationalization. Substituting supposedly rational belief for irrational or a rational emotions and opinions. (*Ideology: An Introduction* 52)

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Stability of a character's relationship with language is an index of that character's relationship with her or his physical environment and the coherence of their interior sense of self. Auster presents the probability of a fragile metropolitan stability and coherence. The central characters experience the chasm of linguistic and social failure before undergoing a

kind of metropolitan redemption when rescued by lovers and caring friends who are able to form social networks across New York City. These networks reside very particular spaces such as bars, restaurants, dinner parties and art galleries. The pivotal 'rescuer' appears from the social networks that live these places. As the narrative progresses it is seeming that Aaron comes to occupy a similar coherent social and linguistic space as that previously occupied by his friend. These urban rescuers contribute, through their spatial and linguistic competence, to the recovery of the condition of a fully social being, verified by an effective relationship with language. Aaron tells us that for Sachs 'the words always seemed to be there for him, as if he had found a secret passageway that ran straight from his head to the tips of his fingers. ... Words and things matched up for him ... , and because Sachs himself was hardly even aware of it, he seemed to live in a state of perfect innocence' (*leviathan* 49-50). He describes his own relationship with language in this way:

The smallest word is surrounded by acres of silence for me, and even after I manage to get that word down on the page, it seems to sit there like a mirage, a speck of doubt glimmering in the sand. Language has never been accessible to me in the way that it was for Sachs. I'm shut off from my own thoughts, trapped in a no-man's-land between feeling and articulation ... for me [words] are constantly breaking apart, flying off in a hundred different directions. (*Leviathan* 49)

Sachs loses his power of speech, destroys his marriage, and abandons his facility with the written word. These episodes are triggered by a fall from a fourth-floor fire escape during the Statue of Liberty centennial celebrations. Later, he would tell Aaron that every time he attempted to write he 'would break out in a cold sweat', his 'head would spin' and he would feel like he was falling again from the fire escape experiencing 'the same panic, the same feeling of helplessness, the same rush toward oblivion' (*leviathan* 226). Aaron employs similar language to describe social disconnection and the drive to self-destruction, as Sachs becomes 'a solitary speck in the American night, hurtling towards his destruction in a stolen car' (*leviathan* 237). For the time being, Aaron's relationship with language has become more coherent as he achieves stability and harmony in his own life, which Auster once again figures as innocence. This makes him in a similar linguistic situation to Sachs, provoking Sachs to entrust his story to Aaron. "You know how to tell it to others"; Sachs writes in a note to Aaron. He goes on:

Your books prove that, and when everything is said and done, you're the only person I can count on. You've gone so much farther than I ever did ... . I admire you for your innocence ... (236)

How Aaron reaches this innocent linguistic state is, in part, influenced by his metropolitan experiences and the social spaces that he inhabits. The public thread in the New York experiences of Sachs and Aaron is their presence in artistic social groups of dancers, writers and photographers. The outcome of each character's narrative depends on the development of their relationships with individuals from these groups. It is intensely metropolitan text, and New York is central to the experiences of the protagonist. Regarding the debut of *Ideology*, Sinfield defines "...ideological positions...never exist only in the mind or in the individual experience and consciousness; they are always supported and reinforced...by social institutions and apparatuses" (*leviathan* 119).

## V. Conclusion

In conclusion, the sovereign is the head of the Leviathan, the maker of laws, the judge of first principles, the foundation of all knowledge, and the defender of civil peace. Sovereignty as the soul of the Leviathan. The Leviathan is described as an artificial person whose body is made up of all the bodies of its citizens, who are the literal members of the Leviathan's body. The head of the Leviathan is the sovereign. The Leviathan is constructed through contract by people in the state of nature in order to escape the horrors of this natural condition. The power of the Leviathan protects them from the abuses of one another. The Ideology relevant for discussion above, here signified by the capitalistic system in the community of *Leviathan*. The protagonists of the selected novel exist in the margins of these truths, but not in the margins of society as such. None of them are marginalized through social class, race, or gender but are marginalized in terms of mental capacity. This means that they are marginalized within the ideological framework they exist. It is the political differences between his younger and adult self for Benjamin Sachs. He reflects on how a child is at the mercy of an almost repressive ideological state apparatus within the family, how a mother has the power to decide the dress code of a child, even though the child objects. The bourgeois subject is the thoughtful, apparently self-creating, self-activating, and self-disciplined but also socially-oriented subject. The availability of the theory and actuality of this bourgeois subject informs both Marx's critique of capitalism and his conception of the popular collective actor as a radically democratic formation. Furthermore, the traumatic experiences he had inside the Statue of Liberty haunts his adult self. The invalid and emptiness on the inside of what is translated as the idea of liberty, becomes a part of Sachs already from the age of six. This explains why he cannot be fully interpellated by the Ideological society he lives. It also shows why he feels the need to try out all those different versions of himself, and why he ends up fractured in the end, rather than as a whole person though this thesis has doubled him with the bomb, claiming that in his final moments he reaches the wholeness he has searched for his entire life.

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