

The Roles of Ideological State Apparatus in Maintaining Hegemony in Charles Dicken's *Hard Times*

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ABSTRAK

One of literary works, a novel, may be reflects social phenomenon. The correlation between literary works and social phenomenon includes an analysis towards a novel entitled *Hard Times* by Charles Dickens, which covers a social phenomenon. The overall image of *Hard Times* is a society of industrial city namely Coketown, which has unequal economic condition. Through characters that appear in the novel, it can be analyzed, *Hard Times* reflects social clashes that are triggered by economic condition and social class differentiation. Through Marxism point of view, the characters of *Hard Times* reflects a society which is distinguished vertically into bourgeoisie and proletariat, according to their roles within the economic activity in Coketown. This vertical distinction leads an inclination of bourgeoisie to maintain their domination within the society. This novel highlights that bourgeoisie then looks the role of Ideological State Apparatus, which is very effective to control Coketown society. The bourgeoisie then take opportunity from that condition to maintain their domination. As the result, this novel indicates that proletariat's struggles to get a better economic condition will always be pushed and restricted by the bourgeoisie, which successfully make an approach to the ISA such as religion, school, or media.

Keyword: society, bourgeoisie, proletariat, hegemony, Ideoogical State Apparatus, Repressive State Apparatus.

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I. Background

The multifunctional work of art, literary work, has strong relation with society. Many literary works such as poetry and prose reflect factual condition of a society. Echoing Plato's statement, Bressler states that "literature's primary function is moral, its chief value being its usefulness for cultural or societal purposes" (13). To represent society within its content is one of societal purposes of literary works. Wellek and Warren add, "Literature represents life; and life is, in large measure, a social reality, even though the natural world and the inner or subjective world of the individual have also been objects of literary imitation" (94). Because of the capability of literature in representing a social circumstance, some issues that arise in a society are possible to appear in a literary work.

II. Characters of *Hard Times*

Some characters of *Hard Times* appear frequently throughout the story. They are Stephen Blackpool, Josiah Bounderby, Thomas Gradgrind, and Louisa Gradgrind. They are the major characters of the story. *Hard Times* involves these characters almost in every part of the story. Their existence

within this novel gives big influence to the story lines.

Besides the major characters like Stephen, Bounderby, Gradgrind, and Louisa, there are such minor characters as Slackbridge, Stephen's wife, and Rachel in *Hard Times*. They contribute beneficial roles although they are not involved intensively within the story. The nature of these characters is merely to support, introduce, and emphasize the major character's actions and qualities.

III. Conflicts

Hard Times conveys many clashes among its characters to adjust the tension of the story. Some characters are experiencing internal clashes, or commonly known as internal conflict. The other characters face external conflicts that are able to develop the interaction among the characters.

The novel shows its internal conflict even to begin the course of the story through Stephen's indecision in determining his marriage. *Hard Times* equips Stephen with a desire to end his broken marriage and to find another ideal wife. However, it has to be a dilemmatic problem since Stephen is set to be a man who cares about the impacts of a divorce.

This novel portrays external conflict in some chapters such as “Men and Brothers”, and “Men and Masters”. In “Men and Brothers”, the conflict occurs between Stephen and Slackbridge. Stephen expresses his disagreement toward the union that is led by Slackbridge.

IV. Setting

Hard Times portrays an industrial town that looks very busy called Coketown as the setting of place. Chapter “Key-Note” describes the physical characteristic of Coketown.

The novel mentions a certain nation, England, during the course of the story, which indicates that the fictional setting Coketown lays within England. The following passage strengthens the analysis that the novel uses England as a particular location: “Oh my friends and brothers! Oh men and Englishmen, the down-trodden operatives Coketown” (Dickens, 165). The word ‘Englishmen’ clarifies that Coketown is generated as one town in England.

Most importantly, the novel provides one thing needful for this analysis in correlation with the setting. *Hard Times* portrays an industrial society as the social setting. It cannot be denied that there is a society existing in Coketown of *Hard Times*.

V. Base and Superstructure of Coketown

Charles Dicken’s *Hard Times* strikes social issue through the presence of particular

society in its story. The novel puts Coketown society to deputize the social life contained in the plot of the story. Coketown society is a manifestation of individuals who unite together and do particular activity to complete some necessities. In a certain time, through Coketown society, the novel shows the way of people to obtain their material needs. Besides, this novel also points out that people in Coketown are trying to get their immaterial needs occasionally.

The novel exemplifies that individuals in Coketown need to eat, to wear clothes, and most importantly to get some money as the form of their tangible needs. Through ‘Coketown Hands’ in Chapter “Fading Away”, *Hard Times* try to illustrate the way of people in achieving their basic necessity. Apart from the material and economic aspects, Coketown society needs to construct their ideology, or their intangible necessity as the secondary aspect. Those intangible necessity belong to Superstructure of Coketown.

Another example clarifies the beneficial roles of ISA for the bourgeoisie in controlling Coketown society. Instead of using the repressive measures to break up the unity of the workers in Coketown, the bourgeoisie separate them through religious persuasions. The novel exemplifies the roles

of religious persuasions in chapter “The Key-note”.

The novel describes that ‘the eighteen denominations’ try to get many disciples throughout the Coketown society. The individuals within the eighteen dominations are definitely separated. To prove that the religious persuasions are not able to determine their own ideology, there is a quotation that states that “the eighteen denominations incessantly scratched one another’s faces...by way of agreeing in the steps to be taken for their improvement.”

VI. Hegemony in *Hard Times*

The novel reveals that the bourgeoisie of Coketown then utilize the legitimation of social institutions in Coketown to maintain their hegemony against society. *Hard Times* points out that in performing hegemony, the capitalists of Coketown including Bounderby make approach to the social apparatuses to control the society. Some institutions are able to rule Coketown society through their laws and oppression. Some others gain trustworthiness due to their tender policy, which get into the ideology of Coketown society, especially the proletariat. Through the fellowship between Bounderby and Gradgrind, “a teacher, a man of realities, facts, and calculations” (Dickens, 4) and “a Member of Parliament for Coketown: one of the respected members for once weights and measures” (Dickens, 109), *Hard Times* strikes the alliance among social classes in

Coketown. The novel describes that “Bounderby is as near being Gradgrind’s bosom friend as a man perfectly devoid of sentiment can approach that spiritual relationship towards another man perfectly devoid of sentiment” (Dickens, 17) to show a mutual relationship between bourgeoisie and the institutions. The purpose of the alliance is definitely to maintain domination of the bourgeoisie.

VII. RSA and ISA in *Hard Times*

First, among the many social apparatuses appearing in *Hard Times*, there are laws, courts, and government existing in Coketown. They control Coketown society through visible rules and more importantly they have legitimation to force through sanctions. The novel shows ‘jail’, and ‘parliament’ with its ‘main force’ to represent the Repressive State Apparatus in Coketown. These institutions have binding rules, accompanied by various sanctions.

Second, there is another kind of apparatus controlling individual’s action in Coketown, the Ideological State Apparatus. This kind of apparatus treats the society of Coketown through educative and religious manners. The punishment and violence within it are very vague. In chapter “Never Wonder”, *Hard Times* puts religious denominations to show the ISA of Coketown. The novel illustrates Coketown society as *religious denominations’* baby. It indicates that religion, as the form of ISA offers non-oppressive measure towards its

disciples. The phrase 'infants were never to wonder' emphasizes that most individuals in Coketown demonstrates their compliance to the religious persuasion, an example of Ideological State Apparatus of Coketown.

VIII. The Roles of ISA in Maintaining Hegemony

Hard Times justifies through the illustration of Coketown society how the bourgeoisie presumably engage the repressive apparatus to retain their domination from proletariat's revolution. However, the novel underlines that the Ideological State Apparatus is more appropriate in maintaining the bourgeoisie's domination efficiently. In some chapters, the novel shows the proletariat's dissatisfaction to the RSA of Coketown. The society tends to give their trust to the ISA of Coketown.

To get the legitimation of wealth distribution that is beneficial for the bourgeoisie, for instance, the bourgeoisie plant their idea through education. *Hard Times* shows through chapter "Sissy Progress". In that chapter, Gradgrind's school suggests its students to be realistic concerning the national wealth distribution.

The analysis towards some characters and conflicts of the novel concludes that *Hard Times* represents bourgeoisie's hopes for an eternal domination by oppressing all of proletariat efforts that are aimed to improve standard of living. In maintaining domination, the bourgeoisie's utilize social apparatus, which gains trustworthy from the society, especially

the proletariat. As the result, in Coketown the bourgeoisie have successfully maintained their domination against the proletariat. The bourgeoisie become richer, and the proletariat becomes poorer.