Ideology, Language, and Subjectivity in the Victorian Novel

Dr. Fatma BAYALAŞ KERİMOĞLU

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To Can and Damla

Dr. Fatma BAYALAŞ KERİMOĞLU

Born in Izmir in 1987, she completed her primary and secondary education in the same city. In 2009, she graduated from the Department of English Language and Literature at Ege University. Continuing her academic journey, she earned her master's degree from the same department, defending her thesis titled "Fred D'Aguiar's *The Longest Memory* and Orhan Pamuk's *The White Castle*." In 2023, she completed her doctorate in the same department. Since 2009, she has been working as an English language instructor at Ege University School of Foreign Languages.

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PREFACE

This book is the published version of my doctoral dissertation, which I successfully defended in 2023 at the English Language and Literature Department of the Institute of Social Sciences at Ege University. The emergence of this study began with my encounter with the works of French sociologists during my postgraduate studies. Through this, I realized that I could approach and interpret life stories both sociologically and historically, presenting my efforts within this theoretical framework. In the initial stages of the study, I endeavoured to grasp the language used by these theorists, including Althusser, Foucault, and Bourdieu, and the philosophical background upon which their theories rested. Subsequently, conducting an extensive historical study, I questioned how an individual's social position in Victorian England could vary, particularly concerning class and gender factors. This required a prolonged effort to perceive through the perspectives of authors and characters. I will not dwell on the necessity of reading the novels extensively so many times, but I believe my feeling of knowing the characters intimately might be predictable. Finally, I can say that this study lived, grew, and developed alongside me through a significant part of my life. It witnessed the entire childhood of my dear son, Can. It was there when my beloved daughter, Damla, came into the world, and she is still very young. Throughout this journey, it was present in every moment of my life, whether happy or unhappy. After the time and effort devoted to it, the happiness of completing this study was expected, yet I never anticipated the accompanying sense of disappointment upon parting from it. Nevertheless, there had to be a point of farewell, and I will treasure this unexpected sense of departure as a pleasant surprise it bestowed upon me.

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Last but not least, I present my heartfelt thanks to my caring mother and father for always lightening my burdens, to my lovely brother for rushing to help me in every challenging moment, to my dear husband whose confidence in me has reinforced my determination, to my beloved son for his profound understanding during my study-focused absences, to my cherished daughter and nephew whose births during this process brought forth life energy and renewal.

Dr. Fatma Bayalaş Kerimoğlu

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, the ideologies of the people who wield both power and knowledge have changed the perspectives and shaped the beliefs of others. The perpetuation of these ideologies has been sustained through a complex network of relationships among individuals, enabling those in power to uphold these dynamics. Essentially, ideologies can be characterized as "structures of signification that constitute social relations in and through power" (Barker 98). Ideologies, as Barker further argues, represent "the 'world-views' of any social group that both constitute them as a group and justify their actions" (98). Thus, this book traces the origins of the terms 'ideology' and 'subjectivity,' exploring the theories of ideology and subjectivity by Althusser, Foucault, and Bourdieu. Grounding its analysis on the theoretical frameworks presented by the aforementioned scholars, this book seeks to explore how characters in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848), George Eliot's *Silas Marner* (1861), and Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) operate within the prevailing ideologies of the Victorian period. In doing so, this book also aims to reveal how the characters in these novels act according to the dominant ideologies of the time, as well as the discursive practices shaping their subjectivity.

In this light, one of the fundamental concepts that this study is built upon is the term subjectivity. To understand subjectivity, it is essential to differentiate it from identity, despite the intertwining of these two concepts. Subjectivity, as Hall notes, is "much broader and more multifaceted" than identity (134). It encompasses not only the construction of an individual as a social being but also entails the person's consciousness about his/her subjection to various ideologies. Additionally, Hall elaborates that individuals might possess separate identities such as race, class, and gender whereas they have a subjectivity consisting of all those identities, alongside their imperfect self-awareness (134). In essence, the categorization and interpretations of subjectivity theories in the twentieth century offer various viewpoints on the nature of the subject. While some theories aim to clarify the nature of the subject, others advocate for a perspective that connects individual identity with broader social influences. Together, these theories provide

a comprehensive understanding of subjectivity, revealing its complexities and the dynamics between individual consciousness and external forces.

Moreover, the first chapter of this book explores Althusser's approach to ideology, emphasizing how he lays the groundwork for the theory of ideology in his article, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (1970). According to Althusser, "ideology has no history" and exists wherever people are present; hence, escaping or remaining outside of ideology is impossible (*On the Reproduction* 253-255). The foundations of Althusser's ideology theory rest on Antonio Gramsci's concepts, notably hegemony and civil society (Rehmann 147). Althusser's exploration of how ideology subconsciously envelops individuals draws from the thoughts of Freud and Lacan. Furthermore, Althusser examines the formation of subjectivity through the lens of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs). Based on Marxist thought, he posits that the primary condition of production is the reproduction of the conditions of production, asserting that this reproduction process is achievable through the reproduction of production relations. The continuity of production relations, as Althusser highlights, is interconnected with the reproduction of the means of production and labour power. To sustain production, or more specifically, to secure the existence of the ruling class, society must willingly engage in this production (*On the Reproduction* 232-233). Althusser further emphasizes that the Ideological State Apparatuses play a significant role in ensuring the ongoing nature of production relations (*On the Reproduction* 247). Besides, Althusser asserts that ideology, far from reflecting reality accurately, presents a distorted version of reality to individuals (*On the Reproduction* 256). He contends that despite variations in the ideologies, all individuals are shaped by specific ideologies, which is a concept he coins as 'interpellation' (*On the Reproduction* 264-265). This notion suggests that individuals have always been subjected to ideology within and through language, thereby becoming subjects. Furthermore, the endeavour to define who the subject is directed by the ideologies in which he/she exists.

On the other hand, Michel Foucault's perspective, which focuses on the concept of subjectivity through the lens of 'technologies of the self,' is encompassed within the scope of this study. In his exploration, Foucault intertwines power and knowledge, drawing on Althusser's work to shape his views on the construction of subjectivity. Foucauldian subjectivity is formed by historical contexts and diverse social practices within an individual's existence (Lechte 144). In addition, Foucault's perspective highlights that the subject constructs itself. However, Foucault's focus lies not in exploring when the subject emerges but in understanding how it is formed (Kelly 513). Moreover, Foucault distinguishes subjectivity from the

body as an ontological reality, unlike Descartes' philosophy which views it as a substance. Essentially, Foucault regards subjectivity as a form –one that varies among individuals and evolves with various social roles they assume. Besides, Foucault diverges from Heidegger and Lacan in his approach to subjectivity. He disagrees with Lacan's division of subjectivity into unobservable periods, considering it inadequate. Instead, he concentrates on analysable real practices within historical contexts (Kelly 513-516). This book, therefore, extensively elaborates on how Foucault approaches subjectivity historically and in connection with social practices.

Another influential theorist whose views on subjectivity are utilized in this study is Bourdieu, who examines concepts like habitus, capital, and field. Initially, Bourdieu employs the term 'capital' to describe all economic, social, and cultural accumulations possessed by an individual, ranging from material assets and education to behaviour, attire, accent, and cultural preferences. Thereby, an individual's place within social relationships corresponds to the capital he/she possesses. Additionally, the concept of 'field' represents structures governed by their own dynamics, such as education, art, sports, politics, and religion. Habitus, on the other hand, refers to "the mediating link between individuals' subjective worlds and the cultural world into which they are born and which they share with others" (Jenkins 46). As Mahar et al. assert, habitus represents "a set of dispositions, created and reformulated through the conjuncture of objective structures and personal history" (10). Within in a particular field, an individual's social position imposes dispositions upon him/her, involving his/her subjective adaptation to that position. This adaptation is often manifested in individuals' behaviours, indicated by the perception of social distance and even through their physical posture (Mahar et al. 10) Thus, as is articulated by Mahar et al., "one's place and one's habitus form the basis of friendship, love and other personal relationships, as well as transforming theoretical classes into real groups" (10). In this way, the first chapter concludes by elucidating Bourdieu's approach to subjectivity, examining his analytical methods and referencing the specific terms he employed in his works.

In the second chapter, substantial economic and social developments in England due to industrialization during the Victorian era are explored. Initially, the Victorian Era (1837-1901) is introduced with its general characteristics, and a detailed examination is conducted by dividing the era into three separate stages consisting of the early, mid, and late Victorian periods. Moreover, a brief overview is provided of the prominent ideologies of the era from the perspectives of politics, economy, class, religion, gender, science, and education. The early Victorian era