

# Interdisciplinary Theorization of Subjugated Identities under Demystified Despotisms

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Arts in English

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## **Declaration**

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at BRAC University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate reference.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

**Student's Full Name & Signature:**

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## Approval

The thesis titled “Interdisciplinary Theorization of Subjugated Identities under Demystified Despotisms” submitted by Raina Isabela (20303006) of Summer, 2024 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English June 10, 2024.

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## **Abstract**

“Interdisciplinary Theorization of Subjugated Identities under Demystified Despotisms” investigates subjugation and the formation of subject identities under various forms of despotism over more than a century. By classifying the regimes of Manuel Estrada Cabrera from Guatemala, Mao Zedong from China, and Isaias Afwerki from Eritrea as premodern authoritarian, totalitarian, and modern authoritarian states respectively, this study traces the pattern of volatile subjugations to comprehend the formation of identities in oppressive states through an interdisciplinary approach between political science and literary studies which enables a broad yet in-depth analysis of the tactics used to condition man into the binaries of passive and active subjects. This is executed through a juxtaposition of theoretical foundations by Hannah Arendt, Louis Althusser, and Michel Foucault with the literary texts of Miguel Ángel Asturias, Ha Jin, Hannah Pool, and Michela Wrong to conduct a comprehensive study that examines socio-political constructs, spatial distribution of biopower through disciplinary and non-disciplinary powers, use of pseudo-democratic institutions, representation of the masses, and processes of indoctrination. Consequently, the complexities of binary classification of identities are highlighted due to the emergence of an intermediary position that deprives subjects of their autonomy during extreme subjugation which is directly proportional to the ascendance of ideological control, thus exemplifying the necessity of the demystification of despotisms through literature produced in exile that offers multiple perspectives of subject identities under oppression but remains stifled itself by censorship in their native homelands.

**Keywords:** Guatemala, China, Eritrea; Subjugation; Uprooted; Ideological State Apparatus; Biopolitics; Totalitarianism and Authoritarianism.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

The lexical definition of government is a political unit or machinery that exercises its authority and performs functions according to the distribution of power within it. To ensure the preservation of state power, these functions depend on obedient yet active subjects, in exchange for social benefits and protection. However, despotism subverts this notion by executing repressive functions for state preservation by formulating passive identities amongst the subjects who require little to no benefits and rarely choose to overthrow the oppressive regime. Although such mystified regimes separate themselves from the outside world which largely strives for democratic institutions, despotism has existed in many forms over centuries.

Prominent Latin American countries like Guatemala, Argentina, Haiti, and so on, were largely authoritarian in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and as of 2018, 40% of the world is under authoritarian rule (Frantz 154) including African countries such as Eritrea, Zimbabwe, Sudan, etc. However, the mid-twentieth century saw the emergence of another more dreadful form of authoritarianism in Russia under Stalin, Germany under Hitler, and China under Mao Zedong, now classified as totalitarian states. This emergence catalyzed a surge in the discourse surrounding oppression in the fields of political science through the arrival of Hannah Arendt, Louis Althusser, and Michel Foucault, and literary studies due to the redefinition of the political novel that tackled immense censorship and prohibition. Both fields emphasize that despotism exacerbates over time through differing ideologies and disciplinary tactics of each state, but the object of this study is the application of an interdisciplinary approach involving both fields to explore how subjugation shapes human realities through the distortion of identities,

amongst the binary– passive and active– subjects, which remains fundamentally constant in all oppressive states to preserve state doctrines.

### 1.1 Identification of Research Problems

Although Michel Foucault dismissed the existence of neutrality amongst the masses<sup>1</sup>, an investigation into the dynamic strategies of subjugation in oppressive states reveals multiple complexities within the binary classification of passive or active subjects, including a phenomenon identified by this study as the volatile “intermediary position”. The volatile nature of this position is attributed to different degrees of subjugation, yet the intermediary position occurs in both binaries and essentially disorients the subject from choosing between supporting or revolting against the state to minimize their autonomy within the state apparatuses. Thus, the question arises: how are these identities created?

The answer resides in twentieth-century political science which correlated the intensity of subjugation with the rise of ideological control as exhibited through various strategies employed by dissimilar established and emerging oppressive states. For instance, the Arendtian notion of logical procedure<sup>2</sup>, prominent in totalitarian socialist states, renders the subject’s entire life meaningless if state ideologies are contradicted. In contrast, Althusser’s theory of interpellation<sup>3</sup> elucidates how self-evident truths were imposed onto the masses for indoctrination in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries encompassing the modern authoritarian states. These

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1 See *Society Must Be Defended* 51.

2 See Arendt 516.

3 See Althusser 224.



methods are characterized as non-disciplinary powers that reinforce self-discipline or self-censorship, often complimented with state disciplinary powers like law enforcement or judiciary systems, which ultimately affect the identity of subjects by blurring their public and private spheres. Moreover, repressive ideologies offer totalizing explanations to create a fictitious world<sup>4</sup> often entrenched in the Foucauldian notion of state racism towards authentic opponents who challenge state doctrines. Hence, the oppressive states develop newer and subtler ideological processes over time to subjugate the masses since there is no outside to ideology, prompting the question that this study explores extensively: Is there a method to address the nature of subjugation to predict the formulation of subject identities?

## **1.2 Theoretical Framework and Justification of Selected Readings**

Subjugation is different for each state due to their specific economic, social, political, and cultural realities. Further, oppressive regimes tend to mystify themselves from the outside world to ensure successful subjugation of the citizens through ideological and disciplinary control with minimal possibility for escape. This study resolves the abovementioned research problem by tracing the pattern of subjugation from the late nineteenth to the early twenty-first centuries, according to the distinct social and political realities of three countries segmented as premodern authoritarian, totalitarian, and modern authoritarian states under Manuel Estrada Cabrera (1898-1920) from Guatemala, Mao Zedong (1966-1976) from China, and Isaias Afwerki (1993-

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<sup>4</sup> This phenomenon is elaborated in Section 2.1, page 15

present) from Eritrea respectively for the demystification of state ideologies and identity formulation of the subjects.

The three despots possess unique socio-political strategies that allow for temporal and spatial analysis of subjugation. The Guatemalan premodern authoritarian state is classified as a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie due to the prioritization of the socio-economically dominant class over the welfare of the masses, in particular, how Cabrera's greed was fueled by the United Fruits Company (UFCO) that eventually plundered the country. Moreover, Cabrera's rule primarily focused on disciplinary powers to create a "super-democracy"<sup>5</sup> which is evocative of the similar corrupt policies in modern authoritarian states. In contrast, the Maoist totalitarian state is classified as a dictatorship of the proletariat due to the victory of the socialist revolution. Moreover, this study exclusively focuses on the Cultural Revolution of 1966 which meant to tackle Nikita Khrushchev's revisionism of Stalinist Russia and thus facilitated China's transition into totalitarianism due to the widespread promotion of propaganda and non-disciplinary powers like the logical procedure to execute state racism at the hands of the masses. Lastly, the modern authoritarian state of Eritrea under Afwerki is a combination of the tactics utilized by both premodern authoritarian and totalitarian regimes since it contains aspects of both dictatorships of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and employs disciplinary and non-disciplinary powers for subjugation. Therefore, tracing the pattern of subjugation requires a theoretical foundation of political science to comprehend the operations of the oppressive states through the unique strategies of the despots determined by the authoritative works of Hannah Arendt, Louis Althusser, and Michel Foucault.

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<sup>5</sup> This is extensively discussed in Chapter 3, page 39.

*The Origins of Totalitarianism* by Hannah Arendt, first published in 1951, is a groundbreaking text in political science for its investigation of Nazism and Bolshevism as a new form of government called “totalitarian”. Through Arendt’s *Origins*, this study establishes that China under Mao Zedong exhibited totalitarian characteristics during the events of the Cultural Revolution through the processes of logicity to promote permanent instability within the political structures. But her massive contributions cannot be contained within the understanding of totalitarianism alone. Instead, a detailed analysis of her postulations regarding superfluity facilitates how identities are formed amongst the masses in oppressive states. Moreover, a comprehensive discussion on ideology, its influence on Cold War regimes, and the rise of modern authoritarianism in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries would be incomplete without the innovative ideas of Louis Althusser which this study captures through *On Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, first published as *Sur La Reproduction* in 1995. Apart from Althusser’s renowned ideas regarding the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) and interpellation, his scrutiny of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie<sup>6</sup> and subsequent promotion of the dictatorship of the proletariat<sup>7</sup> due to the efficacy of the Maoist Cultural Revolution is significant to comprehending why modern authoritarian states adopted subtler ideological tactics while combining the traits of both forms of dictatorship or socio-political constructs to preserve its unique doctrines. Further, Michel Foucault’s major political works encompass *Security, Territory, and Population* published in 1978 and *Society Must Be*

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<sup>6</sup>In Marxist theory, dictatorship of the bourgeoisie refers to the dominance of the capitalist society, particularly regarding the political apparatus. This “dictatorship” can refer to a collective as well as an individual who controls the state apparatus and ideology. Moreover, this ‘dictatorship of the bourgeoisie’ uses pseudo-democratic institutions to preserve and reproduce its state ideology.

<sup>7</sup>Dictatorship of the proletariat also postulates from Marxist theory and refers to the transitional phase during a revolution against the bourgeois state to achieve a communist state. Although Marx and Engels advocated for the eventual withering away of the state, different Marxist movements, particularly, Marxist-Leninism, wished to remain in this transitional phase to retain power through permanent instability without ever reaching a utopia.

*Defended* published in 1976 which are a series of lectures he delivered at the Collège de France, in addition to his collection of essays titled *Power*— all of which are integral to the discernment of the definition of power, governmentalization of the state as the right manner of disposing of things to achieve a convenient end, and the changing mechanisms of biopower to execute disciplinary and non-disciplinary powers to individualize man as a mere species. Moreover, his notion of counterhistory facilitates the significance of an interdisciplinary approach involving literary studies that tackle strict censorship to investigate the identity formation of subjects.

Although political science effectively identifies the operations of each oppressive state, the application of literary studies provides an intimate insight into such states through a multiplicity of characters who capture the ominous nature of subjugation. This creates complex identities that dehumanize man through the distortion of numerous preconceived notions regarding the binary classification of subjects. Hence, the complexity of identities beyond the binaries of passive and active subjects is brilliantly captured in the works of Miguel Ángel Asturias from Guatemala, Ha Jin from China, and Hannah Pool and Michela Wrong who have written extensively on Eritrea.

*The President* by Miguel Ángel Asturias mirrors Cabrera's premodern authoritarian regime through a multitude of characters who are passive, active, or reside in the intermediary position under the rule of a tyrannical president. Asturias's modernist style paired with aspects of Maya mythology delves into the intricacies of subjugation to offer an in-depth exploration of terror, greed, and dehumanization. Whereas Ha Jin's *Waiting* navigates the deteriorating existence of a singular character during the social, ideological, political, and economic transitions in the Cultural Revolution under the Maoist totalitarian state which initiates a discourse on emasculation and superfluity due to an intermediary position that blurs his public

and private spheres. Jin combines his English prose with an inherent Chineseness to create “a trans-border writing of translation literature”<sup>8</sup> that effectively unmasks Mao’s strategies of indoctrination and propaganda to promote state racism towards intellectuals to create permanent instability within the political structures. Lastly, *I Didn’t Do It For You: How the World Betrayed a Small African Nation* by Michela Wrong provides a foundation to understand the mystified state of Eritrea before and after liberation to capture the inception of Afwerki’s modern authoritarian regime, while Hannah Pool highlights the disoriented identity of returnees in *My Fathers’ Daughter* to objectively analyze the effects of corruption, pseudo-democracy<sup>9</sup>, and interpellation on the Eritrean masses. Pool’s text further emphasizes the rationale behind employing uprooted authors (apart from Wrong) to demystify the oppressive tactics of the despot and enable the formulation of an intermediary position that resides within both binaries and results in detrimental consequences on the individual when autonomy is revoked, and subjugation becomes more ideological than disciplinary.

### 1.3 The Significance of Study

The term “masses” has often categorized individuals into two collective units, passive and active subjects, negating the multiple intricacies that extend beyond such binaries to reveal how the subjugation of oppressive states has manufactured such identities to achieve their convenient end. Moreover, political novels are subject to strict censorship or remain marginalized in contemporary literary studies due to promoting didacticism over developing

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<sup>8</sup> See Gong 164.

<sup>9</sup> See Frantz 11-13.

aesthetic qualities. Hence, this interdisciplinary study of political science and literary studies bridges the gaps between the two disciplines to examine subjugation through a broad yet in-depth analysis since political science provides an unbiased theoretical foundation, while literary texts by uprooted authors capture the intricacies of the human condition under the repression of three unique forms of despotism.

This study will heavily contribute to the existing body of literature on political science and literary studies since research has yet to be conducted to outline the pattern of subjugation and demystify the formation of identities beyond the binary classifications that nullify autonomy to preserve the power of the despot. Further, meticulous readings of political theorists alongside literary texts from Latin America, Asia, and Africa produced in exile will apprehend how subjugation constantly changes to predict its future evolutions.

## Chapter 2

### Review of Literature and Formulation of Research Questions

The premodern authoritarian, totalitarian, and modern authoritarian states of Guatemala (1898-1920), China (1966-1976), and Eritrea (1993-present) respectively demonstrate a unique pattern of subjugation that impacts the formation of subject identities beyond the binary— passive and active— classifications. The apprehension of the pattern is recognized through the lens of pioneering political scientists, Hannah Arendt, Louis Althusser, and Michel Foucault whose bodies of work have extensively addressed how the state uses a multiplicity of tactics to preserve itself by subjugating the masses. Arendt’s *Origins of Totalitarianism* offers shape to the “shapeless” nature of totalitarian regimes and introduces the concept of superfluity, Althusser’s postulations regarding Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) and interpellation through his critique of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and promotion of socialist values in *On Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, and Foucault’s insights on power as a continuation of war, governmentalization that enables rationalization and intelligibility of the state, and state racism through biopolitics— all provide a theoretical framework to comprehend the complexities of subjugation in oppressive states. However, a critical evaluation of the existing literature reveals certain limitations and inconsistencies which this study seeks to address by juxtaposing the theoretical notions with the literary works of Miguel Ángel Asturias, Ha Jin, Hannah Pool, and Michela Wrong. This interdisciplinary approach bridges the gaps between the two disciplines to enhance our understanding of subjugation in the contemporary period, advancing the fields and creating opportunities for future investigations.

## 2.1 Hannah Arendt: Introduction to Superfluity and Totalitarianism

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt postulated that in a totalitarian state, masses<sup>10</sup> are subjugated to make “all men equally superfluous” (501). In a totalitarian state, the superfluous man is defined as a passive individual whose consciousness is degraded due to “political, social, and economic events... in a silent conspiracy with totalitarian instruments” (501) resulting in a loss of self. The superfluous man lacks a sense of belonging to the world (521) due to his inability to choose between opposing forces resulting in an “intermediary position”<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, superfluity is located perfectly within the concentration camps<sup>12</sup> which transforms man into a set of reliable reactions<sup>13</sup> for the state to preserve itself (496).

*Origins* offers a comprehensive examination of the concept and location of superfluity. Yet a limitation in the work mentioned above is that superfluity is not representative of all men in a totalitarian state since those affected are essentially the primary opponents of the state. For instance, during the Cultural Revolution, intellectuals were considered primary opponents of the Maoist regime since they were accused of promoting Khrushchev’s revisionist ideas that undermined Marxist-Leninist values of the state. To address this limitation, Ha Jin’s literary text,

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10 Tsao identifies Arendt’s concept of masses as a group of individuals who do not belong to any class or possess a social interest (594). They do not possess any common interest due to a large population or mere indifference but highlight the perverted standards and attitude of the totalitarian leader towards public affairs. For simplification, Erica Frantz succinctly describes the masses as “the ordinary citizens” of a regime (21).

11 “Intermediary position” can be experienced by both active and passive subjects and in a totalitarian regime, it can lead to superfluity. Hence, spatial factors are important for this phenomenon.

12 Arendtian scholar Richard J. Bernstein also identified the concentration camps as the source of degradation (438).

13 Arendt compares the extreme form of the superfluous man to Pavlov’s dog. In the nineteenth century, a Russian Scientist named Ivan Pavlov conducted an experiment to control the reactions of a dog through the sound of the bell. By associating the bell with the arrival of food, Pavlov was able to predict and condition the psyche of the dog. Thus, Arendt uses the term “Pavlov’s dog” to demonstrate how totalitarian regimes use classical conditioning techniques to limit man’s spontaneity, but such phenomenon is restricted to the concentration camps which dwell “on horrors” (481).



*Waiting* contrasts the military doctor, Lin Kong with a young, discharged official, Geng Yang who regardless of a prolonged exposure to totalitarian ideologies, does not suffer from superfluity.

Moreover, Arendt argued that the totalitarian state renders an individual superfluous by destroying public life through isolation and private life through loneliness to eliminate any sense of community within the world. But this phenomenon can be remedied through the “trusting and trustworthy company of my equals” (523) which Roy T. Tsao contests since the totalitarian state purges “everyone associated with the accused” (601) to restrict casual contact and intimate relations, thus proclaiming that superfluity is irreversible. Instead of concentrating on reversibility, prevention of superfluity needs to be prioritized which begins with “demystification” to dispel any misconceptions and promote transparency throughout the state apparatuses.

The works of exiled authors including Miguel Ángel Asturias, Ha Jin, and Hannah Pool indicate that uprootedness and its literary output offer an effective method for demystification in premodern authoritarian, totalitarian, and modern authoritarian states. The Arendtian definition of uprootedness refers to a lack of belonging for being violently displaced (501) that aligns with the lexical definition of ‘uprooted’ which means to be displaced from one’s home or usual surroundings, hence ‘uprootedness’ is a suitable quality to describe exiled authors. But Arendt further states “To be uprooted means to have no place in the world, recognized and guaranteed by others; to be superfluous means not to belong to the world at all. Uprootedness can be the preliminary condition for superfluity” (521). Although the superfluous man can reside in an

intermediary position, akin to the exiled author<sup>14</sup> thus experiencing rootlessness, the authors cannot be deemed superfluous since they plant new roots in foreign lands to permeate information regarding their oppressive homelands through the iron curtain<sup>15</sup>. Thus, Jerome Kohn concurs that “reconciliation (with the outside world)<sup>16</sup> may follow only if new roots are struck in the world” (630).

In *Origins*, superfluity is centered in totalitarian states but absent in premodern authoritarian states due to a combination of terror and process of logicity (Arendt 519) in the former. Premodern authoritarianism only terrorizes “authentic opponents but not harmless citizens without political opinions” (371) whereas totalitarianism considers terrorism as a philosophy that executes justice in terms of natural or divine laws<sup>17</sup>. For instance, the state endorsed racism<sup>18</sup> against intellectuals in China during the Red Terror of 1966<sup>19</sup>, intended to uphold the state’s socialist values.

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14 The exiled author, Hannah Pool resides in an intermediary position which is discussed in Chapter 5.

15 Iron curtain is a political metaphor typically referring to the Cold War period to divide the capitalist and communist spheres. Similarly, this dissertation uses this terminology to refer to the totalitarian or authoritarian world and non-totalitarian or non-authoritarian world.

16 Exile, according to Paul Tabori in *The Anatomy of Exile*, refers a person compelled to leave or remain outside his country of origin on account of well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, or political opinion; a person who considers his exile temporary (even though it may last a lifetime), hoping to return to his fatherland when circumstances permit, but unable to do so as long as the factors that made him an exile persist (Lagos-Pope 74). Moreover, an exiled author writes about the inside world of his oppressive homeland by residing in the outside world.

17 Arendt suggests that these divine laws encourage “the nihilistic banality of homo homini lupus (500), which is a Latin proverb that stands for “man is a wolf to another man”. This proverb highlights how man’s selfish nature can result in predatory behavior towards other people, similar to how wolves may prey on the weaker members of their pack. This signifies conflict and possible hostility in relationships for self-interest or profit. Furthermore, it is also reminiscent of Foucault’s concept of “state racism” which is further elaborated in Section 2.3, page 28.

18 See Section 2.3 for Foucault’s concept of “state racism”, page 28.

19 The Red Terror refers to the terror induced by the young Red Guards in Mao Zedong’s regime during the Cultural Revolution who executed state sanctioned Sixteen Points to expose any bourgeoisie or revisionist intellectual, in addition to the destruction of old customs, cultures, habits, and ideas to modernize China.

However, Arendt asserts that leaving the totalitarian state is often more horrific than facing the consequences of one's complicity in illegal actions, including the mere thought of escape (419). This is due to the processes of logicity elaborated through the following four strategies of ideologies unique to totalitarian states as opposed to premodern authoritarian states to trace the pattern of subjugation over time.

### *1. Explanatory*

Ideologies offer a total explanation that “promises to explain all historical happenings, the total explanation of the past, the total knowledge of the present, and the reliable prediction of the future” (Arendt 515). The masses submit to such ideologies that create a fictitious world or escape from totalitarian oppression because “in the general disaster this escape grants them a minimum of self-respect” or a “fool’s paradise of normalcy” (Stanley 182).

Moreover, such masses are referred to as the “front generation” who witness a massive political and economic shift in the country, such as the Chinese Revolution of 1949, and are willing to consent to their own undoing for the sake of the totalitarian movement’s success (Tsao 609). Arendt asserts that after the collapse of the totalitarian state, the front generation may “happily accept a new function in a changed world” (410) or remain permanently superfluous depending on the duration and level of exposure to the state apparatuses since the masses are “loyal not to an interest but to the fiction” (358).

### *2. Propaganda*

Propaganda is used to inject secrecy and distrust into every political action to maintain the iron curtain, hence it relies on systematic lying to the outside world (Arendt 455). But the

uprooted mass and their literary output which Richard J. Bernstein determines as an “explosive political occurrence” substantiate how information eventually leaks due to individuals having “lost their former social identity and emotional bearings, as a result of abrupt political, geopolitical and economic dislocation” (Baehr 12).

Furthermore, the despot in the totalitarian system maintains the iron curtain by propagating himself as the singular representative or medium between the masses and the non-totalitarian world, thus becoming indispensable to the movement. In Chapter 10, Part I titled “The Masses”, Arendt uses Hitler to describe how the despot acts as a representative by stating, “All that you are, you are through me; all that I am, I am through you alone” (374). This phenomenon is also imitated in modern authoritarian regimes since Isaias Afwerki admits, “The PFDJ is Eritrea and I am the PFDJ” (Wrong 374)<sup>20</sup>. Moreover, such statements are used to indoctrinate the subordinates and the subjects through the “will of the Führer” which will be discussed in the subsequent strategy.

### 3. *Indoctrination*

A key example of ideological indoctrination within the totalitarian state is the “will of the Führer” which, according to Hitler’s totalitarian ideology, ensured that every action throughout the regime would align with the despot’s hypothetical approach to a problem; hence, members are compelled to become the executioner and any mistake is deemed as a false impersonation of the despot (Arendt 419-420). Baehr calls this a “game of cheating” (14) since the despot’s enigmatic statements to create a collective unit of loyal members “held out promises of stability

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<sup>20</sup> PFDJ refers to the People’s Front for Democracy and Justice, which is the only political movement or party in Eritrea. Further, PFDJ was initiated from the dissolvment of EPLF in February 1994.

to hide their intention of creating a state of permanent instability” (Arendt 435). For example, “the infinite multiplication of offices and confusion of authority leads to a state of affairs in which every citizen feels himself directly confronted with the will of the Leader” (447) which was witnessed in Mao’s regime where an excess of political departments that were inherently redundant ensured that the “will of the Führer” cannot be disproved by facts.

Furthermore, in a totalitarian state, the collectivization mentioned above of loyal members rests on its ability to reveal the failures of democracy. When the despot reveals that democracy is based on silent approbation and tolerance of an indifferent mass, they succeed in convincing that the parliamentary majority is spurious which leads to the breakdown of class hierarchy resulting in a structureless mass that allows totalitarianism to produce a new class of loyal members of the state<sup>21</sup>. However, Manuel Estrada Cabrera and Isaias Afwerki’s regimes, which are premodern, and modern authoritarian states respectively, rely on pseudo-democratic institutions to preserve their state ideologies which will be further elaborated in the next chapter.

#### 4. *Logical Procedure*

Totalitarian ideologies are unique from their premodern and modern authoritarian counterparts due to their preservation through the ‘logical procedure’. According to Arendt, ideologies utilize “certain methods of demonstration” which “facts into an absolutely logical procedure which starts from an axiomatically accepted premise, deducing everything else from

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21 “Now they (totalitarian state) made apparent... that democratic government had rested as much on the silent approbation and tolerance of the indifferent and inarticulate sections of the people...they succeeded in convincing the people at large that parliamentary majorities were spurious and did not necessarily correspond to the realities of the country, thereby undermining the self-respect and the confidence of governments which also believed in majority rule rather than in their constitutions... The fall of protecting class walls transformed the slumbering majorities behind all parties into one great unorganized, structureless mass of furious individuals who had nothing in common except their vague apprehension that the hopes of party members were doomed” (Arendt 361-364).

it; that is, it proceeds with a consistency that exists nowhere in the realm of reality” (Arendt 516). The procedure is demonstrated through Jin’s protagonist, Lin Kong<sup>22</sup> to substantiate that state ideologies cannot be contradicted since they would render one’s life meaningless (Arendt 516). Hence, the totalitarian state can repeatedly invent new doctrines—such as the multiplication of government offices that serve no purpose as mentioned earlier— to maintain an “all-embracing omnipotence” (Arendt 399) which the masses will accept since they are unwilling to contradict the accepted premise that deduces their entire life.

To conclude this section, modern authoritarian states may employ these five strategies of the processes of logicity once unique to totalitarian states. However, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, ideologies have become subtler and more ambiguous as outlined by Louis Althusser, discussed in the next section and hence, demystification becomes imperative to shape the “shapeless” structure of such oppressive regimes.

## **2.2 Louis Althusser: The Intersection of Ideology and Socio-Political Constructs**

*On Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, first published as *Sur La Reproduction* in 1995 by Louis Althusser offers a comprehensive examination of the intersection of state ideology and socio-political constructs, such as dictatorship of the proletariat and dictatorship of the bourgeoisie to facilitate the demystification of premodern authoritarian, totalitarian and modern authoritarian states.

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<sup>22</sup> This is elaborated in Chapter 4, page 49.

The state ideology is realized through the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) which is a system of defined institutions and their practices including the Scholastic Apparatus, Information and News Apparatus, Publishing and Distribution Apparatus, and so on that may coincide with one another but remain distinctly autonomous (Althusser 137). Moreover, Althusser's chief support of Mao's mass ideological revolution (which will be explored in greater detail later) led him to declare that "the future depends on the ideological" (Yan 8). Notable critics such as, Erica Frantz claimed that "the emphasis on ideology as a means of differentiating authoritarian regimes waned" (11) due to the disintegration of ideology-based regimes in the post-Cold War era; but she contradicts herself by highlighting the importance of "subtler and more ambiguous strategies" to "silence, deter and demobilize opponents" over "brute force to maintain control"<sup>23</sup> in modern authoritarian regimes (110). Hence, demystification of totalitarian and modern authoritarian states begins with how these 'subtler' and 'ambiguous' ideologies and their spontaneous practices promote the subjugation of the masses.

Unlike the Arendtian logical procedure which operates through deduction and argumentation to indoctrinate the masses into superfluity, modern authoritarian states use interpellation. Interpellation operates through self-evident truths which "draws its *immediate confirmation*, imposing itself on every individual by the way of various practices of the ISA. This ideology of the rights of man, freedom, equality," (224) or adherence to the Hobbesian social contract will ensure a life of contentment since the state will uphold social protection.

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23 This is evocative of the Althusserian concept of Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) which covers courts, fines, prisons and various branches of police including the Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité (CRS) of the French National Police Force which intervened directly as the subsidiary repressive force during the protests of May 1968, when other detachments of the police have been exhausted. Overall, the RSA executes and intervenes at the service of the dominant class (67-70)

Thus, the subjects obey these truths to exercise their own freedom<sup>24</sup>. Furthermore, Raúl Sánchez in *Composition's Ideology Apparatus: A Critique* concurs that such ideological control “naturalizes certain authority regimes... and renders alternatives all but unthinkable” (745) due to the imposition of multiple ISAs which shapes the subject. This is further explored in Michela Wrong's *I Didn't Do It For You* where she stresses that every Eritrean advocated for the self-reliance policy during the short-lived African Renaissance period in the country, admitting an uncanny feeling as though she was speaking to “one single, Hydra-headed creature: the Eritrean soul.” (17)

Modern authoritarian states use interpellation to keep individuals within ideology, hence a simple awareness of ideological control<sup>25</sup> cannot offer an escape from state ideologies itself. In *The Psychic Life of Power*, Judith Butler analyzes Althusser's ISA essay to argue how the concept of interpellation is reminiscent of a divine voice of God who demands acknowledgment and cannot be refused since the subject shows a readiness to turn to their hailing as a sign of “guilt to gain a purchase of identity” for embracing the law.<sup>26</sup> This is evocative of Slavoj Žižek's argument that Althusserian ideology appears at its purest under the guise of tautology, that “law is law” and “God is God”; hence, once an individual is within the field of ideology, it is “by definition impossible to adopt an external attitude towards it; there is no continuous passage from its outside to its inside— as Althusser put it, ideology has no outside” (270). However, in *Open Societies and Its Enemies*, Karl Popper argues that an escape from oppressive ideologies is solely

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24 In *On Reproduction*, Althusser clarifies by stating “a 'self-evident truth' that is accepted without visible coercion... we also plainly have to do with an ideological apparatus, since it functions without violence, 'all by itself', 'on the ideology' of its agents, who accept its rules and practise them by observing them, convinced as they are that they must 'fulfil their duty to vote' and that that is 'normal'” (224)

25 Here, Althusser refers to the duplicate mirror structure of ideology or the mutual recognition between leader and subjects, and subject and subject, for representation and reproduction of its doctrines. See Althusser, 198.

26 See Butler, 109-112.



possible for “the ‘freely poised intelligence’ of an intelligentsia which is only loosely anchored in social traditions” (543), akin to the exiled authors who can achieve the highest degree of objectivity due to their uprootedness, thus demystifying modern authoritarian states which are difficult to categorize into a specific socio-political construct.

Premodern authoritarian states, such as Guatemala under Cabrera are considered a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie since “in a number of capitalist countries, proletarian class struggle organizations are quite simply banned... especially in certain Asian, African and Latin American countries directly or indirectly controlled by US imperialism” (Althusser 98). In such states, the ISAs contribute to “the reproduction of relations of production, that is, of capitalist relations of exploitation... by subjecting individuals to the political State Ideology: indirect (parliamentary) or direct (plebiscitary or fascist) 'democratic' ideology” (144) In particular, the scholastic apparatus signifies the repressive nature of bourgeois knowledge since universities and schools are “the original nascent state” (179) of bourgeoisie authority. However, in the dictatorship of the proletariat, the scholastic apparatus also holds significance for the subjugation of the masses, as exemplified by Mao’s Cultural Revolution.

Althusser identified the Cultural Revolution as a mass ideological revolution (Yan 6) and advocated for Mao Zedong’s dictatorship of the proletariat; as exhibited by Althusser’s 1966 essay, “On Cultural Revolution” where he regarded the significance of the scholastic apparatus by stating: “the youth’s contribution to the transformation of bourgeois ideology to proletariat ideology as a ‘great revolutionary task’.” (Yan 5) Due to his Marxist philosophy, Althusser condemned the slow rise of the bourgeois ideology that eventually paved the way for Nikita Khrushchev’s revisionism in the early 1950s-60s as Althusser proclaimed, “I would never have written anything were it not for the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress and Khrushchev’s critique of Stalinism and the

subsequent liberalization” (Kang 6-7). Thus, in *On Reproduction*, Althusser demanded a new ideological system should replace the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie (90). Further, in *Essays in Self-Criticism*, he insisted that “a mass political line, strong enough and flexible enough” must be used to prepare the “New Party” as the new system, which is focused on the masses (214). This is evocative of Mao Zedong’s statement in *Selected Works* which is “The people, and the people alone, are the motive force of world history.” (Yan 7)

Moreover, Althusser determined that the bourgeois state was responsible for creating the myth of the “totalitarian socialist society” where every individual is monitored by the Grand Inquisitor in their heads, reducing the ideological struggle to a repressive role through the intimidation of “bourgeois authority of knowledge” (177-178). However, Mao’s socialist revolution indicated that if the political apparatus relies on the dictatorship of the proletariat, it can reproduce a state ideology that is indeed directly socialist, but indirectly totalitarian as Arendt cautioned against the totalitarian traits of a nascent Cultural Revolution after Mao rejected Khrushchev’s revisionism (29)<sup>27</sup>. This initiated the blurring of the preconceived fixed boundaries between the two forms of dictatorship, further accentuated through the media apparatus.

Althusser stated that in a bourgeois state, the media apparatus is under the private sector, hence, they have a right to exercise their independence and freedom of expression by critiquing the political institution, rather they function as “component parts of determinant Ideological State Apparatuses under the state ideology, in the service of the state’s politics” due to censorship that

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<sup>27</sup> Arendt refers to Bolshevism and Nazism as inherently totalitarian; and Maoism is akin to these forms of government or worse, since the economic failure of the Great Leap Forward, and the Cultural Revolution decimated at least 40-80 million Chinese people whereas Hitler is blamed for around 42 million deaths and Stalin for 30-40 million (Strauss and Southerl).

“lodges itself in advance in the heads of authors who take the precaution of censoring themselves”<sup>28</sup>. But censorship or self-censorship is also a substantial predicament in the dictatorship of the proletariat under the Chinese Propaganda Department called the General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP) which cuts or rejects any book that does not practice “self-discipline” by writing about the following subjects deemed inappropriate: the Tiananmen massacre, the Cultural Revolution, Chairman Mao, the famine in the early 1960s, and so on (Jin, *The Writer as Migrant* 30). Hence, the demystification of the pattern of subjugation in mystified states through the promotion of literature that exercises independence and freedom of expression by critiquing unfair political institutions is of utmost importance, which is exemplified through the heavily prohibited texts of Miguel Ángel Asturias, Ha Jin, Hannah Pool, and Michela Wrong.

However, if censorship or self-censorship is present in both forms of dictatorship, which socio-political construct is inherently the “most violent form: openly dictatorial and tendentially fascist” (Althusser 110)? To address this question, the two forms of dictatorship are juxtaposed in this study through Cabrera’s premodern authoritarian regime which is depicted as a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie in *The President*, and the Maoist totalitarian state which is classified as a dictatorship of the proletariat in Jin’s *Waiting*. The findings of this investigation will demonstrate how none of these constructs are inherently oppressive, instead the political apparatus may use either a bourgeois ideology or proletariat ideology or a combination of both for subjugation and preservation of the state. This is further exemplified in Chapter 5 where the literary text, *I Didn’t Do It For You and My Fathers’ Daughter* captures Afwerki’s modern

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28 See Althusser 80-86, 144.

authoritarian state which had followed the Maoist Model before gaining liberation in 1993 but intended to form a democracy before the Border War of 1998.

### **2.3 Michel Foucault: The Complexities of Governmentalization and Subject Formation**

The variable degrees of subjugation in premodern authoritarian, totalitarian, and modern authoritarian states have catalyzed the requirement to analyze dehumanization at the individual level which Michel Foucault examines in terms of power relations. Foucault defines power as a continuation of war due to unending diplomacy between rivals, who are essentially equal in terms of strength to initiate a “pseudopeace” which allows repression to be centered on struggle and submission of the individual within the state. (*Society Must Be Defended* 16-17)<sup>29</sup> Such a definition of power aptly characterizes a totalitarian state.

Foucault’s definition of power is akin to Hannah Arendt’s concept of permanent instability within the totalitarian state<sup>30</sup> which initiates unending diplomacy between rivals to create confusion within the political structures for collectivization as demonstrated in Section 2.1. But this definition leads Foucault to entirely dismiss the existence of a neutral or passive subject and in turn, the superfluous man who similarly resides in an intermediary position in the totalitarian state- “We are therefore at war with one another; a battlefield runs through the whole of society, continuously and permanently, and it is this battlefield that puts us all on one side or the other. *There is no such thing as a neutral subject.* We are all inevitably someone’s adversary.

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29 See *Power* 89-93, and Spieker, 191 for Foucault’s use of the Hobbesian definition of “war of all against all” or Hobbes’s primitive war.

30 Moreover, Roger Deacon in *Strategies of Governance*, correlates the definition above with Mao Zedong’s statement regarding war as the politics of bloodshed (138).

[emphasis added]” (*Society* 51) Evidently, this approach contradicts the Arendtian belief that the totalitarian state’s primary objective is to make all men superfluous. Thus, to investigate the complexities of man’s nature in oppressive regimes, Jin’s *Waiting* illustrates the contrasting masculinities of Lin Kong (superfluous subject) and Geng Yang (active subject), and Asturias’s *The President* employs morally ambiguous characters such as Angel Face (passive subject)<sup>31</sup> in a totalitarian and premodern authoritarian state respectively to predict the pattern of subjugation in the modern authoritarian context.

Foucault proposes a definition of “government” in his essay, “Governmentality” to investigate the political apparatus of the twentieth century which aligns with the operations of a modern authoritarian state. Hence, the government is identified as a “right manner of disposing things” to organize men and their relations by developing a “complex of knowledges” to preserve the state apparatuses (Foucault, *Power* 208-220). The ‘complex of knowledges’ such as the legislature or judiciary system ensures that the state is a “composite reality and mythicized abstraction (*Power* 220) to become the principle of intelligibility<sup>32</sup> for maintaining and preserving its ideologies. Hence, Foucault concurs with the Althusserian notion that “the future depends on the ideological” by determining the state as a tactical entity that is “organized only in reference to itself.” (*Security, Territory, and Population* 290).

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31 Passive subject and neutral subject are synonymous. Passivity differs according to spatiality and use of ISAs over RSAs in their respective spaces. For example, Lin Kong’s passivity is different from Angel Face since he resides in a totalitarian state and proclaims himself to be a “superfluous man” whereas, Angel Face is a passive subject because he resides in a premodern authoritarian states where resisting the despot is not as challenging to the totalitarian counterpart. This will be further elaborated in Chapter 4 and 5.

32 In *Security, Territory and Population*, Foucault states that the principle of intelligibility is what the state is and what it must be. The principle of intelligibility and the state’s objectives frame the governmental reason called *raison d’État*. *Raison d’État* appropriates the knowledge of the state for maintenance and preservation so that it can be organized to meet its own convenient end. See 287-290.

Moreover, Mitchell Dean argued that the complex of knowledges is distributed amongst the subjects through rationalization (33) which is “dangerous” since it can validate the irrationalities of the state that upholds the right to life and take life (Foucault, *Power* 299) to preserve its ideologies. This is evocative of the government’s ability to shape the conduct of its subjects through self-regulation (Dean 32) to ensure that they remain in a “field of possibilities in which the behavior of the active subject is able to inscribe itself.”<sup>33</sup> (*Power* 341) This phenomenon is witnessed in totalitarian and modern authoritarian states where Mao had manufactured consent through discipline, such as self-regulation, self-censorship, etc. which were imitated by Afwerki to politically reeducate the EPLF during the Liberation War of 1993 and later continued in the WYDC due to the Border War of 1998. Further, this phenomenon is effectively captured in this study through the protagonist Lin Kong in *Waiting* and Hannah Pool’s family, particularly her brother, Stephanos who is forced to participate in the Border War of 1998 in *My Fathers’ Daughter*.

In addition, Foucault expressed sexuality to be an individualizing disciplinary power within the state (*Society* 252) since the very nature of man to possess “a sexual nature” is what makes man an object of control (Taylor 160). This was exemplified in Mao’s totalitarian state as illustrated in *Waiting* which merges the themes of strict political oppression with sexual repression to castrate the mind of the superfluous man and was further implemented in the EPLF due to the Maoist Model during the Liberation War of 1993 exhibited in Michela Wrong’s *I Didn’t Do it For You*.

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<sup>33</sup>Foucault discusses how power is only exercised over “free” subjects within the field of possibilities they have already consented to, thus, highlighting the limits of freedom itself (*Power* 342).

For Foucault, resistance towards the aforementioned disciplinary power is not a passive action or a reversal of power itself, instead, resistance is “as inventive, as mobile, as productive” as power itself (Davidson xxi), hence it is indistinguishable from power (Deacon 128). However, resistance takes different forms due to the variability of subjugation in premodern authoritarian, totalitarian, and modern authoritarian states. For instance, the processes of logicity in totalitarian states make productive resistance incredibly challenging since the conflict with the formidable despot may lead to superfluity amongst the masses.

However, in premodern authoritarian states, where repression is primarily exerted by the RSA (See footnote 9) instead of the ISAs, resistance can simply be classified as an “anarchistic” or “immediate struggle” where the removal of the chief enemy is of utmost concern instead of resolving the root of the problem (*Power* 329). For instance, the removal of Cabrera by the Unionist Party was deemed the utmost concern in Guatemala. Yet, his impeachment eventually led to the rise of another despot, Jorge Ubico soon after. But *The President* by Miguel Ángel Asturias highlights greed as the root of the problem, at the micro and macro level through the characters, Judge Advocate, and the omnipresent President. Hence, Foucault advocates for a new discourse as a productive form of resistance called “counterhistory” which features the misfortunes of ancestors, exile, and servitude to demystify the distorted knowledge of the regime that tries to constantly seal it (*Society* 71-73). Thus, “counterhistory” adds a new dimension to the demystification offered by exiled authors who use their artistic abilities to express an act of resistance that challenges the politics of domination (103-104).

The last method of demystification involves the Foucauldian definition of biopower, biopolitics, and state racism. Biopower refers to the state control of the biological or the acquisition of power over man as a living being (*Society* 240). It is classified as a life-

administering power that becomes biopolitical when situated and exercised onto the species to protect and reproduce the state ideologies. Biopolitics is defined as “a complex array of changing mechanisms concerned with regulating the contingent economy of species life” (Dillion and Lobo-Guerrero 268). The ‘changing mechanisms’ of biopower refer to the spatial distribution of individual bodies that may be regulated through disciplinary powers or non-disciplinary powers (Foucault, *Society* 242).

Disciplinary power attempts to “rule a multiplicity of men to the extent that their multiplicity can and must be dissolved into individual bodies that can be kept under surveillance, trained, used and if need be, punished.” (Foucault, *Society* 242) This is witnessed in all oppressive states, primarily, in premodern authoritarian states which use the RSAs to monitor the individual’s body and behavior to classify what is normal and what is deviant (Frost 546). However, modern authoritarianism and totalitarianism also use the new non-disciplinary powers conveyed through the more dangerous ISAs or “the introduction of more subtle, more rational mechanisms” (*Society* 242) to perceive man as a “new body, a multiple body... infinite in number, cannot necessarily be counted.”<sup>34</sup> (*Society* 245)

Moreover, state racism is an obligatory precondition in all of the abovementioned oppressive states that makes “killing” an entire group of people acceptable. Here, “killing” does not equate to murder but “every form of indirect murder: the fact of exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, rejection, and so on.” (*Society* 256) For instance, Maoism employed the devices of political rationality to convert the class enemy or the bourgeoisie into a biological threat (*Society* 83). Hence, Foucault

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<sup>34</sup>Frost supports this deduction by claiming that biopolitics, which shift from the political, operate by “dividing the masses into scientific groupings that can be subject to political interventions” (547).



explicitly proclaims that socialism was racist from the outset, due to its promotion of biopolitics and rationalizing the right to kill (261).

In *Killing Yourself To Live: Foucault, Neoliberalism, and the Autoimmunity Paradigm*, Jason Maxwell proposes that a remedy to power as a perpetual state of war is to analyze the specifics of the mass's environment "from moment to moment" (171). But this remedy is not feasible to analyze mystified states that use the iron curtain to prevent any information from leaking to the non-totalitarian world. Instead, through the literary texts of the uprooted masses, an effective method of demystification is enabled by the comparison of biopolitical mechanisms to investigate state-induced racism and trace the pattern of subjugation in premodern authoritarian, totalitarian, and modern authoritarian states.

## 2.4 Conclusion: Synthesis of Research Questions

The primary objective elicited from this review of the literature is the identification of the pattern of subjugation from premodern authoritarian to totalitarian to modern authoritarian states, in the context of Guatemala, China, and Eritrea respectively, encompassing the late nineteenth and early twenty-first centuries. To investigate the pattern of subjugation, this study focuses on socio-political constructs such as the two forms of dictatorships, the spatial distribution of biopower through disciplinary and non-disciplinary powers, lack of democratic practices, representation of the masses by the despot to the outside world, and indoctrination through ideological control.

This hypothesizes that modern authoritarian states utilize certain aspects of both bourgeois and proletariat ideologies to subjugate the masses and preserve their unique state ideology (See Section 2.2, page 13), distribute biopower through disciplinary and non-disciplinary powers, represent the masses to the outside world akin to the totalitarian despot (See Section 2.1, page 5), and indoctrinates through interpellation to impose state ideologies in exchange for social protection. These assertions are exemplified in Chapter 6 through the literary lens of Hannah Pool and Michela Wrong.

Moreover, the following research question is formulated by investigating the pattern of subjugation to predict the operations of modern authoritarian regimes: **How does subjugation affect identity formation in oppressive states?** Arendt argued that in a totalitarian state, all men are equally superfluous due to the logical procedure that ensures the state ideologies cannot be contradicted whereas, Foucault entirely dismisses the existence of an intermediary position where both active and passive subjects may reside, and in turn contradicts Arendt's notion since

the superfluous man is a passive subject with a degraded consciousness. Hence, by synthesizing the differing arguments, it becomes evident that all men cannot be universalized into one distinct category regardless of their identical residence. To determine the complexities in passive and active subjects to subvert these binary classifications altogether, and validate the existence of an intermediary position, factors including background (age, occupation, education, residence) and experience (relationships, history) will be investigated through the selected literary texts in the subsequent chapters.

Further, the effects of subjugation are contextualized to encompass differing political approaches through multiple literary lenses of Miguel Ángel Asturias, Ha Jin, Hannah Pool, and Michela Wrong which leads to the development of the last research question: **What are the methods that enable the demystification of oppressive states?** The essential findings of the literature review including, the Arendtian understanding of ‘uprootedness’, Althusser’s concern regarding censorship in multiple apparatuses, and Foucauldian concept of ‘counterhistory’ formulate the assertion that the literary works of exiled authors who exercise their independence to critique unfair political institutions without the risk of censorship offers an effective method of demystification, particularly when each state is compared with one another to investigate the pattern and effects of subjugation on identity formation.

### Chapter 3

#### Premodern Authoritarianism: The Multiplicity of Subjugation in Miguel Ángel Asturias's *The President*

Miguel Ángel Asturias occupied numerous roles that altered the representation of Guatemala to the rest of the world. In 1899, he was born into the premodern authoritarian state of Manuel Estrada Cabrera (1898-1920), while his family fled into internal exile to the countryside amidst political strife. Political strife would continue to haunt him throughout the years due to his role as an ambassador to France and his abhorrence towards the United States's influence on Guatemala<sup>35</sup>, reinforced by a string of despots who plundered the economy for personal gain—all of which contributed to his most impactful role as an exiled author. He was exiled in France and Argentina which provided him with the highest degree of objectivity to demystify the oppressive political institutions of Guatemala through his lyrical protest novels.

*The President* first published in 1946 as *El Señor Presidente* effectively demonstrates Foucault's notion of "counterhistory" since it demystifies the distorted realities that the premodern authoritarian state tries to conceal. But instead of using historical evidence (Foucault, *Society* 71-73), Asturias chooses the fictional realm and references to Maya mythology to elucidate the brutalities in oppressive regimes. In addition, his modernist style<sup>36</sup> challenges the typical protest novel through lyrical prose and elusive characters with no cohesive plot.

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<sup>35</sup>The United States, through the United Fruit Company, had a major influence on Guatemala's economy, including a military coup reinforced by the US in 1954

<sup>36</sup>The *President* focuses on Cabrera's premodern authoritarianism through Asturias's avant-garde style, which Lyon has noted to be "almost Joycean" (187) due to its inventive and lyrical "all-purpose, total language" (Martin, "Three Major Novels" 18)

Yet Asturias's modernist style amidst the "literary Boom" (Martin, *Introduction* xxii)<sup>37</sup> in Latin American literature resulted in the categorization of his work as "anachronistic". If the novel had not been denied publication, due to strict censorship under the Ubico regime, *The President* would have been released in 1933 and observed the rise of Hitler's Nazi regime (Martin, *Introduction* xxii). Thus, the novel's capacity to demystify the intricacies of subjugation using disciplinary powers in the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie would have earned Asturias an insurmountable position in literary and political spheres.

The premise of *The President* revolves around the inhabitants of an unnamed country<sup>38</sup> under an omnipresent despot who uses disciplinary powers for subjugation to preserve his dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. To investigate the complexities of subjugation and how it forms passive and active subjects in a premodern authoritarian state, characters such as the Idiot, Angel Face, and Judge Advocate respectively will be analyzed according to factors regarding, their backgrounds and experiences as discussed in section 2.4.

The mute Idiot is a passive subject who does not reside in an intermediary position but lacks "political opinions" (Arendt 371) in a premodern authoritarian state. However, his relationships and experiences in the state unveil how passive masses without political opinions are subjugated by disciplinary powers that rule a multiplicity of men before dissolving into individual bodies that are monitored and punished if they challenge the despot's rule.

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<sup>37</sup>The "literary Boom" in Latin American literature describes how in the 1960s, literature needed to be new and detached from political affairs due to the fear of producing a typical protest novel. Asturias's literary works gained prevalence after the release of his English translation in 1964 and receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1967. Still, his diplomatic affairs and modernist style, which was accused of imitating the European modernist aesthetic, resulted in his work being largely overlooked in the continent.

<sup>38</sup>Mario Vargas Llosa states that even though Guatemala is not mentioned once throughout the novel, the imagery directly corresponds to that "unfortunate yet beautiful country" (xi).

The Idiot is represented as “a symbol of the silent masses who have no voice under despotism” (Walker 63) and the embodiment of Christ<sup>39</sup> as exemplified by the scene of his death which is contextualized by the sound of a distant church where “bells tremulously tolling thrice for the souls of dead Christians : Mer-cy ! Mer-cy ! Mer-cy !” (Asturias 29)<sup>40</sup>. “Dead Christians” refer to the apolitical passive masses and the absence of salvation in the premodern authoritarian states ridden with corruption. This is further clarified by the following lines that predict the Idiot’s eventual demise: “Snow for the dying ! Ting-a-ling ! Snow for the dying ! The viaticum is going by ! The ice-man is passing ! Take your hat off, you dribbling mute ! Snow for the dying !” (Asturias 21).

Snow represents mortality, death's coldness, and the citizens' meaningless lives<sup>41</sup>, and viaticum is a sacrament given to the dying Christian to receive the body and blood of Christ. In addition, the dribbling mute is a reference to the mute Idiot, and the ice-man who delivers snow to the masses alludes to the omnipresent president whose reelection campaign is in full swing within the city. Hence, there is no salvation for the passive masses<sup>42</sup> whilst the corrupt despot remains in power. For example, the apolitical beggars witness the assassination of Colonel Jose Parrales Sonriente by the Idiot and receive brutal torture to falsely accuse the lawyer, Abel Carvajal, and General Canales signifying how disciplinary powers are willing to dissolve the

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<sup>39</sup>By aligning the figure of Christ with the Idiot, Asturias challenges Christian beliefs and institutions due to the disillusionment and existential anguish of the modernist authors. Martin stresses that Asturias was “willingly absorbed into the postwar existentialist wave of politically committed literature advocated by Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir” (*Introduction* xiv).

<sup>40</sup>It is important to note that the Idiot is shot by Lucio Vasquez, a member of the Secret Police at the steps of the Cathedral Porch, witnessed by the Turks and Genaro Rodas but “no one saw anything” (Asturias 50).

<sup>41</sup>This is in reference to the modernist author James Joyce’s short story “The Dead. Many scholars, including Gerald Martin and Thomas E. Lyon, have noted a Joycean style in Asturias’s novels since they wrote around the same time period and resided in Paris during the 1920s-1930s.

<sup>42</sup>Asturias further reinforces this argument when he states, “it was not enough for families and towns to be aged by despair; the culminating outrage must take place-the image of Christ in his agony must pass before the President with his eyes shadowed by an infamous golden canopy” (Asturias 217)

collective into individual bodies which become the sight for punishment in a premodern authoritarian state.

Such oppressive states further challenge Foucault's dismissal of an intermediary position as exemplified by Asturias's protagonist Miguel Angel Face, given that the character embodies multiple dualities, including "the thematic relevance of the angel-devil antithesis" (Martin, "Three Major Novels" 80). In *The President*, Angel Face is often proclaimed as "beautiful and wicked as Satan" due to his occupation as the chief advisor or "the Favorite" of the wicked President<sup>43</sup>; nevertheless, the reader is initially introduced to the character through an act of kindness towards the Idiot. Although Angel Face remains in an intermediary position akin to Ha Jin's protagonist Lin Kong, the former is not a passive or superfluous subject due to his residence in a premodern authoritarian state where there is a lack of ideological control through logical procedures or interpellation, resulting in his ability to perform modes of resistance against the rule of the despot.

Richard L. Franklin argued that any hope of resistance in an oppressive state rested in "man's determination for self-realization" (685), hence Angel Face's mere association with Camilla is an act of resistance since this association leads to self-realization regarding his service to the malevolent master. When Angel Face learns that the President has publicized this association by claiming the former had secretly wed the daughter of his enemy, the President vomits his whiskey onto Angel Face while laughing manically, enough to make him fear that his

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<sup>43</sup>Angel Face outlined early in the novel that such an esteemed occupation may come at the price of many heinous crimes which reveal his malevolent nature. "To commit a crime for example," the most effective means of gaining the leader's good will; or "to commit a public outrage on defenceless people"; or "to demonstrate the superiority of force to public opinion", or "to get rich at the expense of the nation"; or ... A murderous crime would be best; the annihilation of one of his fellows was the clearest proof of a citizen's complete adherence to the President" (Asturias 175-176)

position as the Favorite has been compromised. Yet instead of feeling remorse or fear, the sycophantic Angel Face felt disgust and rage towards his master for the first time. “He (Angel Face) felt sick with disgust, yet he still went on behaving like a well-trained, intelligent dog, content with its portion of filth and full of the instinct of self-preservation. He smiled to conceal his animosity, but there was death in his velvety eyes;” (Asturias 222)

Angel Face is different from the Idiot because he resides in an intermediary position, instead of possessing a lack of political opinion. But unlike Ha Jin’s protagonist whose superfluity immobilizes him in an intermediary position, Angel Face is allowed to challenge the rule of the despot due to an intermediary position without promoting direct impeachment. For instance, Lin Kong abstains from all sexual activities reflecting the castration complex<sup>44</sup> of intellectuals in the Maoist regime whereas Angel Face restricts his lust to protect Camilla which instigates the struggle for morality within the character<sup>45</sup> that leads him to disobey direct orders to arrest Major Farfan for sharing governmental information at the Sweet Enchantment so that God would “reward him by saving Camilla.” (172).

Therefore, when the President proclaimed that he ruled over “a nation of intenders”, or people who wish to act but lack willpower for which “I, the President of the Republic, who has to do everything, and take all the blame as well” (Asturias 257)— it elucidates how the subjects are not indoctrinated to execute the will of the Führer. Instead, all representatives of the

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<sup>44</sup>Castration complex is a metaphor for political persecution which merges the themes of strict oppression with sexual oppression, for example, the practice of self-discipline during the Cultural Revolution which castrated the minds of the intellectuals in the Maoist society. (See Qiu 98-109). This will be further elaborated in the next chapter.

<sup>45</sup>This is indicated in the lines, “And when I mastered my own nature so as to save Camila from my desire, I left a part of myself. unstuffed; that’s why I feel empty, uneasy, angry, ill, caught in a trap” (Asturias 141-142)



government<sup>46</sup> in *The President* particularly the active subject, Judge Advocate possesses the capacity to resist direct orders from the despot for his profit.

Although Judge Advocate actively supports the despot of the premodern authoritarian state due to his occupation, he disobeys the President's orders to release Fedina de Rodas since he decides to sell her to the Sweet Enchantment. This signifies how the subordinates of the despot in power are representatives of the greed of the President himself who declares, "You might almost say that if it weren't for me Fortune wouldn't exist," (Asturias 257) evocative of Manuel Estrada Cabrera's greed that plundered Guatemala. Yet it is the consequence of greed that politicizes individual bodies to satiate the bourgeoisie state<sup>47</sup> which is exemplified by the exploitation of Genero Rodas's wife, Fedina as a form of human trafficking.

After Genero witnesses the murder of the Idiot, he sees a red light beaming from his newborn's cradle that forbodes "the spectre of death" while envisioning his wife, Fedina as a skeleton with nothing but "the sunken breasts, limp and hairy like rats, hanging over the framework of the ribs." (Asturias 57)<sup>48</sup>. When Fedina de Rodas is captured by the police, Judge

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46Other subordinates of the President including Major Farfan defies orders by sharing classified information and his appreciation for General Canales to the prostitutes at the Sweet Enchantment, General Canales stages a revolution against the President for wrongfully accusing him of assassinating the Colonel.

47Another brief example of this phenomenon is how Angel Face is tricked into becoming the prisoner in No. 17 at the underground cells when he attempts to leave the premodern state. Chapter XLI "Nothing to Report" details how Angel Face becomes dehumanized as the prisoner in No.17 through the torture inflicted upon his body, "Two hours of light, twenty-two hours of utter darkness, one tin of soup and one of excrement, thirst in summer, flood in winter; that was life in the underground cells" (280). But the memory of Camilla gives him an unreal hope that such grim realities might simply be a nightmare; until the Chief of Police uses the Vich to deliver false information regarding her alleged infidelity which ultimately kills the prisoner in No. 17. Moreover, the Vich is awarded "eighty-seven dollars... a second-hand cashmere suit and his passage to Vladivostok" for the death of the prisoner or Angel Face.

48Lastly, he hallucinates a single eye around his wife and child which makes him shriek, "I'm being pursued by an eye, an eye is chasing me!" (Asturias 58) The eye is evocative of the myth of evil eye or "el ojo" in Maya culture which believes that the evil eye can attack a child so severely that the child may not be able to repel it. Further, Genero's hallucination instills the fear of "Cadejo" or the creature that "prevented one from sleeping" (Asturias 59). The figure of Cadejo is split into the white Cadejo that protects people from danger, and the black Cadejo which appears as the personification of the devil[3] and is known to consume newborn babies. The systematic use of the Cadejo to enhance the dynamic between good and evil while predicting future events in the novel is expected from Asturias who had written a short story titled, "Legend of the Cadejo".

Advocate interrogates her regarding the whereabouts of General Canales and the crimes committed by her husband<sup>49</sup>. Although she had no information regarding both, she is sentenced to solitary confinement and force-fed lime juice while her newborn bellows behind the thin walls in hunger. Eventually, when she is allowed to feed her baby, it rejects her breast milk which had become too sour for consumption, resulting in the baby's death. Afterward, Judge Advocate sells Fedina to the brothel called "The Sweet Enchantment" while she tightly holds onto the decaying corpse of her child. Therefore, although the death of the child and abuse of Fedina were foreseen, using references to Maya mythology (See footnote 48) this incident establishes how the judiciary system contributes to the spatial distribution of biopolitics through disciplinary powers to politicize the body according to the state apparatus<sup>50</sup>.

Judge Advocate objectifies man to becoming a biopolitical subject in the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie to satiate his greed without suffering any consequences which justifies his classification as "the evilest character" in *The President* (Llosa viii). But Judge Advocate solely represents the corruption in the judiciary system of a premodern authoritarian state; thus, he lacks the complexity to analyze how evil tactics subjugate the masses. Hence, the title of Asturias's novel is aptly named after the President who conveys the intricacies of subjugation in the premodern authoritarian state.

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<sup>49</sup>Although Genero Rodas was not involved in the murder of the Idiot, he is given two hundred lashes and falsely accused of helping Vasquez.

<sup>50</sup>This becomes much more evident when Genero Rodas is finally hired as part of the Secret Police after the senseless death of his child and the merciless abuse and eventual human trafficking of his wife; since, it is essential for Genero to be detached from his family and receive a cruel punishment outlined by Angel Face, to ensure complete devotion to the President.

The cyclical nature of subjugation through disciplinary powers is captured by the Maya legend of Tohil's dance<sup>51</sup>, where Asturias juxtaposes Tohil, who demands human sacrifices to abolish the suffering of the tribesman, with the President who instigates permanent instability (Arendt 435) in its nascent stage in a premodern authoritarian state since his rule cannot be challenged due to pseudo-democratic institutions satirized through the re-election campaign of the President in the poet's propagandistic speech<sup>52</sup>. The term "pseudo-democracy" is derived from Erica Frantz's postulations in *Authoritarianism: What Everyone Needs to Know* published in 2018, where she suggests that modern authoritarianism resides in a hybrid gray zone by mimicking democratic practices such as fair elections with multiple political parties (11-13).

Asturias further ridicules pseudo-democracy by defining the President's premodern authoritarian regime as a new form of government called "Super-democracy" of the "Super-man" (255-256). The President's super-democracy possesses no resemblance to democracy, for instance, it prohibits freedom of speech and all intellectual activities if it attacks the intelligibility of the state as shown by Doctor Luis Barreno, who is berated for raising awareness regarding the outbreak of rabies in the President's regime and barred from leaving the country. Hence, pseudo-democracy is an integral element in the subjugation of masses in both premodern and modern authoritarian states.

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51The tribal ritual called on Tohil, the Giver of Fire, to stop subjecting them to a living death by swallowing the lighted torch of fire that resulted in famine within the land; in return Tohil demanded human sacrifices from the hunter-warriors of the tribe to create "neither true death nor true life" (260). Once the tribesmen agree, Tohil demands they keep dancing in his honor which symbolizes the frenzy of repetitive suffering and corruption in the state.

52" That the welfare of the Republic depends upon the RE-ELECTION OF OUR ILLUSTRIOUS MANDATORY AND ON NOTHING ELSE BUT HIS RE-ELECTION ! Why hazard the ship of State in unknown waters, when we have at its head at present the most accomplished Statesman of our day, whom History will salute as a Great Man among Great men, a Wise Man among the Wise, a Liberal, a Thinker and a Democrat? ? ? Even to imagine any other than Him in this high office amounts to an attempt upon the Destiny of the Nation (which is our own destiny); and whoever dares to do so-if any such there be-deserves to be shut up as a dangerous lunatic, or if he is not mad, tried as a traitor to his Country according to the law ! ! !" (254-255)

Further, the root of the problem in Guatemala resided in Cabrera's association with the imperialist United Fruit Company (UFCO) which "played a key role in the election of every President" (Kit 106)<sup>53</sup> that Asturias alludes to when Doctor Barreno connects the death of a few unfortunate men to the consumption of sodium sulphate bought from the soda-water factory (30) and the President berates him since the soda-water factory was associated with the rising UFCO at the time. This association established his regime as a typical dictatorship of the bourgeoisie that prioritized the monetary gain of the dominant bourgeoisie class over the welfare of the citizens. For instance, Cabrera's rule increased U.S. investments from 6 million dollars in 1897 to 40 million dollars in 1920 which deepened the nation's economic dependency on the U.S. but also "contributed to the dictator's personal wealth" (Dosal 38), aligning Cabrera with a monopolistic ruler whose success is highly individualistic and induces ruthless competition among the masses (Arendt 362), exemplifying that political institutions in the premodern authoritarian state serve as a façade for private interests rather than the welfare of the state.

Further, Asturias insinuates the stranglehold of the UFCO in Guatemala when Angel Face observes a portrait of the President with striking "epaulettes like railway-lines" (40) evocative of the concession signed by Cabrera in 1904 that terminated the 25-year ongoing construction of the Northern Railway, meant to promote the country's economic independence from foreign investments. Cabrera had surrendered the project to Minor C. Keith, the founder of UFCO (Dosal 46) from which he accumulated a significant amount of wealth. Hence, his premodern authoritarian regime is characterized as a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie with hidden

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<sup>53</sup>Manuel Estrada Cabrera's rule began with the assassination of general José María Reina Barrios and the implementation of the Monroe Doctrines which sought the establishment of U.S. control over Latin American countries. Barrios was highly cooperative with the U.S. military and State Department and allowed the UFCO to take over public, often indigenous lands. Moreover, in *Dictatorship and Democracy in Latin America*, Calderon argued that the U.S. representatives functioned as 'kingmakers' in Guatemalan politics and hindered re-election of presidents by refusing to intervene in Cabrera's tyrannical actions.

desires and secret convictions of the socio-economically dominant classes (Tsao 583) resulting in widespread exploitation and deprivation of resources across Guatemala that Asturias further captured in his later works.

Nevertheless, the representation of Manuel Estrada Cabrera through the fictional President allows Asturias to define the characteristics of a premodern authoritarian state of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For instance, the regime's association with the UFCO establishes premodern authoritarian states as primarily a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Moreover, *The President* highlights the existence of pseudo-democratic practices through "super-democracy" and how the judiciary system contributed to the spatial distribution of biopolitics through disciplinary powers that monitored and punished individual bodies if they challenged the despot. The observation of the exiled author's objective view is depicted by a diverse set of characters, including Angel Face who challenges Foucault's dismissal of passive subjects and sets a precedent for analogous characters in totalitarian regimes as observed by Lin Kong in the next chapter.

The counterhistory provided by Asturias captured the intricacies of subjugation in a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie through disciplinary powers and pseudo-democratic practices that are still present in contemporary authoritarian regimes. Hence, *The President* paved an integral path for demystifying the unique pattern of subjugation, beginning with the premodern authoritarian state, which eventually altered due to newer and subtler ideological tactics in the mid-twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

## Chapter 4

### Totalitarianism: Ideological Subjugation of the Superfluous Intellectual in Ha Jin's *Waiting*

The impact of dangerous political events on intellectuals may instigate voluntary exile, linguistic alienation, and the development of a counterhistory that captures superfluity as a consequence of the logical procedure. The literary works of the Chinese exiled author, Ha Jin exemplify this phenomenon. Born in 1956, Jin witnessed the repercussions of Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution from proximity and distance. In proximity, he witnessed the burning of his father's library during the Red Terror and participated in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) during the Cultural Revolution<sup>54</sup>. However, after choosing voluntary exile in the U.S. due to the events of the Tiananmen Square Massacre<sup>55</sup>, Jin began developing a counterhistory that demystified the Maoist totalitarian state by employing a unique intermediary lens positioned between his Chinese and English identities to create fiction that demands to be free from socio-political constraints, as opposed to Asturias's protest novels.

Jin's philosophy as an exiled author correlates with David Daiches's notion that the birth of the exiled artist does not mean he has found his place within the social order but that he has "no place, no recognized function" (201)<sup>56</sup> since Jin insists that most atrocities have been committed in the name of the country hence, blind patriotism is "unnecessary and anachronistic"

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<sup>54</sup>At a young age, Jin joined the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in fear of Russia's attack on China during Khrushchev's revisionist period. There he recalled one of the junior officers possessing a copy of *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman who was secretly read in the PLA due to the insidious nature of censorship in China (Sturr 2).

<sup>55</sup>Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 were student-led demonstrations against the corruption in the Chinese Communist Part and for democratic reforms, freedom of speech and press, etc. that led to the death of thousands of civilians in China. Similar to the Cultural Revolution of 1966, the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989 also targeted Chinese intellectuals.

<sup>56</sup>In contrast, Glad in *Literature in Exile* proclaimed that an exiled author recognizes that man's home cannot be shaped by his own history but "by the histories of those who surround him" (15).

(*The Writer as Migrant* 22). Instead “an intellectual’s basic task is to speak truth to power, and if necessary, speak against power” (*Exiled to English* 97)<sup>57</sup> which Jin achieves by countering self-censorship through his status as an exile<sup>58</sup> to demystify subjects that are prohibited or censored in China by the GAPP (see section 2.2) using a strategic technique called “reimagining” (Qui 7).

“Reimagining” is an effective method of demystification since it tackles hegemonic historical narratives and censorship by blending Chinese narratives with Westernized styles and intertextual references that Lahens classifies as a “permanent oscillation between anchorage and flight” (736)<sup>59</sup> given that the narratives retain an inherent Chineseness (anchorage) through proverbs and idioms, but his English prose (flight) appear to be directly translated from Chinese. For instance, in Jin’s seminal work *Waiting*, the following excerpt from an interaction between Geng Yang and Lin Kong may appear outlandish within the context of the English language, yet a closer inspection of its implications in Chinese offers valuable insights into each character: “You strive to have a good heart. But what is a heart? Just a chunk of flesh that a dog can eat. Your problem originates in your own character, and you must first change yourself” (160).

Geng Yang’s correlation between heart and a meal for a dog is evocative of the Chinese dialects for “dog” (狗, gǒu) and “good fortune” (福, fú) which are phonetically similar. Thus,

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<sup>57</sup>It is vital to observe Paulo Freire’s concept of “intellectual leaders” which suggests that those who work for liberation should not take advantage of the emotional dependence of the oppressed which would only create greater dependence as an oppressive tactic. (Moussa and Scapp 105-106).

<sup>58</sup>Jin remarks that in China, most authors practice self-censorship due to a necessity since most of them belong to the Writers’ Union, an official literary association that has a branch in every province and major city. The Union often pays the authors, or the authors work in state-owned institutions, this dependence on the state has “handicapped Chinese writers and artists and intensified their self-censorship” (31).

<sup>59</sup>Although literature produced by exiled authors or uprooted masses is considered counterhistory and an effective mode of detotalitarization, Jin’s identification with Western practices or ideologies has led to many critics accusing him of betraying his country. For instance, the false representation of Shuyu’s “bound feet” in the 1960s which had been abolished by the CCP around the early twentieth century (Qiu 89). But *Waiting* clearly employs Shuyu as a symbol for rural or old China that is still entrenched in Confucianism to further stress the division between itself and new Maoist China.

dogs are often associated with wealth and prosperity in China, further highlighting the character's greed that substantiates his success in Deng Xiaoping's Reform and Opening Up period in the 1980s that introduced capitalism in the economy. Further, the concept of "character" (品格 pǐnggé or 品德 pǐndé) carries significant depth as opposed to its lexical English definition which means moral qualities or personality traits. In Chinese culture, "character" is rooted in Confucian thought which encompasses virtue and ethics that reflect one's social position; hence questioning Lin's character accentuates his association with Confucianism due to his rural background where such values are distinct from Mao Zedong's New China in the urban spaces. Thus, Jin's work, particularly *Waiting* accumulates a new identity as the "trans-border writing of translation literature" (Gong 164).

The premise of *Waiting* revolves around Lin Kong, a doctor at a military hospital who wishes to divorce his wife Shuyu, residing in his rural hometown to marry Manna Wu, a nurse from his workplace. Jin's "realistic fiction" portrays alienation (Lam 310) during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) of Mao Zedong who hovers behind the plot; yet his socialist ideologies blur the lines between public and private to ensure every facet of Lin's life remains torn between two people, spaces, and ideologies. Hence, his intermediary position differs from that of Angel Face since due to the logical procedure that castrated the lives of the intellectuals<sup>60</sup> in China, Lin's passivity develops into superfluity in a totalitarian state.

To identify how subjugation altered from premodern authoritarian to totalitarian states, Jin's self-proclaimed superfluous protagonist, Lin Kong is dissected to find the root of his intermediary position, the logical procedure that deduces his entire life, and the multiple factors

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<sup>60</sup>See Chapter 4, page 49 for demonstration of the logical procedure.



of subjugation that separate him from other subjects of the state. Moreover, this investigation will simultaneously demystify the intricacies of the Maoist totalitarian state that instigated rationalization of non-disciplinary powers, permanent instability, and state racism in the dictatorship of the proletariat.

An investigation into the root of Lin's intermediary position leads to the theme of 'waiting' itself. Lin possesses no intense desires for Manna, despite waiting eighteen years to divorce Shuyu exhibited by the lines: "Somehow this temporary separation from Manna didn't bother him at all, just as sleeping in the same room with Shuyu did not discomfort him either" (Jin, *Waiting* 203), since he believes that the act of waiting in an intermediary position without taking action to choose between either woman would eventually lead to a resolution. "He felt as if there was some force beyond his control, of which he merely served as a vehicle, which would realize the divorce and start him on a new life" (203) But by the end of the novel, Lin considers that he had "never loved a woman wholeheartedly", instead waiting itself provided him with meaning. "In fact you waited eighteen years for the sake of waiting" (Jin, *Waiting* 279).

Lezhou Su argued that since Lin waits for the sake of waiting without knowing what he waits for, Jin's text is evocative of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (9). Although both works are about inaction and enduring without answers, Beckett's minimalist backdrop is replaced with a dynamic China, beginning with Confucian ethics centered on patriarchal values and filial piety exemplified by rural China to Maoist socialism that modernized urbanized space by attacking the Four Olds to abolish feudal practices, before concluding with Deng Xiaoping's enigmatic introduction of capitalism. Hence, waiting in the intermediary position gives Lin meaning, not because it provides a fruitful outcome, but because it provides stability in a dynamic China.

The two ideologies spheres, Confucianism in the rural spaces and Maoism in the urban spaces, in conflict with each other during the Cultural Revolution is represented by the two wives, as Lin indicates, “An ideal solution might be to have two wives: Manna in the city and Shuyu in the country” (93) Since the Cultural Revolution saw the destruction of the Four Olds, China was experiencing a state of transition from traditional Confucian beliefs to a modernized Marxist-Leninist identity under Mao Zedong. This transition was slower in the premodern villages where Shuyu Liu resided, thus representing the Confucian sphere in the novel.

At Lin’s first meeting with Shuyu, he expresses that “She (Shuyu) looked so old, as if in her forties... What is more her feet were only four inches long. This was the *New China*, who would look up to a young woman with bound feet? [emphasis added]” (Jin, *Waiting* 14). Although bound feet were an extreme method of beautification in the Confucian era that bordered on fetishization at the expense of physical pain or disability<sup>61</sup>, Shuyu is not a victim of the oppressive feudal practices of Confucianism instead when describing the pain of foot binding to a group of nurses, Shuyu gleams with pride as she details the mutilation of her feet<sup>62</sup>. Thus, she represents the positive aspect of the Confucian ethical system that upheld “loyalty (Zhong), filial piety (Xiao), benevolence (Ren), fair and justice (Yi)” (Qiu 84)

Such principles were overridden by Mao’s modernization of China where filial piety was replaced by comradeship for which all devotion was directed towards “class love”.<sup>63</sup> In 1942, at

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61For instance, “Because of her bound feet, Shuyu couldn’t fetch water from the communal well with a shoulder pole and a pair of buckets as others did” (Jin, *Waiting* 85).

62Don’t tell me about pain. I started to bind my feet when I was seven. My heavens, for two years I’d weep in pain every night. In the summer my toes swelled up, filled with pus and the flesh rotted, but I dared not loosen the binding. My mother’d whack me with a big bamboo slat if she found me doing that. Whenever I ate fish, the pus in my heels dripped out. There’s the saying goes, ‘Every pair of lotus feet come from a bucket of tears’ (Jin, *Waiting*, 195).

63In the novel, when Lin eventually divorces Shuyu, the city judge tells them, “Although you two are divorced, you are still comrades belonging to the same large revolutionary family” (Jin, *Waiting* 206)

the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art, Mao Zedong argued that in a class society, there can only be “class love” and any other forms of affection that transcends classes are simply inspired by bourgeoisie thought (Sturr 12). By reducing love to class love in the totalitarian state, politics begins to blur the public and private spheres through non-disciplinary powers to control the individual as a collective<sup>64</sup>.

In *Authoritarianism*, Frantz classified the use of non-disciplinary powers as “low-intensity repression” (106-107) that targets a broad group without the use of violence. For instance, Manna Wu represents the typical front generation (see section 2.1) that happily consents to a new function in a totalitarian state, regardless of its sinister practices of indoctrination. As Arendt indicated, the despot did not need to use propaganda to control the front generation since they desired to believe in a fictitious reality to seek happiness and self-respect. Hence, Manna may exhibit counterrevolutionary actions such as reading *Anna Karenina* during the Cultural Revolution<sup>65</sup> but is more adept at self-deception than Lin<sup>66</sup>.

This is depicted in the scene where Manna reveals a box of souvenirs which she had collected of Chairman Mao throughout the years due to their aesthetic appeal. But Lin is repulsed by them as he states in his inner monologue, “Someday these trinkets might become valuable indeed, as reminders of the mad times and the wasted, lost lives in the revolution” (Jin, *Waiting* 239). This demonstrates how intellectuals who can comprehend the harmful ideologies of the

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64At the micro-level, we see that the hospital monitors sexual promiscuity by administering the female staff to undergo a physical exam “that eliminated those with a broken hymen” (24) and unmarried couples to receive severe punishment in the form of banishment if they were involved in an affair.

65 This action is counterrevolutionary because during the Cultural Revolution, China had severed all ties with Khrushchev’s Russia due to its revisionist policies, hence any aspect remotely associated with Russia would result in the label of “revisionist” or “bourgeoisie” classifying the subject as an authentic opponent of the state.

66 For instance, when Manna learned that Lin could be publicly denounced for keeping a library of foreign books, she stopped borrowing books from him altogether.

totalitarian regime are subjugated to ensure all devotion is directed towards the despot who creates a fictitious reality and a facade of representation for the totalitarian masses to the outside non-totalitarian world. Therefore, since all citizens must think and act according to the will of the Führer to reinforce state ideologies for intelligibility (see footnote 24), intellectuals reside in passivity to avoid the dire consequences of the Cultural Revolution.

Noam Chomsky defines the intellectual as an “ideological manager” (19) who may either choose the Marxist/Leninist path by fashioning themselves as the leader who provides authority to the masses to lead the popular struggle or realize the futility of the popular struggle and aid the political leaders to achieve their ends (21). But *Waiting* subverts this definition in the context of a totalitarian state and challenges Foucault’s dismissal of a passive subject who decides to remain in an intermediary position, since the intellectual, Lin Kong cannot perform effective modes of resistance due to his passivity to aid the masses in popular struggle nor actively support the despot to achieve their ends. For instance, although Lin is repulsed by Maoist propaganda, he publicly delivers lectures on Maoism during political meetings since the intellectual is tasked with preaching totalitarian doctrines in the scholastic apparatus otherwise, he faces humiliation as a revisionist in the form of self-criticism<sup>67</sup> that attempts to indoctrinate the masses into the right political thinking through voluntary self-condemnation.

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<sup>67</sup>Self-criticism is considered a tool for thought control in communist systems. Although, in China, this practice is rooted in Confucian thought, during the Cultural Revolution, this was used as a practice of self-examination and self-condemnation to report private thoughts to the party (Su 12). According to Foucault, this allows the state to control the habits or actions of the intellectual since they rationalize the complex of knowledges, and eventually promote them to make the state intelligible. The complexity of rationalizing such practices is effortlessly portrayed in *Waiting* after Lin’s affair with Manna becomes public and his reputation as a “model monk” starts to decline for which the hospital staff expects “to hear more from him about his innermost thoughts, as though he were supposed to make a self-criticism” (Jin 61).

However, in the totalitarian state, the passive subject in an intermediary position is fundamentally different from their premodern authoritarian counterparts because the intellectual internalizes the beliefs of the totalitarian regime due to the logical procedure that leads to superfluity and immobilizes effective resistance against harmful ideologies.

To comprehend how the intellectuals were targeted during the Cultural Revolution, consider premise A as “professors at Peking University were preaching revisionism or bourgeoisie thought to undermine the dictatorship of the proletariat” that was accepted by the Chinese masses to deduce every aspect of one’s life according to this premise. For instance, Lin Kong, an intellectual and model citizen may read foreign books during the Cultural Revolution but intentionally dictates his mind to disregard any concept that challenges premise A. This is exemplified when Lin assists Manna in drafting a report for her interpretation of Commissar Wei’s<sup>68</sup> beloved poetry collection, *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman, which Lin finds entirely contradictory to the state’s established premises. He contemplates why the Commissar, responsible for political education would recommend such an obscene book that promotes “a kind of megalomania that ought to be condemned” (Jin, *Waiting* 147), but asserts that it must be a “good, healthy book” that promotes proletariat culture, otherwise the Commissar would not have recommended it.

Lin associates the symbol of the ‘grass’ in Whitman’s, “A Song for Occupations” as the universal devotion to working and celebrates the abundance of life through the proletarian spirit

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<sup>68</sup>Commissar Wei is introduced as a character who possesses Lin’s scholarly attributes and personal desires without enduring his obstacles or hardships. Unlike Lin, Wei had successfully divorced his wife because she had “written a booklet criticizing some member in the Political Bureau in Beijing and had turned into a counterrevolutionary” (Jin, *Waiting* 145). Similar to Lin’s true aspiration of becoming a librarian (285), Wei had majored in philosophy and minored in Chinese literature (140) he had “dated half a dozen women at the same time” (152) reminiscent of Lin’s desire for a polyamorous bliss and he had shown an interest in marrying Manna with the blessing of all the hospital staff.

(148). Although Whitman empathizes with the working class, his poetry resonates with the American identity representing all social classes. Moreover, the symbol of the 'grass' represents core themes of individualism and democracy which Lin intentionally misinterprets due to his fear of contradicting premise A that deduces his entire life. Since Lin is dominated by acceptance and deduction of premise A, the consequences of resistance can range from the least critical, consequence B, his termination from the hospital and revocation of his medical license, to the most dangerous, consequence C, his demise at the hands of the Red Guards or People's Liberation Army. Therefore, Arendt concludes that the logical procedure operates using "the A which you said dominates your whole life through the consequences of B and C, which it logically engenders" (518).

This logical procedure demonstrates how Lin's misinterpretation is not only to maintain his public appearance since he is drafting the report to a superior officer, but to protect his privacy since effective resistance against Maoist ideologies would render his entire life meaningless. Thus, he suffers from passivity in an intermediary position that degrades his consciousness, resulting in alienation and loss of self due to the logical procedure. Such a passive state of subjugation is called superfluity which is unique to the totalitarian state and intends to create a collective unit from the masses to preserve the rule of the despot or Mao Zedong<sup>69</sup> in this regard, through permanent instability.

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<sup>69</sup>Although Maoist regime is not specified as a totalitarian regime by Arendt, in *Origins* she describes the terror in Mao's regime, prior to the Cultural Revolution as follows: "If this was terror, as it most certainly was, it was terror of a different kind, and whatever its results, it did not decimate the population... did not run along the lines laid down by Stalin (or Hitler, for that matter), that he was not a killer by instinct" (28-29). In the 21st century, since much effort has been invested to demystify Mao's regime, it is possible to dismiss Arendt's hypothesis since the economic failure of the Great Leap Forward, and the Cultural Revolution decimated at least 40-80 million Chinese people whereas Hitler is blamed for around 42 million deaths and Stalin for 30-40 million (Strauss and Southerl).

In the Chinese totalitarian state, Mao Zedong applied the Marxist-Leninist approach arguing that Marx's utopia was attainable through a transitional phase of the dictatorship of the proletariat that prevents the withering away of the state<sup>70</sup> even after the victory of the socialist revolution (Althusser 214) by invoking that "class struggle had not come to an end but instead might intensify because of the existence of bourgeois cultures and ideologies inside and outside China" (Kang 19). Thus, he created permanent instability which the Foucauldian concept of power clarified as a "continuation of war" in the transitional phase to form a collective that intentionally continued the class struggle against Nikita Khrushchev's revisionism<sup>71</sup> that sought to revise the Marxist-Leninist doctrines in 1953. This instigated the Cultural Revolution and terror of the young Red Guards who chastised all intellectuals suspected of spreading revisionism or bourgeoisie thought, hence, the dictatorship of the proletariat became the state of intelligibility and led the intellectuals to retreat into a state of superfluity.

However, when Ping Qui argues that Lin's loss of self or superfluity "is the crisis of the nation" (58), his antithesis Geng Yang subverts this hypothesis since he served the regime as an officer in the Third Border Division but does not suffer from superfluity or emasculation. Instead, Geng Yang finds immense success in Deng Xiaoping's Reformist period, while Lin is further alienated. The difference between these two characters is investigated through factors such as background and experiences involved in subjugation which unveils how superfluity results from state racism against intellectuals during the Cultural Revolution.

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<sup>70</sup>After the victory of the socialist revolution, Marx and Engels advocated for the eventual withering away of the state machine to achieve a classless society.

<sup>71</sup>Khrushchev revised the Marxist-Leninist doctrines in two significant ways. He proclaimed the war between communism and imperialism, or proletariat and bourgeoisie was not fatally inevitable and foresaw the transition to socialism as peaceful, instead of revolutionary. This worried Mao Zedong who wondered whether he would be denounced after his death like Stalin, hence, on 22nd April 1960, on the ninetieth anniversary of Lenin's birth, he launched his attack against revisionism. (Macfarquhar and Scoenhals 4-7)

Since Geng Yang is described as a young officer, he is not conflicted by traditional Confucian principles like Lin, whose abstinence from all sexual activities leads to the deterioration of his relationship with Manna, resulting in emasculation and self-hatred. Abstinence is an integral aspect of self-control in Confucian teachings moreover; by vowing to Director Ran Su to avoid any sexual contact with Manna, Lin exhibits the virtues of loyalty-appropriateness (zhongyi 忠義) and trustworthiness-appropriateness (xinyi 信義) (Su and Hird 212). Such qualities lead him to reveal the truth about Manna's virginity to Geng Yang who eventually assaults her, resulting in Lin's emasculation before the entire hospital. "For the rest of the afternoon, whenever free, Lin thought about the rape... How he hated himself! He was a man incapable of protecting his woman and irresolute in taking action. 'Such a wimp!'" (Jin, *Waiting* 184)

Furthermore, many critics ascribed Lin's superfluity to his higher education (Su and Hird 231) which leaves him at the risk of being chastised as a revisionist, thus ensuring he remains a passive subject. For instance, when Lin reads the letters, Mai Dong had written for Manna, he feels a sense of discomfort since he has never penned a sentence charged with an ardent desire for another and rationalizes his scarcity to his higher education. "Maybe I've read too much, he reasoned, or maybe I'm too rational, better educated. I'm a scientist by training- knowledge chills your blood." (241). Hence, Lin's superfluity, as a result of his education, can be accredited to state racism which becomes a necessary precondition to normalize the killing of intellectuals regardless of any definitive proof of bourgeoisie thought or influence, validating Foucault's notion that socialism was racist from the outset. To clarify this notion, Geng Yang does not suffer from superfluity since his "wu" 武 (military prowess) masculinity over "wen" 文 (literary



accomplishment) masculinity is celebrated in the Maoist regime and later, Deng Xiaoping's state.

Moreover, Su and Hird argued that *Waiting* advocates for a "tempered combination of moral conscience and skillful activity, both wen and wu" amongst Chinese men (34). However, Jin does not signify any character with this combination, instead *Waiting* reflects how the wu masculinity is rewarded due to the state racism towards wen masculinities in Maoist China. This is portrayed by Manna's attraction to Geng Yang during their first encounter over Commissar Wei who is deemed as a well-suited counterpart of Lin (See footnote 68), accentuating how the wu masculinity of Geng Yang challenges Lin's sexual orientation and libido.

In Maoist China, the idealized figure of masculinity was a well-built soldier blind with patriotism over the scholars prevalent in the Confucian era, where citizens could enter government service through the civil service exam on their knowledge of Confucian teachings and literary skills. Geng Yang's disparaging of Lin's sexuality before he assaulted Manna highlights the shift in the evolution of masculinity in China. "He's (Lin) no good and doesn't know how to handle a woman... He told me that he had never slept with you (Manna)... I saw his d\*\*\* when we bathed together in the bathhouse. I've wondered ever since if he's a bisexual." (171) Hence, the wen masculinity suffers from a castration complex due to state racism that persists after the Cultural Revolution.

Much like Judge Advocate, Geng Yang captures how greed and corruption were present in the oppressive state regardless of the despot's direct orders. He demonstrates this by recounting how a regimental commander in his division had forcefully detained a journalist in the barracks but despite receiving severe criticism, the commander was promoted to divisional

chief of staff because had spent “fifteen hundred yuan for two pairs of gold bracelets and presented them to our commander and commissar” (Jin, *Waiting* 165). Such corruption persisted in Deng Xiaoping’s reformist period since Geng Yang became the owner of a wealthy construction company through deductible wages and unfair treatment of workers.

The juxtaposition of Geng Yang against the superfluous man, Lin Kong through their background and experiences allows *Waiting* to contest Arendt’s notion that in a totalitarian state, “all men are superfluous” (501) by providing a kaleidoscopic view of subjugation and its consequences on the individual that persist after the collapse of the regime. *Waiting* allows the advancement of identifying the intricacies of subjugation in the modern authoritarian states in the next chapter because Ha Jin effectively develops a counterhistory through translation literature that bridges the intermediary position between Chinese and English while demystifying the totalitarian state that creates the superfluous man by promoting dynamic spaces that use subtler subjugating tactics such as the logical procedure and state racism to create a collective through permanent instability, encircling back to the title itself that stresses the dangerous comfort in waiting without action.

## Chapter 5

Modern Authoritarianism: Investigating Identity and Personalization through Hannah Pool's *My Fathers' Daughter* and Michela Wrong's *I Didn't Do It For You*

After enduring Africa's longest war<sup>72</sup> for liberation (1952-1993), Eritrea displayed the potential for an African Renaissance with the promise of a free press, ample employment opportunities for the masses, and a democratic government until it was entangled in conflict again with Ethiopia over a small territory that escalated into the Border War (1998-2000), resulting in its characterization as a modern authoritarian state. At the micro level, interpellation through self-evident truths is used to subjugate the individual, according to various practices of the ISA in exchange for social protection, administered in the modern authoritarian state. Hannah Pool's memoir, *My Fathers' Daughter* demystifies this phenomenon by effectively navigating the identity crisis of the uprooted mass who can objectively inspect the subjugation in their native homeland.

At the macro level, Michela Wrong's authoritative exposé, *I Didn't Do It for You: How the World Betrayed a Small* discloses the leadership of Eritrean despot, Isaias Afwerki who demonstrated authoritarian characteristics before the formation of the state itself, due to its mimicry of the Maoist Cultural Revolution or a dictatorship of the proletariat in the Eritrean People Liberation Front (EPLF), and later, the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie in the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) by employing pseudo-democratic practices. Hence, the juxtaposition of Manuel Estrada Cabrera's premodern authoritarian state and Mao Zedong's totalitarian state with Afwerki's modern authoritarian state through the lens of contemporary

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<sup>72</sup>See Wrong, 12.

political theorist, Erica Frantz can demystify the unique pattern of subjugation in terms of objectives, and policies in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Published in 2005, *My Fathers' Daughter* captures the experience of Hannah Pool as a returnee<sup>73</sup> who was uprooted during the Liberation War of 1952 and adopted by an English family before reuniting with her Eritrean roots years later. This creates disorientation within the returnee since she resides in an intermediary position between Eritrean and English identities, while simultaneously challenging the Arendtian notion that the uprooted mass suffers from superfluity since Pool's memoir attacks the iron curtain that separates Eritrea from the outside world and offers an objective view on how modern authoritarian states use interpellation to subjugate the masses.

Although Pool's categorization as a returnee puts her in an intermediary position as "neither expat nor local, but somewhere in between" (214), the disorientation between her identities as Hannah in England and Azieb in Eritrea<sup>74</sup> makes the discourse surrounding her intermediacy highly political, since under the British administration in 1941 Eritreans "could speak, but not eat" (Wrong 180) referring to how Britain introduced a Western-style democracy that encompassed "the rights to an independent press, trade union membership and freedom of religion" (Wrong 171) however, the caretaker policy allowed them to move industries to Kenya

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73Pool defines the concept of "returnees" as uprooted individuals who are biologically Eritrean, but their upbringing differs them from native Eritreans. "I might look Eritrean, but I don't look local. I am a "returnee." There are plenty of us around, especially in the summer months, and we stand out no matter how much we try to kid ourselves otherwise: our clothes, our hairstyles, our shoes, even the shade of our skin marks us as "not from around here." The lucky among us can speak the language, but even then, our accents give us away. We acknowledge one another on the street and strike up conversations in cafés—it's a relief, you see, to be speaking in English, or German, or Swedish, anything so long as it's not Tigrinya" (138-139) Kebede identifies that "Over one-half of the returnees are children under the age of fifteen. Nearly all of them were born and brought up in exile" (221)

74This is in reference to the two names given to Pool by her adopted and biological parents respectively. "Maybe they'll ask me which name I'd like to be called? The trouble is, I don't think I really know the answer. Hannah or Azieb? I'm both...Maybe I'll be Azieb in Eritrea and Hannah in England" (85)

as war compensation and advocated that Eritrea should be “parceled off between Ethiopia and Sudan, breaking their initial promise of self-governance to the people of Eritrea” (Embassy of the State of Eritrea). Thus, Pool’s proclamation as a British Eritrean and that “the two identities are not mutually exclusive; they coexist, and I’d even say that they complement each other” (227) subverts Foucault’s dismissal of an intermediary position and the notion that “there is no neutral subject. We are all inevitably someone’s adversary” (*Society* 51).

The intermediary position of the returnee provides Pool with objectivity to identify the misapplication of disciplinary powers in the modern authoritarian state through the mandatory National Service (NS) of young Eritreans for nation-building purposes under the Wefri Warsai Yika’alo Development Campaign (WYDC). Pool conveys the portentousness of the NS by juxtaposing it with the calamities endured in the EPLF. “There are local military police on pretty much every street, men and women completing their national service... dressed in army fatigues and carrying rifles. The one thing I don’t think I’ll ever get used to is the number of people with missing limbs, presumably as a result of injuries sustained on the front.” (66) Moreover, through the character of Stephanos who is part of the NS and cannot communicate in English, unlike his brothers, *My Fathers’ Daughter* represents how the masses are interpellated to participate in the NS which combines the practices of the scholastic and political apparatus by proclaiming itself as “the school of the nation where Eritrean nationalism is re-produced, nurtured, and inculcated in the hundreds of thousands of draftees.” (Kibreab 46)

Further, the operations of the NS have been compared to slave labor and concentration camps exemplified by Hepner and O’Kane who argue that “from the education of individuals in the nationalist ideology of the state to the training of workers who will be offered to multinational corporations, to the use of torture against those who rebel, *biopolitical acts* are

related to each other in a structured, and structuring, form” (emphasis added). (xxxix) Such institutions use ‘biopolitical acts’ in the political and scholastic apparatuses to interpellate the masses through political re-education, which is an example of non-disciplinary powers to subjugate the individual as a collective or use disciplinary powers such as torture to subjugate the individual within a collective. However, the modern authoritarian despot, Isaias Afwerki, had previously distributed biopower through disciplinary and non-disciplinary powers before Eritrea's liberation, which is brilliantly captured in *I Didn't Do It For You* by Michela Wrong. Further, Wrong's demystification of Eritrea supports the assertion that the modern authoritarian state accumulates characteristics of both the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat to achieve state intelligibility.

Isaias Afwerki is defined as the nucleus of the modern authoritarian state of Eritrea (International Crisis Group 10) since he creates a facade of representing the Eritrean masses to the outside world as follows, “To a besotted public, Isaias’ qualities seemed the quintessence of the Eritrean national character, he was Eritrea Plus.” (Wrong 374). Afwerki was the leader of EPLF<sup>75</sup> during the liberation struggle and assumed the presidency of independent Eritrea in 1993. Many Western thinkers and politicians including former US President Bill Clinton (Hepner and O’Kane xxv) proclaimed him as one of the pioneers of an emerging African Renaissance. “The initial wave of democratization that accompanied the implementation of structural adjustment...in the mid-1990s, optimism had returned to the continent in the form of a

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<sup>75</sup>During this period, Afwerki was the defacto This was because during the struggle for liberation, “The EPLF accomplished extraordinary things with meager resources. Despite the continuing absence of sustained external support, the Front steadily improved its military capacity, while simultaneously building basic infrastructure (construction, transportation, communications), promoting economic development (agriculture, animal husbandry, commerce and trade), delivering social services (education, health, emergency relief), and campaigning to alter fundamental power relations within rural society (land reform, marriage reform, restructuring of village administration)” (Hepner and O’Kane xx-xxi)

putative African renaissance.” (Hepner and O’Kane xxv) Yet this wave of democratization can be classified as the first indication of pseudo-democracy, similar to Manuel Estrada Cabrera’s dictatorship of the bourgeoisie that advocated for a “super-democracy” or elections that are unfair and corrupt, depicted in Asturias’s *The President*. Moreover, Afwerki monopolized his political power by delaying multiparty elections since the absence of a Hobbesian Leviathan would threaten the vitality of the diverse Eritrean society (Kibreab 42-43) resulting in “permanent conflict” within the state (Afwerki 20).

However, ‘permanent conflict’ is evocative of the Maoist state or the dictatorship of the proletariat which generates permanent instability within the regime to create a collective through the logical procedure to execute justice on behalf of the despot for state intelligibility. Similarly, in the 1970s and 1980s, EPLF under Afwerki was a Marxist-Leninist organization isolated from the rest of the world to foster a strategy for national liberation that depended on “popular mobilization”<sup>76</sup> (Hepner and O’Kane). Moreover, akin to the Maoist young Red Guards, EPLF created a collective amongst the children, called the Red Flowers who were a significant force for popular mobilization. The Red Flowers exemplify how Afwerki had indoctrinated the youth by combining the scholastic and political apparatuses at the Zero School, where they were educated in nation formation or strategies for liberation (Wrong 285), thus they were trained to execute justice on behalf of the EPLF, prior to the formation of Eritrea.

In *I Didn’t Do It For You*, Wrong represents the condition of the fighters of EPLF who deduced their entire life according to the premise of national liberation from Ethiopian rule,

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<sup>76</sup>Connell further highlighted the influence of Maoist ideologies in Afwerki’s rule by stating, “In Isaias’ case, this tendency was reinforced by training in China at the height of the Cultural Revolution, during which he received intensive exposure to Maoist doctrine whose themes of extreme “voluntarism” and populism continue to define his worldview” (5)

highlighting the use of the logical procedure in modern authoritarian states as follows, ““In a way, we (fighters in EPLF) were not fully human... because all the things you associate with being human— setting up a home, bringing up children, holding down a job – we did none of that.”<sup>77</sup> (292). Hence, from the strict monitoring of sexual activity to ostracizing pregnant women (291), the Front employed non-disciplinary powers to ensure complete loyalty to the emerging state of Eritrea similar to the Maoist notion of class love (see Chapter 4). Therefore, David Pool identifies that the strict disciplinary powers of the Front are rooted in “the Maoist model” since Afwerki had trained in China during the Cultural Revolution (Hepner and O’Kane xxi)<sup>78</sup>.

Although the Front employed various aspects of the dictatorship of the proletariat as mentioned above, most ex-fighters deceived themselves into the facade of the African Renaissance by classifying Maoist ideals as democratic. “My friend launched into a long explanation as to how, in rural communities, a peasant was expected automatically to share anything he received with the village. This *democratic practice* had been maintained at the Front, he said, so gifts had little meaning” (emphasis added). (Wrong 17-18) This underlines the biased interpretation of Maoist teachings at the Front since the dictatorship of the proletariat that wishes to create a classless society must denounce “the impossible miracles of purely parliamentary-democratic activity” (Althusser, *On Reproduction* 107). Therefore, modern authoritarian states may utilize aspects from the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat due to their likeness to the regimes of Cabrera and Mao. However, the shift in subjugation tactics from the use of logical procedure to interpellation for indoctrinating the masses to form a collective post-

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<sup>77</sup> Akin to the Maoist totalitarian state, the EPLF also monitored the sexual activity of the

<sup>78</sup> Wrong clarifies this phenomenon by stating ““Once you’ve done your training and you’ve been politicized, and you’ve studied Mao and the struggle of the masses, Lenin, and the Russian Revolution, then you know that eventually, you must win. It may not happen in your own lifetime, but eventually, you will win.”” (Wrong 305)



liberation reveals that the modern authoritarian state possesses its own unique objectives and policies.

To investigate one of the key objectives of modern authoritarian states which differs from their previous iterations— premodern authoritarian and totalitarian states— political scientist Erica Frantz in her innovative work, *Authoritarianism: What Everyone Needs to Know* hypothesized that the modern authoritarian states relies on the process of personalization that elucidates how the despot dominates the elite class<sup>79</sup>. Frantz outlines six signs of personalization, however, the subsequent paragraphs will focus on four signs in particular<sup>80</sup> that are present in the previous iterations and convey the unique characteristics of the modern authoritarian state of Eritrea.

The first and second signs are regarding the narrow inner circle which allows the despots to have greater control after the seizure of political power, and the installation of loyalists in key positions. This phenomenon was also witnessed in the totalitarian state where Mao Zedong's inner circle, the Gang of Four acted according to the will of the Führer. However, in the modern authoritarian state, the members of the inner circle or loyalists can challenge the despot due to the lack of logical procedure for indoctrination as exhibited in the Maoist totalitarian state, and the failure of pseudo-democratic institutions for the monopolization of power. For instance, Afwerki had created an inner circle since the EPLF known as the “Menqae”, but after the defeat

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<sup>79</sup>Frantz elaborates on this notion by stating, “It signals a shift in the balance of power between the leader and elites in the leader’s favor.... Each grab for power means that the leader has accumulated even more of it, making it even more difficult for the elite to challenge such actions” (49)

<sup>80</sup>The third sign of personalization that this study does not focus is the promotion of family members in powerful posts since it is absent in all the oppressive regimes in discussion. This is no coincidence since Arendt states that the despot attempts to make himself indispensable to the movement, by acting as a representative of the masses to the outside world and vice versa. Moreover, Frantz contradicts this sign as well when she states, “Their despots hold on to power until the bitter end in the face of challenges to their rule” (54).

The sixth sign of personalization is new security services which includes the Red Flowers, that mimicked the Red Guards of China, during the EPLF and National Service under the WYDC campaign in the PDFJ which have already been discussed above.

of the Border War that resulted in Ethiopia claiming large portions of Eritrean land, some prominent members of Menqae joined “The Group 15” or G15 who signed “the Berlin Manifesto” criticizing Afwerki’s constant war-footing and delay of multiparty elections (Wrong 376). Afwerki responded by arresting all eleven members of G15 and closing all independent media in Eritrea<sup>81</sup> (Yohannes 4). Thus, Wrong asserted that “The fate of the G-15 is the great silence in Eritrean history... Afterward, with the Badme (Border) War and the rounding up of the G-15, was effectively the end of Eritrean democracy” (Finn).

The fourth sign refers to the creation of new political parties or movements to monopolize the power of the despot. Further, this phenomenon is absent in both the premodern authoritarian state of Guatemala and the totalitarian state of China since Eritrea “sought to forge a model for national development that rejects most neoliberal strategies as imperialist in nature and morally corrupting to the collective values forged in the revolutionary nationalist struggle” (Hepner and O’Kane xiv). To clarify, neoliberal strategies include democratization which Afwerki claimed, as stated above, results in permanent conflict due to the substantial number of ethnic communities in Eritrea, who would all seek representation in the multiparty elections, thus, corrupting the core values of the Eritrean national identity. Hence, the dissolving of EPLF to a new political movement called “the People’s Front for Democracy and Justice (PDFJ) and the drafting of a multiparty constitution that never came to fruition (Wrong 360), demonstrates how the root of pseudo-democratic institutions in the modern authoritarian regime rest on its ability to control the diverse communities through disciplinary and non-disciplinary powers (as

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<sup>81</sup>Lyons elaborates on this event as follows to show how Eritrea became a modern authoritarian state after promising multiparty democracy, “The September 2001 crack-down was followed by the closing of private press, the arrests of students and others who offered critical voices, and the indefinite postponement of elections. The Eritrean Government became highly repressive and isolationist” (170)

discussed above) to interpellate its unique ideology of self-reliance and achieve its “nationalist ends” (Hepner and O’Kane xiv).

The last sign of personalization in modern authoritarian states is the use of referendums such as self-reliance as tactics to strengthen the power of the despot over reflecting the welfare of the people since Afwerki asserted that the significance of “self-reliance” from self-determination for the post-colonial, independent African states (18) particularly Eritrea, rooted in a revolutionary past and abandonment from the UN<sup>82</sup>. Moreover, Wrong highlights that after liberation, every Eritrean advocated for the self-reliance policy as a self-evident truth for national liberation and unity amongst the communities, particularly during the short-lived African Renaissance. This led Hepner and O’Kane to argue that the policy of self-reliance was meant to modernize Eritrea as a progressive state amidst the “global system of nation-states” (xxii) but such intended objectives were never achieved since the policy itself prompted isolation of the state from the rest of the world, similar to the mystified totalitarian state of Mao Zedong, as Wrong proclaimed, “Eritrea also became very isolated. It was routine to describe it as a pariah state” (Finn).

Moreover, the Maoist state used non-disciplinary powers like the logical procedure to ensure that leaving the totalitarian state would be more dangerous than residing as a passive subject, and the premodern authoritarian state of Cabrera employed disciplinary powers to prevent any remedy for subjugation. However, the modern authoritarian state fails to subjugate the masses due to residing in a “hybrid-gray zone” (Frantz 11) since it lacks consistency

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<sup>82</sup>Afwerki criticizes the UN for refusing to intervene when the federation between Eritrea and Ethiopia had been overthrown, “Eritrea was federated with Ethiopia in 1950 through a UN resolution after 40 years of Italian colonial rule and ten years of subsequent British administration. Later, the Ethiopian regime annexed Eritrea by unilaterally abrogating the Federal Act, which specified the nature of the association between the two countries. Despite these facts...the UN were willing to take up Eritrea's legitimate claims to exercise its right of self-determination” (20)

regarding aspects of the dictatorship of the proletariat and bourgeoisie, and disciplinary and non-disciplinary forms of biopower to create subjects such as Hannah Pool with distorted identities as an Eritrean native or English returnee.

To clarify, although “the end of the Cold War forced the EPLF to superficially embrace some democratic practices” (Waldehaimanot and Taylor 567) the state remained in a hybrid-gray zone. This was because prior to liberation, the state had followed Maoist ideologies to establish a national identity. The hybrid-gray zone resulted in the shift of subjugation tactics from the logical procedure to the use of interpellation for indoctrination which was ineffective since loyalists in key positions who had witnessed Eritrea’s ideological transitions, could challenge the despot by highlighting the pseudo-democracy of the new party– the PDFJ –which promoted the self-reliance policy that ultimately isolated the state from the outside world and created biopolitical subjects. Thus, Afwerki’s hybrid-gray zone created a modern authoritarian state in Eritrea with unique characteristics that simultaneously combine and separate it from its previous iterations.

In a 2023 interview, Michela Wrong outlined how Isaias Afwerki had led Eritrea towards national liberation after an extensive history of colonization and revolutionary struggle. Yet instead of ushering in an age of African Renaissance that celebrated freedom of speech, democracy, and solidarity amongst the war-ridden masses, Afwerki created a modern authoritarian state composed of numerous aspects from its previous iterations but unique in terms of its objectives and policies that allow this study to establish a pattern of subjugation and identity formation in oppressive states from the late nineteenth to early twenty-first centuries.

## Chapter 6

### Findings and Conclusion

This study has identified the pattern of subjugation from the premodern authoritarian state of Guatemala (1898-1920) to the totalitarian state of China (1966-1976) till the modern authoritarian state of Eritrea (1993- present) eliciting questions such as, how are identities of subjects formulated in volatile oppressive states? And what methods can demystify the oppressive tactics of the state? This chapter resolves these inquiries by juxtaposing the findings derived from the analysis of each respective state, consequently producing an interplay between political science and literary studies, where literature produced in exile addresses the gaps within the theoretical foundations of politics by analyzing subjugation at close proximity.

*The President* by Miguel Ángel Asturias demystifies Manuel Estrada Cabrera's premodern authoritarian state of Guatemala in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by highlighting the prioritization of private interests of the socio-economically dominant class over the welfare of the masses thus, characterizing such an oppressive state as a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Cabrera was further supported by the imperialist UFCO which maintained immense control over the politics and economics of Guatemala through unfair elections to keep the despot in power which ensured the smooth import of resources. This led to the development of a pseudo-democracy or "super-democracy" in Guatemala, resulting in permanent instability at its nascent stage due to the use of only disciplinary powers, and lack of ideological control through non-disciplinary powers. Using strict disciplinary powers to control the masses led to massive corruption amongst active subjects like Judge Advocate who supported the despot's rule but disobeyed direct orders for his own profit by selling Fedina de Rodas to the Sweet

Enchantment instead of releasing her. This underlines the corruption in the judiciary system and the greed of the subjects in such regimes. Moreover, such states witnessed passive subjects like the Idiot who represented the apolitical masses and their lack of political opinions, and Angel Face who remained in an intermediary position with the autonomy to choose between supporting the despot while disobeying direct orders or revolting against him without promoting direct impeachment.

However, by the mid-twentieth century, there was a striking shift in the pattern of subjugation due to the rise of communist governments including, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Such states primarily employed non-disciplinary powers since the masses were subjected to self-criticism to promote class love over traditional values and indoctrinated through the logical procedure to act according to the will of the Führer. This allowed the state to reach permanent instability by remaining in a constant state of war through state racism, particularly in Mao Zedong's totalitarian state of China that targeted the intellectuals to counter Khrushchev's revisionism during the Cultural Revolution of 1966. The Maoist totalitarian state is characterized as a dictatorship of the proletariat which prevented the state from withering away after the victory of the socialist revolution through the creation of passive subjects distinct from their premodern authoritarian counterparts. The passive subjects of a totalitarian state experienced a loss of self due to their lack of autonomy in an intermediary position and thus, were classified as superfluous.

This is exemplified through Ha Jin's superfluous protagonist, Lin Kong in *Waiting* who is castrated by the logical procedure and avoids all sexual activities with his spouses as his public and private lives are blurred in the Maoist regime, hence he finds solitude through waiting in an intermediary position between two ideologies, wives, and spaces. However, *Waiting* subverts the

Arendtian notion that all subjects are superfluous in a totalitarian regime by introducing the active subject, Geng Yang who challenges Lin's intermediary position and castration complex by disobeying the strict values of the totalitarian state to emphasize the effects of state racism through his eventual success after the collapse of the Maoist state.

Yet by the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries with the decline of the communist governments and the emergence of democratic principles post-Cold War, subjugation became subtler and ambiguous through the use of both disciplinary and non-disciplinary powers, giving rise to Isaias Afwerki's modern authoritarian state of Eritrea. Under Afwerki, Eritrea contains aspects of both dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, due to its use of pseudo-democratic principles after liberation, and the Maoist Model before liberation. This enunciates how fixed ideologies are irrelevant since neither is inherently oppressive, instead the political apparatus employs a combination of socio-political constructs to preserve the intelligibility of the state. Further, Michela Wrong's *I Didn't Do It For You* explores that instead of relying on logical procedures for indoctrination, the despots utilized the interpellation of self-evident truths such as national liberation, unity, and identity to create passive subjects like Stephanos in *My Fathers' Daughter* by Hannah Pool, who undergoes political re-education in the National Service. However, Pool's memoir depicts herself as a disoriented active subject who emerges amidst the uprooted mass and remains in an intermediary position due to her dual identities which provide her with objectivity to demystify the oppressive tactics of the state.

The dynamic pattern of subjugation over more than a century reveals how oppressive states have become more ideological through the introduction of non-disciplinary powers to create obedient and passive subjects to preserve the power of the despot. Moreover, these tactics including the logical procedure and interpellation disorient both passive and active subjects since

man refuses to be universalized into one of these categories. Thus, the literary texts utilized in this study provide insight into how identity is formed in oppressive regimes and challenge the theories proposed in the existing literature of political science.

The Idiot and Stephanos are ideal subjects of the state since they do not challenge the rule of the despot and can easily be subjugated through disciplinary powers. Such apolitical subjects are present in all oppressive states since they represent the Arendtian concept of the front generation, much like Manna Wu who obeys the rules of the despot for self-respect and happiness in the fictitious world. However, the significance of their struggle is elucidated in the selected literary texts to represent the perilous realities of the ordinary individual when in contact with the state apparatuses. For instance, the Idiot is murdered by a government official through direct orders from the President, Stephanos's recruitment in the NS, not only disrupts his education but puts his life at risk, once the country closes its borders from the outside world, and Manna Wu is assaulted by a retired official, resulting in the hospital's public abhorrence towards her.

In contrast, Judge Advocate and Geng Yang are active subjects because they are government officials but challenge the despot's rule through disobedience, underlining the root of the problem that pervades throughout their respective states. For instance, Judge Advocate emphasizes the greed of Cabrera that plundered Guatemala under the control of the UFCO, and the lack of repercussions faced by Geng Yang in the Maoist, and later Deng Xiaoping's regimes highlight the state-induced racism against intellectuals in the Cultural Revolution and Tiananmen Square Massacre, respectively.



Moreover, Angel Face, Lin Kong, and Hannah Pool from Guatemala, China, and Eritrea respectively, subvert Foucault's dismissal of an intermediary position within socio-political structures, yet their distinctions highlight the portentous ascendance of ideological control that limits the possibilities of man. Due to his residence in a premodern authoritarian state with minimum to no ideological control over the masses, Angel Face has autonomy in his intermediary position to choose between supporting the President or defying the regime by pursuing Camilla. On the other hand, Lin Kong who resides in the Maoist totalitarian state that utilized the logical procedure for mass indoctrination depicts how the superfluous man is immobilized in the intermediary position between two contrasting ideologies, wives, and spaces which results in a castration complex that lingers even after the fall of the regime. Although modern authoritarian states uphold the Althusserian hypothesis that the future will be ideological due to the use of interpellation for indoctrination, the intermediary position of Hannah Pool due to her disoriented Eritrean and English identities prove that the uprooted mass may suffer from disorientation however, as opposed to the Arendtian notion that uprootedness is a preliminary condition of superfluity, Pool's narrative indicates that an effective method to go outside ideology is through uprootedness itself. Thus, uprooted authors like Pool can objectively demystify the oppressive tactics of the state by developing a counterhistory that tackles strict censorship in her native homeland, Eritrea.

The works of exiled authors including Miguel Ángel Asturias, Ha Jin, and Hannah Pool offer an effective method of demystification due to their distance from the disciplinary and ideological constraints of the oppressive regime. However, the pursuit of demystification can result in alienation, anachronism, and accusations of disloyalty to the native land. The development of a counterhistory had resulted in the classification of Asturias's literary works as

anachronistic protest novels and predisposed towards the UFCO due to his diplomatic connections. Ha Jin advocates that the exiled author should not be restricted by his native land, instead he should incorporate Westernized styles with Chinese themes to create a separate literature known as translation literature. However, such an approach has led to many accusations against him for fetishizing Chinese practices for Western audiences. Regardless, literature produced in exile provides an insight into the identity formation of subjects in each oppressive regime to emphasize the rise of ideological control over time, through diverse characters to capture the passive and active subjects and introduce the intermediary position that exists in both of them but remains overlooked in the existing literature of political science.

The findings of this research indicate theoretical and social implications within the field of political science since the incorporation of literary texts challenges previously held assumptions regarding the universalization of superfluity amongst the residents and the uprooted masses in a totalitarian state, in addition to the dismissal of an intermediary position amongst the individuals in all the oppressive states. Instead, the nuances of identity formation of the subjects, represented by the literary texts, reveal how all subjects in a totalitarian regime do not experience superfluity, and that the uprooted masses provide an effective method of demystification which lifts the iron curtain that separates the oppressive regimes from the outside world. Moreover, this study provides valuable insights into the pattern of subjugation to predict that in the contemporary period, socio-political constructs such as the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are combined to subjugate the masses through both disciplinary and non-disciplinary powers to produce passive subjects or place individuals in an intermediary position that minimizes autonomy to prevent any uprising.

Furthermore, this research is based on only three selected countries and a specific period in their history to comprehend the operations of a premodern authoritarian, totalitarian, and modern authoritarian state which can be classified as a limitation of this study. Although the selected countries represent subjugation in particular regions of Latin America, Asia, and Africa, amidst a period of extreme oppression through three distinguished despots with their unique set of tactics to shape the identities of the residents in their state, it increases the potential for generalized findings. The pattern of subjugation is unique for each country and undergoes many temporal fluctuations in its history beyond the scope of this study; therefore, to mitigate these limitations, unbiased and meticulous research was conducted to create an interplay between political science and literary studies. Moreover, the pattern of subjugation uncovered in this research shapes diverse and evolving identities that create space for future demystification of oppressive regimes through the promotion of literature produced by uprooted masses who continually address the misapplications of power that dehumanize man into species.

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