How Difficult It Is to Be Different

A Marxist view on Divergent

Salvör Ósk Einarsdóttir
Kt.: 010394-2289

Supervisor: Anna Heiða Pálsdóttir
January 2018
Abstract

This essay explores the application of Marxist literary theory to the book of *Divergent* by Veronica Roth. *Divergent* is the first book of a trilogy. Marxism is named after the German philosopher Karl Marx. The story takes place in a dystopian future within a post-apocalyptical world and the people have been split into five factions. It is interesting to explore how Marxism can apply to the book. Many of the terms that are associated with Marxism are applicable to *Divergent*. I use examples from *Divergent* that are the most fitting. Furthermore, I examine both the hero, Beatris Prior, and the villain, Jeanine Matthews, in the story, separately and try to view them from a Marxist viewpoint. I did not only analyze the hero and the villain. I also took some of the factions within the story and I applied Marxist theory to them. For instance, both Dauntless and Abnegation were examined, while the other factions were mentioned. While reading the book for recreation, it is easy to miss something that can help explain the behavior of Beatris or Jeanine. When both Jeanine and Beatris are examined from a Marxist viewpoint, it is obvious that they are more complex than at first glance. I do not only use the *Divergent* book as a point of reference. I also use other source materials in order to explain the Marxist terms along with more information that is relevant to the essay. The object of this essay was, in some way, to learn something new. Anyone can read a book and then summarize what the book is about, a girl that is different from what is considered normal and has to fight for her life. However, it is only by taking a closer look at the book that the complexities behind it are revealed.
# Table of Contents

- Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1
- Karl Marx ....................................................................................................................... 2
- Selfless workers............................................................................................................ 10
- Mind control.................................................................................................................. 15
- Conclusion .................................................................................................................... 23
Introduction

The novel *Divergent* (2011) by Veronica Roth is about a post-apocalyptic world that was once Chicago, in a dystopian future and the people believe themselves to be the only ones left in the entire world. The remaining people have been split up into five factions, each with different values. Abnegation values selflessness, Erudite values intelligence, Amity values peacefulness, Dauntless values bravery and Candor values honesty. Each faction has a manifesto that details its laws and characteristics. The heroine of the book is Beatrice Prior who is born into Abnegation, where the people are selfless. As she turns sixteen years old, she has to choose whether to stay in her birth faction or choose another faction, Dauntless where the people are brave. She finds out that she is Divergent during the aptitude test. It is supposed to establish which faction people have an aptitude for. It means that she can fit into more than one specific faction, in fact she is compatible with three of the factions, and thus she is seen as a threat to the system, according to Matthews and the people who are loyal to her. She chooses Dauntless and goes through the initiation that consists of three stages – the physical, emotional and mental stages. She forms friendships with some of the initiates, and is also targeted by a few of the more ruthless initiates.

As the story goes on, Tris discovers love and also a plot concocted by the leader of Erudite, Matthews, to overthrow the government made up of people from Abnegation by declaring a war against them. Matthews uses the whole nation of Dauntless, besides a few select people, to massacre the people in Abnegation and has a serum made that controls their bodies and minds, so they are unable to stop themselves from killing anyone or even stop themselves at all. However, those who are considered to be Divergent are immune to the serum. So it is one way to determine those who are Divergent. Tris and a few other people do their best to stop the oncoming war and manage to negate the effects of the serum. They end up fleeing to another faction after they have freed the minds of the people. This essay will examine the novel *Divergent* from a Marxist point of view and a comparison will also be made to events that happened during World War II.
Karl Marx

Marxism is a literary criticism that, according to Peter Barry, “tries to explain things without assuming the existence of a world, or of forces, beyond the natural world around us, and the society we live in” (150). Moreover, Marxism identifies with a different social class.

The social class of every society is as diverse as it is common and there is a quote to look closer at it from Marx’s perspective.

For Marx, what distinguishes one type of society from another is its mode of production (i.e., the nature of its technology and division of labour), and each mode of production engenders a distinctive class system in which one class controls and directs the process of production while another class is, or other classes are, the direct producers and providers of services to the dominant class.

In *Divergent*, for instance, there are those who are factionless and live on the streets, away from the factions. They do not have any jobs, they are forced to sleep on the streets and often fend for themselves in search for food. Some would consider the factionless to be the dregs of society and in Matthews’s opinion they “are a drain on our resources” (Roth 444). To put Marx’s example into context with the story, it is evident that the people who live within the factions are the privileged and can get whatever they desire. Such as a shower, whenever they need it, and food whenever they are hungry.

Marx had two terms that he separated the social class into.

Karl Marx had his own terminology that he used in order to distinguish between social classes. The former is the bourgeoisie “the owners and the controllers of material means of production” and the latter is the proletariat who own “their labour-power, which they are forced to sell to the bourgeoisie in order to survive” (Crompton 29). Both definitions apply to the factions, although, there is no mention of money changing hands in exchange for the labour or material. For instance, the people in Amity produce most of the food that the other factions eat and select members of Dauntless make up the defenses of the people. Thus both factions can be considered to be the proletariat, as both factions provide the labour that is needed in some way.

To clarify the terms, in order to get a better understanding on how they relate to the story *Divergent*, there is a better description of both terms. The first one, the bourgeoisie
is a term that applies towards the story *Divergent* but it does not apply to all of the factions. In fact, there is only one faction that this term can apply to.

the bourgeoisie plays a heroic role by revolutionizing industry and modernizing society. However, it also seeks to monopolize the benefits of this modernization by exploiting the propertyless [*sic*] proletariat and thereby creating revolutionary tensions. (Ryan)

Matthews, the leader of Erudite, would be the person that wants to live in a revolutionized world and one of the most ardent advocate of it. Furthermore, the people within the Erudite faction are responsible for the mind control serum that is used on the people within the Dauntless faction. Thus, they are fulfilling the heroic role of the bourgeoisie.

The proletariat, is defined by *Encyclopædia Britannica* as what “designated the class of wage workers who were engaged in industrial production and whose chief source of income was derived from the sale of their labour power” (“Proletariat”). This term can apply to almost all of the factions in one way or another. For instance it applies to the people of Dauntless, in the sense that, while they are not factory workers that spend each day doing the same job, for however many years, they are in a sense selling their services. They are the warrior faction and are expected to keep everyone else save from each other and the factionless.

Although, while the decision and the concept of a changed world is a radicalized and heroic thought “We are tired of being dominated by a bunch of self-righteous idiots who reject wealth and advancement” (Roth 442), as Matthews so eloquently puts it, the execution of her plan to discredit the people of Abnegation, is not heroic in the least. It is Tris that realizes what Matthews hopes to accomplish with her plan. “If Jeanine can make people believe that my father and all the other Abnegation leaders are corrupt and awful, she has support for whatever revolution she wants to start” (Roth 332).

The leaders seem to show the most obvious differences between social classes. For instance, during Tris’ initiation, one of the initiates concedes a fight and as punishment, one of the leaders (Eric) hangs her over the Chasm. The Chasm is somewhat like a waterfall and is supposed to draw a line between being brave and being foolish. Anyone who throws himself off the Chasm dies (Roth 74).
Although, logically the leadership is different within each and every faction. For instance, there are fifty individuals from Abnegation that make up the government in the world of *Divergent* and it is understandable that each faction treats their leader differently. For instance, Abnegation does not have only one representative from the faction. In the story there are at least two leaders mentioned and neither leader presents himself as a superior human being. However, there are some differences in individual social classes. It does not matter what kind of society there is, there are always some distinctions.

For example, during Dauntless initiation the trainers are supposed to prepare the initiates for life in the faction, how to protect themselves and to fight for their survival. However, one of the instructors, Eric who is also one of the leaders of Dauntless, is content with intimidating them and making them fear him. Additionally, the people in Candor are sometimes discriminated against for their honesty. They do not hide their opinion of someone and are always honest, regardless of how anyone else feels about it. Moreover, there is discrimination noticeable from the faction system as a whole.

For instance, each and every faction has something negative to say about the others. The citizens of Abnegation are the stiffs, the people in Amity are the hippies, and the nation of Dauntless are cruel and so on. Furthermore, taking a better look at Abnegation and Dauntless, they could not be further apart. On one hand, those in Abnegation are expected to be selfless and to think more about others rather than themselves. They give up any luxurious items and anything that is considered to be selfish. They do not look at their own reflection, unless when their hair is being cut (Roth 8). In essence they are encouraged to have no sense of self, while also helping the factionless, and they do not choose to be persecuted for their decision by the citizens of Dauntless. There is name calling and slander by other factions.

On the other hand, the people in Dauntless are the complete opposite of the people in Abnegation. For instance, they are encouraged to embrace their individual characteristics and do not care about anyone’s opinion while spending points (what the author calls money in the story) on clothes and personal body modifications. Additionally, they can be seen as ignorant of violent acts that are committed by the members of the faction. An example would be the attack on Tris. She was attacked one night during the initiation process by three other initiates and there were no
consequences for the attackers. They were not punished in any way. Nonetheless, social class is not the only aspect of society that is mentioned by Karl Marx. There is also economy to be considered

There is not much mentioned about the economy of the whole Divergent society. However, there are some differences mentioned between individuals in some of the factions. The initiates, along with the full members of Dauntless, are given points which they are free to spend on clothes and other necessities. However, people in Abnegation buy clothes in excess twice a year (Roth 88) and there is no mention of individuals being given points within Abnegation. It is most likely that each individual household is given the money for each member of the family. However, it is mentioned that the citizens of Amity have trucks for their produce, fruits and vegetables that they use to transport the produce between places (Roth 126). Just as with economy, there is not much mentioned about religion in the story.

Naturally, Karl Marx did not only distinguish between social classes, he had a vision of how the world should have been. Peter Barry states: “The simplest Marxist model of society sees it as constituted by a base (the material means of production, distribution, and exchange) and a superstructure, which is the ‘cultural’ world of ideas, art, religion, law and so on” (151). By examining the different characteristics of the factions, there is a somewhat clear distinction between them because, four of the factions – Amity, Dauntless, Abnegation and Candor can be considered the base of Marx’s world. Each faction is responsible for something the other faction’s need, such as food or protection, while Erudite is the faction that has ideas and puts them in motion.

Furthermore, Erudite provides either technology or knowledge to the other factions and it is apparent that they are the superstructure of this story. As, even though the ruling government is made up of people from Abnegation, there are indicators that the people in Erudite hold the true power. For instance, the fact that Matthews, their representative, is able to manipulate people into thinking badly about those in Abnegation and sow doubt into people’s minds, without an immediate uproar, is one example. Moreover, by the end of the story, people from the base factions have decided to take a stand against the actions of the nation of Erudite and they are doing everything in their power to change their already altered world.
However, since the Marxist explanation does not fully integrate with the *Divergent* story, as it is a hard term to define. There is another, more detailed description for the term. “base refers not to a particular economic position (the working class for instance) but to the entirety of productive relationships” (“Base’”). Thus, it is not just the industrial workers that are used to determine the base, it is every kind of subordinate. For instance, an office worker or someone’s personal assistant can both be considered to be a part of the base in this instance.

Additionally, the term superstructure can also be a difficult word to determine and it has a wide variety of definitions and to elaborate on Marx’s meaning of the word, there is a quote from Nikolai Bukharin. It gives a different insight into the term.

We shall interpret the word ”superstructure” as meaning any type of social phenomenon erected on the economic basis: this will include, for instance, social psychology, the social political order, with all its material parts (for example cannons), the organization of persons (official hierarchy), as well as such phenomena [sic] as language and thought. (No page number)

Marx’s envisioned world is described as a society of individuals that seem to be free of traditional society. There are two stages, “a socialist stage and a stage full of communism” (Rawls 359). The communist society is a world without people being separated and subjugated (Rawls 359). If the factions are analyzed individually in accordance to this definition, then the people in Abnegation have some of the characteristics in common with the world Marx. Although, it is by no means an exact match. For instance, the demeanor and natural submission of the people in Abnegation, to never question anything and their natural inclination to be overlooked. Additionally, Marxist critics do not only use the elements mentioned above to criticize literature, there is also covert and overt content.

Marx’s envisioned world is described as a society of individuals that seem to be free of traditional society. There are two stages, “a socialist stage and a stage full of communism” (Rawls 359). The communist society is a world without people being separated and subjugated (Rawls 359). If the factions are analyzed individually in accordance to this definition, then the people in Abnegation have some of the characteristics in common with the world Marx envisioned. Although, it is by no means an exact match. For instance, the demeanor and natural submission of the people in
Abnegation, to never question anything and their natural inclination to be overlooked. Additionally, Marxist critics do not only use the elements mentioned above to criticize literature, there is also covert and overt content.

According to Peter Barry, those who are Marxist critics and use it to criticize literature works, “make a division between the ‘overt’ (manifest or surface) and ‘covert’ content of a literary work … and then relate the covert subject … to basic Marxist themes” (Barry 161).

In Divergent, the overt content is that each faction has its own manifesto, which is basically their own law within that singular faction and it is adapted to the characteristics of each faction. They formed the factions because of their individual beliefs decades ago of who was to blame for their world at war, which was “humankind’s inclination towards evil, in whatever form that is” (Roth 42). Thus they were divided and formed separate factions in order to eliminate the qualities that they believed were responsible for the world’s disarray.

Those who blamed aggression formed Amity. Those who blamed ignorance became the Erudite. Those who blamed duplicity created Candor. Those who blamed selfishness made Abnegation. And those who blamed cowardice were the Dauntless. (Roth 42-43)

There is also the covert subject to consider. While the people project the characteristics of their faction, such as those in Candor being honest and Erudite being intelligent, it is not that simple because there are always flaws in every system. Especially, while the citizens of Abnegation are considered to be selfless and they are encouraged to think about the welfare of others rather than themselves while the other factions are encouraged to think of themselves. Moreover, there was at least one abuse case in Abnegation, which is not considered to be selfless behavior. Also, the people in Candor may be honest about everything and everyone, however, they are honest to the point of hurtfulness and they do not hide their opinion of someone or something, which can be offensive to those who are not in Candor.

Everyone has both negative and positive qualities that make them who they are. Some people do their best to always be positive towards any situation they find themselves in, while others are pessimistic to a fault. Naturally, the people within each faction are no exception to positive or negative qualities. For instance, the people in
Candor are known for their honesty and on many occasions, honesty is an important quality to have. If a person is giving a testimony in a trial, that person has to tell the truth about what happened. However, there is a difference in being honest about something that happened and being honest to the point of being hurtful. For example, Christina, a character in the novel, does not hide her opinion of some of the other initiates. Apparently, it is common to be honest about their feelings towards each other, whether it is hate or love.

The population of Dauntless is considered to be brave and is known to be the warrior faction. However, that often leads to arrogance and the people can be ruthless, in and out of battle, even if they are protecting everyone. The Erudite citizens are intelligent and yet their thirst for knowledge never ends and they look down on those who are less intelligent than themselves. The people in Amity are considered to be peaceful to the point of isolating themselves rather than being involved in matters of other factions and they inject peace serum to people, in order to keep them non-violent and happy.

There is no sense of unity in the story, people are at war with each other, those within an individual faction, and also a few factions are at war with each other. For example, Erudite and Abnegation. Additionally, there are secrets and lies within at least three of the five factions, schemes and more. Moreover, there is no trust shown between any individuals, and while there is expectation for each faction to present as a whole, that is not a possibility. For instance, not every citizen of Erudite knew about Matthews’s plan and also not every member of Dauntless participated in the massacre of the people in Abnegation. Some were immune to the mind control serum, Tris for instance.

Karl Marx uses a terminology which is historical materialism. It “shows that history, or social change, occurs via human forces, and not because of God, destiny, or some unknown non-human force that shapes events” (Klages). It especially applies to the story Divergent. For example, they say how the factions came to be, however long ago and that decision was made by humans in order to attempt and fix what they believed to be wrong with society. Note that the story does not include something mysterious or even that it was the will of God that they decided to change their society.
There are a few instances, where religion is mentioned within the novel. However, not much is known about it. For instance, Tris mentions that “my father gives thanks to God … not every Abnegation family is religious” (Roth 41). They seem to be Christians. Furthermore, as Tris is on the verge of dying at the end of the story, she tells her audience that her mother gave her to God by submerging her in water when she was a baby.
Selfless workers

Beatris is a sixteen year old Abnegation member that has to choose whether to leave or stay within her own faction, as is tradition for every sixteen year old boys and girls. As she goes through a test that determines which faction she belongs in, she discovers that she is what is called Divergent. Being Divergent means that she does not conform to any one way of thinking. She is not just selfless, but she is also brave and intelligent. She embodies at least three characteristics of the five factions (Roth 30). She changes her name after the choosing ceremony. She is no longer Beatris but Tris. As Tris goes through the initiation process into the Dauntless community, learning how to shoot a gun, throw knives, partaking in hand to hand combat and facing her fears, she becomes friends with some of the other initiates.

Tris goes through a personality change over the course of the story. At the beginning she is a reserved, naïve little girl. However over the course of the story she gains confidence in herself while also becoming more ruthless as the story progresses. At first she is unexperienced in combat and does not have the necessary muscle strength to fight and also it is in her nature to shy away from violence. Yet at the end of the story she shoots an adversary in the foot and does not show any remorse or sympathy towards him.

However, Tris is betrayed by one of her friends, he helps a few people assault her, and after she has confronted him the next day, he kills himself. Furthermore, she discovers, later in the story, that the leader of Erudite, Matthews is planning a war against Abnegation. She is unable to do anything at the time and every person in Dauntless is injected with a mind controlling serum that does not work on those who are Divergent. Thus, Tris is one of the few people who is not being controlled. She does her best to break away from the massacre in order to put an end to it but is captured and then saved by her mother, who is killed. She manages to get into the main control room and shut down the simulation, freeing people’s minds.

The simplest interpretation of the word alienation is “a condition of being estranged from someone or something” (Hobby 2). Tris has alienated herself from her family in the sense that she does not reveal her struggles with being in Abnegation. “He [Caleb] scolded me for not giving my jump rope to a little girl on the playground who didn’t
have anything to play with” (Roth 18). Nor that she is thinking of transferring to another faction that is completely different to her birth faction.

Furthermore, after Tris has chosen to become a part of Dauntless faction, she is alienated from everyone in Abnegation and her family, because transfers are expected to have limited contact with their families (Roth 361). Additionally, she is forced to defend herself by killing one of her good friends, as she tries to stop the massacre of the people in Abnegation. Because she kills her friend, Tris becomes alienated from her lover and other friends as she is forced to tell everyone what happened under truth serum. She has kept it a secret, not telling anyone what happened. Moreover, Tris is a strong female character that does not need to be saved by men, she just saves herself.

Karl Marx introduced two terms that he used to describe workers: alienation and reification. The former is a term that most people are familiar with, although Marx uses the word in a slightly different way.

Karl Marx explained in his study of ‘alienated’ or ‘estranged labour’ . . . that, under the capitalist mode of production, workers are alienated from the products of their labour (i.e., they do not own the things they make) and from their own labour power (which they sell for a wage), but they are also alienated from their human essence, effectively becoming machines in the mechanical system of production. (Hobby 2)

There is at least one faction in Divergent that can be considered to be the so called production workers. The people of Amity are farmers and grow their own produce, such as fruits and vegetables and they work every day in the fields. They have to harvest what is ripe, package it and deliver it to the compound. Thus they truly are the workers that Karl Marx describes, even though there is no mention of any payment for the products. Furthermore, their compound is farthest away from the center, due to being closest to the fence and that can also be considered to be a part of alienation.

However, the people of Amity are not the only ones that fit into this mold. The factionless are those who would not complete initiation, decided to drop out of it or those who are not of any use to their old faction and have been cast out. They are not able to be a part of the society they were born into, either because of their own decision or because the decision of one of the factions. For example, the people in Dauntless do not live long, there are no elderly individuals within the faction. They are either dead or
have been cast out for being too old. Although not every part of the term applies to the factionless because they are not made to work for the factions, they just exist alongside them.

Abnegation is the governing faction, the ruler of the city. There are fifty people from Abnegation that make up the council. The reason for it is because:

our [sic] faction is regarded as incorruptible, due to our commitment of selflessness. Our leaders are selected by their peers for their impeccable character, mortal fortitude and leadership skills. Representatives from each of the other factions can speak in the meetings behalf of a particular issue, but ultimately, the decision is the council's. (Roth 42)

Thus, it is bit of a dictatorship with no democracy.

The people in the faction have dedicated themselves to help others and to volunteer their work to help others, such as the factionless. They give them food and help them with getting job opportunities. They also volunteer to do the work that needs to be done. For instance, “Five years ago, volunteer construction workers from Abnegation repaved some of the roads” (Roth 11). By dedicating themselves to support and assist others, they are encouraged and expected to forget about themselves. They are essentially supposed to become their work and have no sense of self. "Everything-our houses, our clothes, our hairstyles – is meant to help us forget ourselves and to protect us from vanity, greed and envy, which are just forms of selfishness.” (Roth 38). It is also an effective way to prevent jealousy and feelings of inadequacy from some of the people of Abnegation.

It is apparent throughout the story that there are many people within the factions that do not much care for those in Abnegation. For instance, one time when Tris is walking, a boy from Erudite shoves her and it causes her to lose her balance hit the ground. Rather than apologize and help her up, the boy insults her by calling her a “stiff” and walks away. (Roth 13). The people in Erudite are vicious in their dislike of the people within Abnegation and it is possible to relate their attempts to the Marxist term hegemony.

The term hegemony is today often used as shorthand to describe the relatively dominant position of a particular set of ideas and their associated tendency to
become commonsensical and intuitive, thereby inhibiting the dissemination or even the articulation of alternative ideas. (Rosamond)

Matthews’s plan of getting rid of the people of Abnegation, is the dominant idea, so dominant that no other alternative is presented in the story. There is no mention of anyone else having a different idea in order to reach the same results, getting rid of Abnegation.

Alienation can apply to the people of Abnegation. They are alienated from every other faction because of their inclination to be selfless and because of the distain that the other factions have against them. Additionally, those who transfer from Abnegation are alienated from their parents because people believe that a person has to be wholly committed to their chosen faction and should forsake their families and old faction as they ready themselves to become a member of their chosen faction.

Two of the terms that a Marxist critic uses are overt and covert content in literature. According to Robert Merton “while some functions are manifest (intended and easily observed), others are latent (unintended and less obvious)” (Brym and Lie 10). The manifest content in the Divergent story that relates to the people in Abnegation, are actually the actions that Erudite employs against them. For instance, they write newspaper articles that accuse the people of Abnegation of being abusers and hiding away food for their own enjoyment. It is quite clear that they are on a smear campaign. However, the covert content is the plan that Matthews has, to rid the world of everyone in Abnegation by having them killed. Naturally, there are other examples of overt and covert content in the story. For example, Tris’ mother is the epitome of a person from Abnegation. She helps the factionless and she volunteers for all kinds of work. However, she is later revealed to have been born in Dauntless and know how to handle a gun. Thus, she portrays herself as a person that has nothing to hide and is just who she appears to be. Yet, she is shown to be quite complex in the end.

“False consciousness denotes people’s inability to recognize inequality, oppresion, and exploitation in a capitalist society because of the prevalence within it of views that naturalize and legitimize the existence of social classes” (“False consciousness”). Abnegation is a faction that is naturally inclined to submission. Every action they take is not for themselves, but for others and they have eliminated every selfish act within their community. Furthermore, they themselves could be seen as their own oppressors. Such
as looking in the mirror and being unable to celebrate their actual birthday. Moreover, the actions that the people in Erudite take against those in Abnegation is discrimination and oppression: “but the Erudite have prohibited Abnegation visitors from entering their compound”

Karl Marx explained in his study of ‘alienated’ or ‘estranged labour’ . . . that, under the capitalist mode of production, workers are alienated from the products of their labour (i.e., they do not own the things they make) and from their own labour power (which they sell for a wage), but they are also alienated from their human essence, effectively becoming machines in the mechanical system of production. (Hobby 2)

There is at least one faction in Divergent that can be considered to be the so called production workers. The people of Amity are farmers and grow their own produce, such as fruits and vegetables and they work every day in the fields. They have to harvest what is ripe, package it and deliver it to the compound. Thus they truly are the workers that Karl Marx describes, even though there is no mention of any payment for the products. Furthermore, their compound is farthest away from the center, due to being closest to the fence and that can also be considered to be a part of alienation.

However, the people of Amity are not the only ones that fit into this mold. The factionless are those who would not complete initiation, decided to drop out of it or those who are not of any use to their old faction and have been cast out. They are not able to be a part of the society they were born into, either because of their own decision or because the decision of one of the factions. For example, the people in Dauntless do not live long, there are no elderly individuals within the faction. They are either dead or have been cast out for being too old. Although not every part of the term applies to the factionless because they are not made to work for the factions, they just exist alongside them.
Mind control

Matthews is the leader of Erudite. She is described as “a walking, talking computer” (Roth 331). Also, that she is “an attractive woman with watery gray eyes and spectacles” (Roth 362) and “a layer of pudge around her middle” (Roth 442). There is almost nothing known about Matthews before the *Divergent* story, how her childhood was or who she was before she became a leader. It is known that she was selected to be Erudite’s only leader because of her IQ score and that at least one of the leaders of Abnegation does not seem to like her all that much (Roth 42-43).

According to Eric Fromm, “Alienation is a good example for the necessity to join dynamic psychology (or humanistic psychology, which are synonyms) and Marxist thinking.” It is easy to understand the basic concept of alienation and apply that towards any situation that the concept would apply to. However, Marx’s explanation of the word only applies to the production workers and physical labour. It is not a psychological definition. Although, in this case, it would be appropriate to examine Matthews from a psychoanalytical viewpoint, with a Marxist term.

The concept of alienation from Karl Marx, from a psychoanalytical viewpoint, applies to Matthews in the sense that she has lost her identity, of who she was before she became an adult and a leader, because no one stays the same from childhood to adult. Furthermore, she may be surrounded by people that are at her beck and call, such as secretaries and scientists, but they do not necessarily like her or have any desire to interact with her outside of work. It is natural for workers to be wary of their bosses and only see them during working hours.

Furthermore, the term reification, which is also from Marx, with a psychoanalytical viewpoint, also applies to her. Tris gives a description that can explain it a bit more. “I see no vicious glee in her eyes, and not a hint of the sadism I expect. She is more machine than maniac. She sees problems and forms solutions based on the data she collects” (Roth 446). Basically, she is no longer seen as the leader of Erudite, she has become something more, something that is capable of killing people without a thought on the consequences.

Matthews is an established leader by the time the story is being told, thus there is no information on how she was chosen as a leader. Furthermore, the term alienation can apply to her in the sense that she may be surrounded by people that are at her Beck and
call, such as secretaries and scientists, but they do not necessarily like her or have any desire to interact with her outside of work. It is natural for workers to be wary of their bosses and only see them during working hours.

Matthews casts doubt onto the people of Abnegation. In order to put her plan in motion, to collapse the existing government and rid the world of those who are Divergent. For example, there are news articles published that speculate on the reason why Tris transferred from Abnegation to Dauntless and whether it was because of abuse. Additionally, there are news articles published that defame the characteristics of Abnegation, whether its people are in fact selfless, by wondering whether they are hiding food from everyone else.

Matthews can be considered to be bourgeoisie, because she seems to relish the idea of being the leader and also because there is a strong possibility that she presumes to be the leader of her new society that she wants to build. She has had a taste of being powerful within her own faction, to be able to control the people within her faction and it is not enough for her, she desires more power and control over all the people in the world.

Matthews and her associates can be compared to a period in time when there were no laws against owning a slave. “Marx identifies five basic historical developments or changes in the mode of production” (Klages). The slave state is one of the five historical developments that Marx identifies. According to Klages, “In a slave state, some people are owned and some are the owners; the owned people are the ones that labor, and the owners reap the benefit of that labor.”

Normally, being a slave would indicate that a person would have no choice but to work for someone against their will, willingly or not. Such as how African Americans were forced to work for the white man and were unable to leave the servitude. However, that does not apply to this situation. Matthews uses people for different purposes and while they are not owned by her, they are in a sense employed by her and she does not give them any chance to say no or to back out once some plan of hers has begun.

There are certainly those who believe in what Matthews stands for and follow her willingly but most people become uncomfortable with one task or another and it is unrealistic that there is not one person who wishes not to be included in her plans or that someone does not try to any involvement with Matthews.
Furthermore, Matthews is the master of her associates, those who help her with putting her plans in action and is somewhat the slave master because those who are working for her do not get paid and do everything that Matthews says. She also reaps the benefits from whatever plan they perform while her associates get nothing. She is the master of her puppets, no one does anything that is not planned and outlined by her.

However, there is more that can be discerned about Matthews from the contents of *Divergent*. A connection can be made to a somewhat recent history period in recent lifetime.

There have been made numerous references to covert content. It is basically something that is discerned from the text rather than being said outright. The covert content of the story *Divergent* can be compared to relatively recent history. The actions of Hitler and his followers during the World War II have distinct similarities to the story being told through *Divergent*. Jeremy Roberts writes about Adolf Hitler in his book on holocaust biographies: “Many people were responsible for the Holocaust, in which millions of Jews and others were murdered. But no one person bears as much guilt as Adolf Hitler” (6). Adolf Hitler is the name of a soldier that decided to hunt down and eradicate millions of people because of their religious beliefs, all because he believed that killing them was his holy mission from God and that there was a conspiracy amongst the Jews to rule the world (Altshuler 84).

In *Divergent*, Matthews decided, long before the beginning of the current story, that she would not only change the government but also target those who are Divergent. Jeremy Robert’s statement about Hitler could apply to both Matthews and Hitler and it serves as a reminder that even though Matthews and Hitler are the figureheads for both of their wars, they did not do it alone. They had supporters that are just as guilty as them. Even though Matthews is a fictional character and Hitler is a part of actual history.

The term hegemony comes to mind, where certain views are deemed natural as a form of social control (Barry 158). There is nothing mentioned, at least in the story *Divergent*, about how Matthews came to have followers that had the same views as her. However, logic dictates that in order to find people, she had to talk about her views and some could even have been persuaded to see things from her point of view.
Furthermore, in order to subtly get support for her plan of getting rid of all the people within Abnegation, she goes on a smear campaign, that paints Abnegation as selfish hoarders.

Many of Hitler’s views and actions are known to people. For instance, “Hitler’s lie that the Jews were responsible for all the ills that had befallen Germany . . . Moreover, the German people did not follow Hitler primarily because of coercion or fear” (Roth and Rubenstein 213). It is apparent that Hitler lied to his followers and he was apparently a skilled manipulator, capable of changing or having people see things from his viewpoint. Furthermore, Matthews and Hitler have more in common than just the leaderships.

One of the comparisons that can be made about Matthews and Hitler is that they use the same method in order to get rid of their victims, they kill them, although their methods are different. Hitler used gas chambers in order to kill the Jews in masses and he was never involved in the killings himself (Fritz 60). Matthews is more subtle about killing those who are Divergent, they were made to look like suicides and she did not kill too many at one time.

Hitler and Matthews have different reasons for starting a war, Hitler believed it was his holy mission and Matthews desires a world with an improved government and “a world in which people will live in wealth, comfort and prosperity” (Roth 429). Although, both seemed to desire a better world. Neither Matthews nor Hitler seem to understand that their actions and thus the consequences of those actions, are wrong, especially in the eyes of all their victims. Their only crimes being that they are different from the rest of the population.

The people in Dauntless are responsible for the city’s security, both on the inside of the fence and from the outside. According to Tris, “Their primary purpose is to guard the fence that surrounds our city. From what, I don’t know” (Roth 14). Dauntless is the only faction that has five leaders. However, every year the initiates are forced to prove themselves to the full members of Dauntless. Not only do they have to make sure to be in the top ten ranks, in order to be accepted into the faction but they have to jump on and off a moving train if they not want to be made factionless. Then they also need to jump down a black hole with no idea what awaits them at the bottom. Both tasks are supposed to test their bravery. They ration the thinking with the fact that if you are
unable to do the two tasks, then you do not belong within Dauntless in the first place. It is a tactic to get rid of the undesirables without having to train them.

Reification can be applied to the faction of Dauntless as a whole because their jobs require them to set up a schedule that will prevent them from working too much each shift. “You may be able to go on patrols beyond Amity’s farms, but…” (Roth 134)

Furthermore, the patrols most likely have a set schedule for when they are supposed to patrol the streets. It is a repetitive task and while each day is different, there does not appear to be many problems within the city and there has never been anyone that has come from out of the city.

The social class within the faction is not too distinguished, however, there is always something to be found. For instance, Eric is one of the leaders of Dauntless and he is also one of the people that is supervising Tris’ initiation. “The idea that a Dauntless leader will oversee our initiation is bad enough, but the fact that it’s Eric makes it seem even worse” (Roth 79). He is apparently someone that should not be crossed. Moreover, there is a difference between him and the other instructor. They do not agree on a tactic, whether someone should be allowed to concede or not (Roth 105).

Furthermore, there are only ten people of the whole initiation class, transfers and dauntless born, that get a spot within Dauntless. If that is not enough, the five highest scored people are the ones that do not have to work on patrol, protecting the fence.

According to Errington and Gewertz, false consciousness is “the incapacity to recognize the fact and the means of dominance” (84). It is made apparent in the story, that at least two of the Dauntless leaders are a part of Matthews’s plan and they are submissive towards her. She controls everything about them, every step they take, even though they might not think so.

In the Dauntless compound there is much competition between members but also between initiates. For instance, capture the flag is a part of the initiation, where the initiates are split between Four and Eric and they are supposed to get the flag from the other team. The initiates compete between themselves in order to get a spot within the faction.

An incident that happened during Tris’ training can be identified to ideology, as people deceive themselves and it expresses what they are led to think. Tris is assaulted by a few of the boys from initiation one night but she is able to get away from them.
However, she recognizes one of the boys that assaulted her, he was one of her friends. Four, one of Tris’ instructors, tells her that “He hurt you because your strength made him feel weak. No other reason” (Roth 298). He had most likely convinced himself that because of the Dauntless competitive nature, he would forsake his friendship with Tris and assault her in the hopes of debilitating her, perhaps, to better his own standing. He also wanted her to be the weak skilled Abnegation transfer, perhaps then he did not have to be the weakest initiate.

The term ideology can explain why the people in *Divergent* believe certain ideas that are presented to them. “Ideology in this sense is a set of beliefs with which people deceive themselves; it is theory [*sic*] that expresses what they are led to think, as opposed to that which is true; it is false consciousness” (Cranston). An argument can be made that the factions were formed on false pretenses because there is no evidence given to the founders of the factions that it is human emotions that are to blame for the war that brought on the apocalypse.

Furthermore, ideology can explain the belief that divergence does not exist. As stated above, people fear those who are Divergent because they cannot be controlled. It is apparently such a wide held belief that those who are Divergent refuse to acknowledge it to others and thus could be considered to be myth. At least until someone confirms their status as Divergent.

Hegemony is a term widely used within Marxist theory that is not from Karl Marx himself, but from Antonio Gramsci. Raymond Williams that defines the term thus: “Hegemony is like an internalized form of social control which makes certain views seem ‘natural’ or invisible so that they hardly seem like views at all, just ‘the way things are’” (Barry 158). In the story *Divergent*, there are two different views presented on those who are Divergent. One view is that they do not exist. For instance, when Tris gets her results from the aptitude test, she is completely unaware that it is possible to be compatible with more than one faction (Roth 31). Furthermore, people are frightened and believe the Divergent to be a threat to the factions.

It is somewhat difficult to understand why people are frightened of those who are Divergent. However, Tris’ mother has an explanation for it. “We can’t be confined to one way of thinking, and that terrifies our leaders. It means we can’t be controlled” (Roth 457). The people in *Divergent* are defined by their factions and thus each person
is expected to embody the characteristics of said faction. For instance, being brave, honest or intelligent. They are not expected to be brave and intelligent or selfless and honest. They belong to one faction and should not think outside of the so called box that they are in.

The assumption that there is no such thing as Divergent, seems to be a wide held belief amongst the people. For instance, Tris does not know anything about the term or what it means, when she is discovered. Thus, up until someone is discovered to be a Divergent, they are society’s invisible problem. There is at least one leader, Matthews Matthews, who is aware of those who are Divergent, and most likely there are more. It is an effective way to control the people within the factions. If they are not aware of this so called problem and are warned about what they are, it creates a controlled environment.

There is also some apparent hegemony in how the factions treat each other. For instance, the people in Erudite do not treat those in Abnegation too well. There are newspaper articles published that slander some of their leaders, accusing them of abuse against their children. Also, that they are hiding away luxurious items such as cars and fruits and vegetables. Some of the people in Erudite do also bully those in Abnegation to some extent. For instance, there is general name calling “stiff” and in one instance where Tris is walking, she is pushed out of the way by an Erudite man that insults her.

By being true to their characteristics and being submissive and selfless, the people in Abnegation are letting people walk all over themselves. They are unable to say anything to those who mistreat them. Also, the treatment that people in Abnegation suffer through at the hands of Erudite, is not only sabotage by them, it can also be seen as a subtle dominance over Abnegation.

Ideology is how a society thinks about itself, the forms of social consciousness that exist at any particular moment; ideologies supply all the terms and assumptions and frameworks that individuals use to understand their culture, and ideologies supply all the things that people believe in, and then act on. (Klages)

The people that know about divergence, such as Matthews and her associates, are conscious of what they perceive is a problem and a certain attitude towards those who are Divergent is encouraged. For instance, the woman that conducts Tris’ aptitude test
strongly advises her that she should never tell anyone the fact that she is Divergent (Roth 30).

Also, ideology can apply to all of the factions. Each faction is known for their distinct characteristics, as has been reiterated several times throughout this paper. It is expected of people to embody the characteristics of their faction. For example, everyone in Abnegation is supposed to be selfless, it is really a requirement. If a person is not selfless, then that is not the faction for him. Moreover, everyone in Dauntless are supposed to be courageous and fearless and everyone in Amity are supposed to be always happy and kind. At least that is what people are led to think and is most likely true in most people.

However, there is at least one man that does not always act in selflessness. Marcus Eaton is an Abnegation leader and is revealed to be the father of one of Tris’ instructors, Four. Tris gets to know Four outside of his role as an instructor and she discovers that he was once in Abnegation. He had transferred because his father abused him physically and he decided to save himself. Abuse of any kind is never selfless behavior.

Although Tris appears to be one of the most independent character in *Divergent*, her behavior and actions imply that she is not completely free of the ideology of her society within Dauntless. There have been numerous mentions of the faction of Dauntless being known for their bravery. Throughout the book, Tris comments on different stunts that the people in Dauntless do. She believes the participation of those activities make her brave. For instance, she has to jump off a building, down into a dark hole, in order to gain access into the Dauntless compound. Also, she climbs onto a Ferris wheel. “My heart pumps faster. Will I really risk my life for this – to win a game the Dauntless like to play?” (Roth 151) in some sort of belief that every action she takes, will make her more like the people within Dauntless.
Conclusion

This essay research, from a Marxist viewpoint, the novel Divergent and a correlation has been made to events that occurred for the duration of World War II. The proletariat and the bourgeoisie are terms from Karl Marx, used to differentiate between social classes. Both terms can apply to the factions. For instance, both Amity and Dauntless are the proletariat of the social class whereas the faction of Erudite, and Matthews, can be considered to be the bourgeoisie of the social class.

The term alienation has many different interpretations, the simplest is that someone is isolated from something. Karl Marx had his own explanation for the word alienation which involved labour workers to be excluded from their products. The term can apply to both Matthews and Tris. Matthews’ alienation is seen from a psychoanalytical viewpoint. She has lost her identity. Whereas Tris alienated herself from her parents when she chose to become a member of Dauntless.

The term ideology can apply to Tris. She was attacked by a boy, someone that she considered to be a friend. The boy had deluded himself into thinking that by debilitating her, he could improve his own standing amongst the initiates.
Works Cited


https://www.britannica.com/topic/false-consciousness accessed Dec 7 2017


https://www.britannica.com/topic/proletariat accessed Dec 6 2017


