

Character resistance as a compliance of homosexual desires in *Elisa Y Marcela* movie by Isabel Coixet: Slavoj Žižek's historical-psychoanalysis approach

Dhitya Faradilla

Fakultas Ilmu Budaya, Universitas Gadjah Mada

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to reveal the movement of Elisa and Marcela in their movement to fulfill their desire as a lesbian couple contained in the film Elisa Y Marcela by Isabel Coixet. This study uses Slavoj Žižek's theory about the subject to understand the character's subjectivity in dealing with the symbolic dimensions that ensnare him and how to escape the symbolic reality. This research is included in the descriptive qualitative study, in which data is presented as words sourced from the Elisa Y Marcela film script. Data collection is done by watching movies repeatedly, understanding the film to be analyzed, and collecting data following research problem. There are several stages in data analysis, namely grouping data related to Elisa and Marcela's subjectivity in data tables, then classifying according to several steps in historical psychoanalysis. The main focus of this study is on the figures of Elisa and Marcela. The results of this study show that Elisa and Marcela, as the main characters, succeeded in knocking down symbolic in their lives. They do not care about people's thoughts of similar relations they run, Elisa and Marcela remain together and do not give up. Both of them know that their relationship is wrong and forbidden, but they continue, calling them cynical subjects. After all the rejection they received, they finally tried to tell lies, and one of them disguised as men, and their actions indicated a moment of emptiness when the subject had reached the disgust of all that trapped him. In the end, they carried out radical acts, they had a marriage in the church legally, she lied to the priest in the church, and lied to many people. Thus, they can both fight the symbolic with these radical actions.

Keywords: Slavoj Žižek, Hystorical-Pshycoanalysis, Lesbian, Elisa y Marcela movie.

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Introduction

Sexual deviance is currently a topic of discussion that is widely discussed by society in Indonesia and other countries. LGBT is an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. The term LGBT has existed since the 1990s, intended to replace the phrase "gay community" (Yudiyanto, 2016). Homosexual or LGBT groups are often considered taboo by community groups, and this happens because they believe that normal relationships are relationships between men and women or heterosexuals, so someone who behaves otherwise will be called deviant or abnormal behavior (Wulandari, 2018). This LGBT phenomenon raises various pros and cons in Indonesian society. Those who agree with this phenomenon are seen from a human perspective as no longer a mental disorder,

while those who do not agree with this phenomenon because they see the LGBT phenomenon as deviant behavior, even causing damage to the social order of humanity (Yudiyanto, 2016). This is what causes the emergence of two conflicting perceptions regarding the existence of LGBT groups, especially in social life (Lestari, 2018).

Many countries in the world have different views regarding LGBT, giving rise to pros and cons about this. Indonesia is a country that opposes the LGBT phenomenon because LGBT is still taboo to discuss, which is very different from the condition of LGBT in Western countries (Soetjningsih, 2004). In addition, Zimbabwe is also one of the countries that opposes LGBT. The President of Zimbabwe said that the existence of LGBT people is worse than dogs and pigs (Khairiyati et al., 2021). Even so, there are still countries

Corresponding author: **Dhitya Faradilla**, Program Studi Magister Sastra, Fakultas Ilmu Budaya, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Bulaksumur, Yogyakarta. Email address: dhityafaradilla@mail.ugm.ac.id.

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that are pro-LGBT and have given freedom to their people regarding their sexual orientation and legalized same-sex marriage, namely Spain. Based on that, it can be seen that every country has its pros and cons regarding LGBT because this issue is quite a sensitive issue in society.

Now, Spain is still discussing social and political debates in response to the justification of various lesbian, gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) organizations to provide access to same-sex marriage (Galán, 2004). However, previously they were not free to engage in same-sex sexual activity and chose their sexual orientation. The government enforces strict regulations regarding same-sex relationships or anything related to LGBT. In the beginning, in Spain, the government imposed a criminal law on homosexual offenders, with a period of around 15-20 years for the LGBT offenders. Not only imprisonment, but perpetrators of sexual deviation will also receive social sanctions from society because they still think that perpetrators of sexual deviation are considered disgusting and do not deserve respect like society in general. Finally, the laws and regulations changed every year until 1979. The Spanish government began to legalize same-sex sexual activity.

Based on these social cases, societal issues are triggered by several sensitive matters, causing problems for some people who feel they are victims of social problems. Various movements are now emerging to defend against problems that harm certain parties. The emergence of various problems regarding LGBT has made some of these stories adapted into films by directors interested in stories about LGBT that have occurred in real life. One of the films based on a true story is *Elisa y Marcela*, first released on February 13, 2019, and directed by Isabel Coixet.

Elisa y Marcela was set in 1988. This film is adapted from a true story about a pair of lesbians who successfully committed same-sex marriage by violating government laws at that time. This incident is the same as what is depicted in the film *Elisa y Marcela*, where the Spanish people criticized their relationship at that time because of their forbidden relationship. They had same-sex relationships. They had been caught many times by society and received criticism. However, that did not change the decision of the two because they

continued the relationship until, in the end, they plotted to deceive everyone, and one of them changed his identity to a man, Elisa. After successfully doing this, he finally asked the church to baptize him for various reasons so that everything could go according to their plan. After that, they married the church by lying to the church and even the pastor. However, in the end, everything was uncovered, and they were threatened with criminal punishment from the Spanish government regarding their second forbidden marriage.

The movements made by Elisa and Marcela brought him out of the existing policies in Spain. Homosexuality is a form of deviant behavior that is considered not a disease in the subject but a form of inappropriate behavior. Elisa and Marcela, who already know very well about the norms of homosexuals, do not make them immediately stop their illicit relationship. In fact, at that time in Spain, homosexual offenses were considered illegal, whether there were witnesses or not when the violation occurred. If there were complaints about an illicit relationship established by a pair of lovers, then they could still receive legal sanctions.

The characters of Elisa and Marcela are related to the subject of the theory put forward by Žižek. In this study, researchers will use the theory by Slavoj Žižek, namely Historical Psychoanalysis. The theory is used to analyze the film *Elisa y Marcela* by Isabel Coixet. The use of this theory in the movie *Elisa y Marcela* is due to the movement of the characters Marcela and Elisa against symbolic norms to follow their inner urge to continue same-sex relationships. The movement of these characters is in line with the theory put forward by Žižek about the subject.

The theory put forward by Slavoj Žižek is called historical psychoanalysis - *historis*. It is called psychoanalysis because Žižek combines Lacan's ideas to achieve historical ideals (Akmal, 2015) Besides Lacan and Marx, Žižek also has basic thoughts about the subject regarding Hegel's definition of dialectics and social subjects, finally from these three Hegel-Lacan-Marx gave birth to him as a Žižekian subject (Zamzuri, 2018) While achieving Marx's historical ideals, Žižek conforms to the concept of psychoanalysis. Lacan proposes three arrangements in the development of psychological subjects. He considers that every

individual or ego must pass through three spaces or structures of psychological development that construct his unconscious nature (Setiawan, R, 2020). The triadic order is The real at this stage, everything is still undecipherable (Žižek, 2008), so what is real is the stage where everything has not been mediated by the symbolic. The Symbolic, at this stage the place where the subject is formed to become the actual subject, so this extended can refer to individuals who are considered to represent the symbolic itself or the institution (Robet, 2010). At this stage, the Imaginary is also known as the mirror stage, where the subject experiences a separation between himself and his image. This separation causes the condition of the subject to be divided (Akmal, 2018).

In some of the concepts presented by Žižek, cynicism is a kind of negation of a misguided or false negation of ideology because they hide the mask of their ideology or in simpler terms (Setiawan, 2018). The cynical subject refers to the issue which takes action but already knows the truth but still does the activity. Subjects like this usually have great passion, which clouds their knowledge. Symbolic cynicism is a form of the subject's awareness of the actual reality, but the subject still does it even though he already knows the truth. In 'cynicism,' the subject has such a great desire that it makes him cover up what he knows by continuing to take the action he wants. The presence of 'cynicism' is considered to resemble bad qualities (such as radical action), but in reality 'cynicism' is like morality itself which is present in the domain of immorality so that it looks subversive, anti-resistant, and always lives in pretense (Žižek, 2002).

The moment of emptiness is when someone already feels that they do not want to be bound by something that binds them. Eventually, the moment of emptiness will automatically come in the form of the subject's disgust for fakes that are not following the actual reality or the subject's rebellion against frauds towards actions carried out without any ideology. One of the ways to get out of the

Research Method

This research is included in the qualitative descriptive study. The qualitative descriptive method solves problems by describing the object's state following the facts

symbolic is to be in a moment of emptiness that suddenly triggers actions beyond reason, beyond empirical, and even beyond symbolic observation as the pivotal point that starts a real subject explosion (Setiawan, 2018).

A radical action is a form of subject response to get out of the symbolic, which always takes a negative path Žižek says as a radical action (Akmal, 2015). Extreme actions tend to be carried out by the subject as a form of rebellion against the symbolic ideology that ensnares the subject, which is finally countered by actions called radical actions taken to gain freedom for the subject. Radical actions are even called 'acts of selflessness' because the self is a form of hegemony, cultural constraints, and construction (Arifin, 2016). This radical action is carried out by ignoring existing norms, ignoring predetermined values; because of this action, the subject can also be referred to as a Homo Sacer (Agamben, 1998). Taking radical action (becoming a radical subject) is the end of the negotiation between self-awareness about the existence of a real dimension and a symbolic dimension (Wibowo et al., 2021).

The researcher conducted this research to show the regulations regarding sexual deviance that occurred in the 19th century, around the 1890s, as depicted through the film *Elisa y Marcela*, based on the true story of a lesbian couple in Spain who struggled to live together despite the many obstacles they faced. Based on this, we can see how the struggle of LGBT people seek equality until the Spanish government declares that LGBT is a legal act.

This research focuses on the struggles of the characters Elisa and Marcela, also known as subjects who struggle against symbolism by taking radical actions. Based on the focus of the discussion, the researcher raises the formulation of the problem, how are the movements of the characters Marcela and Elisa in fulfilling their desire to become lesbians in the film *Elisa y Marcela* by Isabel Coixet? From the formulation of the problem, it can be seen the struggle of the two characters to subdue the symbolic by taking actions that lead to radical action which violate the symbolic order of both.

(Sugiyono, 2013). The data that has been obtained is then analyzed, concluded, and interpreted into the theory used in the research (Endraswara, 2006). This analysis makes the film *Elisa y Marcela* the object material. The formal object uses Slavoj Žižek's

psychoanalytic-historical theory. The data collection methods and techniques used in this study are analysis of the story in the film *Elisa y Marcela*. The subjectivity of the characters Elisa and Marcela is known through their movements against the existing symbolic dimension.

The next step is collecting the data as material for conducting research. Data collection techniques are done by adjusting the object to be studied by collecting data from facts related to existing research problems (Faruk, 2012). So, data collection was done by watching movies repeatedly collecting words, sentences, and dialogue related to the

Result & Discussion

Based on the formulation of the problem raised in this study, the main focus is on the character Elisa and Marcela in the film *Elisa y Marcela* by Isabel Coixet. From this subject, it will be revealed about the symbolic dimensions that ensnare the subject, the subject who becomes a cynical subject, the moment of emptiness experienced by the subject, and the subject who performs symbolic actions indicated as radical actions. This is as explained in the discussion below.

Symbolic Dimension

In the 19th century, according to the background in the film, around 189, in that year, same-sex relations were relationships that were considered very forbidden and could be said to be very disgusting. The stigma of society at that time believed that relationships between same-sex relationships were taboo and would be ostracized by the community if someone had same-sex relationships, either gay or lesbian. At that time in Spain, someone with a same-sex relationship would be considered a disgrace and a perpetrator of sexual deviance. Therefore, the perpetrator who carried out the forbidden relationship would also receive legal sanctions already implemented in that country's law. So, the perpetrators will not only receive ostracism from the community but will also receive prison sentences within several years. The norms that emerge are symbolic arrangements regarding same-sex relationships, considered inappropriate, and the perpetrators living together in society. This is following the symbolic order that ensnares the subject of homosexual actors in the film *Elisa Y Marcela*, as in the quote below:

subjectivity of the characters Elisa and Marcela in fighting against the symbolism. After the data is collected, data selection is carried out by grouping the data according to the problems raised in the study.

The data analysis method used in this research is descriptive analysis. Next, the data were analyzed according to the formulation of the problem that has been determined using Slavoj Žižek's theory. After the analysis was carried out, an explanation was made regarding the facts contained in the film *Elisa and Marcela* regarding the subjectivity of the two characters in fighting to fulfill their desires as lesbians.

Data 1:

Elisa : What is it?

A man : I wanted to invite Marcela to the dance next week. The dance.

Elisa : She can't make it, I'm afraid.

A man : Let her tell me that herself. Or are you her boss? Open the door! You perverted bitch, open the door! Whore.

(1:00:15) - (1:00:57)

Spanish government regulations at that time, which still prohibited same-sex relations, were a separate criticism of the perpetrators, including those carried out by Elisa and Marcela. The perpetrators of these prohibited acts were subject to a barrage of social sanctions from society and criminal sanctions stipulated in the government laws at that time. The prohibition that existed then was a form of a symbolic dimension that had long been formed. Where various matters regarding sexual deviance are taboo and even become something that is considered disgusting for some people. Things like that were embedded in people's lives, eventually forming a symbolic order for the people in Spain at that time. So, for Elisa and Marcela, being a lesbian couple is quite challenging to cover up their intimate moments. They have to pretend to behave like a friend relationship in general. Elisa and Marcela took this action because they were entangled with the symbolic dimension that existed at that time, which made the two of them only take steps considered normal and not deviate at that time. However, for both of them, this is not an easy thing when they try to keep their relationship hidden, but still, pairs of eyes watch the couple's relationship. The

sanctions that are pretty severe to receive are social sanctions given by the community by isolating and even giving various harsh words to the perpetrators because they are considered very deserving of such treatment due to their actions. This kind of symbolic dimension formed in social society in Spain, where they believe same-sex relationships will cause them to be considered a minority and get ostracized from society, as illustrated in the quote below.

Data 2:

Marcela : Do you know what's happened to your classmates? Are they all sick or something? Be seated.
(1:01:31) - (1:01:51)

In the film *Elisa y Marcela*, a symbolic arrangement has been created and ingrained in the minds of the people in Spain at that time. The setting of this film is around 1898 - 1901, at which time lesbian and gay behavior was subject to much criticism from society. Perpetrators who are caught having same-sex relationships, the perpetrators will be ostracized from society. Society has considerable influence in imposing sanctions on gay or lesbian perpetrators. They will isolate and distance themselves from their abuser, as seen in the excerpt of the dialogue snippets in the data above. In that situation, Marcela, a teacher, was surprised to find that most of her students were not in class then. It happened because someone called her a lesbian, and these words were heard by the people in the area, which ultimately caused this condition to occur. Those who are perpetrators will be ostracized by society and kept away. As in the dialogue, where people try to keep their children away from Marcela because they hear rumors circulating about the forbidden relationship between Marcela and Elisa. They become marginalized people in society when they take actions that contradict the symbolic dimension created at that time. Not only in the form of action, but the community will also provide verbal sanctions to the perpetrators, as contained in the dialogue snippet below.

Data 3:

Elisa : Is everything alright? Is something wrong? I would have thought you'd be glad we were leaving.
Marcela: I'm. Believe me
Elisa : You don't look it. We'll never have to set foot in this cell again.

Marcela: It's not so bad. It's worse out there. Where we're circus freak. Where they laugh at us. Stare at us. Where there's no escape... never will be.

(1:45:15) - (1:46:30)

Lesbian or gay is a sensitive enough thing to be debated. Lesbian perpetrators like those in this film are often discriminated against by their environment when their sexual identity is exposed and known by many people. Everyone at that time certainly thought that lesbians were wrong. From any point of view, lesbian perpetrators are the guiltiest of what they have done. Society at that time had instilled in their minds to avoid everything related to these matters, so it was not uncommon for them to find out about these acts. They would give various inadequate responses in multiple ways. As illustrated in the snippet of dialogue between Marcela and Elisa above, where Marcela has concerns about her life when she has to live outside detention, she thinks about the response from society for what she has done. All of this can happen because society has been controlled by the symbolic created, so if someone takes action outside of the symbolic, he will get reproach from the people around him. As can be seen from the data, society was already living in the symbols created before. The criminal law that the perpetrators of same-sex relations will accept will also be given to the perpetrators for quite a long time, as seen in the dialogue snippet below.

Data 4:

Governor : Really, commissioner, all this about these Spanish women getting married? My wife can't seem to talk about anything else. She even wants to visit them in prison.
Warden : They had a lot of visitors, it's true.
Governor : I'm getting pressure from the Spanish authorities. They want to try them in Coruna. I think they're keep on making an example of the.
Warden : They're not criminals, so much as just two women who are just...
Governor : Idiots. How do things stand at the moment?
Warden : One of them has given birth to a baby girl.
Governor : In the prison? That's all we needed.

Warden : Governor... if we hand over to the Spanish authorities... they'll be facing 10 to 20 years.

(1:38:23) – (1:39:23)

As explained in the discussion above regarding the symbolic dimension of perpetrators of same-sex relations, both gay and lesbian, in Spain, based on the film *Elisa Y Marcela*, the quote above clearly illustrates how state officials in Spain enforce the established legal regulations regarding irregularities—sexual activity committed by an individual. The section above clearly shows the punishment given to the perpetrators, Elisa and Marcela, for their actions that continue their forbidden relationship. It is shown in the film that the perpetrators of this same-sex relationship will receive a prison sentence of 10-20 years as a result of their actions, it clearly shows how the symbolic can subdue the subject, and a person will be punished for what they do to fulfill their desire to violate the symbolic.

Cynical Subject

"Cynicism" appears to represent the subject who knows the actual reality. Cynical action relates to something the issue does, contrary to what it should be or with "the symbolic." Still, the subject already knows that the action should not be done or ignores the symbolic and continues to do it.

This is related to the discussion with the characters Elisa and Marcela regarding the harmful actions they experienced when they were starting to become aware of the desire within them regarding different sexual interests within them, where they began to have more closeness than friends. However, the passion that arises continuously grows between the two of them until they finally live life together with various obstacles. However, they know their relationship is something wrong that shouldn't be done, and of course, it will harm them because their actions are unlawful, and they will get sanctions from society. As seen in the dialog below:

Data 5:

Elisa : Sometimes I feel so afraid.
 Marcela : Elisa, we have to play along. Pretend that we're just like everyone else. That we are we're just like everyone else. Or they'll never leave us alone
 Marcela : You know it's true.

Elisa : I know

(56:50 – 57:18)

From the start of their relationship, Elisa and Marcela already knew the consequences they would receive when going through the relationship. When they have same-sex relationships or as lesbians, they still feel afraid if someone finds out about their relationship status, which is more than just friends. This shows that this couple knows their behavior is wrong and deviant. This is like the premise put forward by Žižek, which suggests that they don't know, but they do it, shifts to they know, but they still do it. Suppose it is related to the forbidden relationship between Elisa and Marcela. In that case, both of them seem cynical when they know what they are doing, but they still do it, which ultimately leads them to take actions that make them both issues.

Moment of Emptiness

The moment emptiness is understood as where the radical action originates, the disgust and falsehood that influences the subject's actions so that the issue acts out of consciousness without any plan or purpose. Thus, the subject no longer cares about all the symbolic snares that bind him, which ultimately makes the issue take action as a form of the subject's disgust for the symbols that bind him. Finally, the subject performs actions that are a form of hate from the symbolic. This is as contained in the dialogue snippets in the *Elisa y Marcela* film below:

Data 6:

Elisa : So, you know what we have to do?
 Marcela : yes.
 Elisa : Are you sure?
 Marcela : yes
 Elisa : do you love me?
 Marcela : with all my being.
 Elisa : It's not too late for you to live another kind of life, Marcela. One that's normal.
 Marcela : For me, a normal life is with you. You're the one who gives me what I need. Just you. No one else.
 Elisa : Then we'll go to Buenos Aires, where no one knows us.
 (1:04:09) – (1:06:07)

Elisa and Marcela, who already knew very well about the relationship they were carrying out, was a very forbidden relationship at that time. They even received criticism from many people about their relationship. However, the two of them didn't just give up; they still wanted to be together regardless of the consequences they would receive for their actions. In this case, they still decide to stay together, and they still feel in love with each other. They even plan something they think will save their relationship by going to another city to continue being together. This is included in the moment of emptiness. Elisa and Marcela are in a moment of emptiness where they continue to act outside of their awareness because they follow their great desire to go towards fulfilling the desires within them. Elisa and Marcela's actions culminated in their explosion of everything that trapped them, so they acted beyond reason. The moment of emptiness presents itself as the culmination of the outbreak of the various disgusts within him.

Radical Action

The action taken is contrary to the symbolic order, which is referred to as a radical action in the end. The subject acts opposite to the symbolic one. This action can be said to be without ideology, without symbol, and without any plans that influence it in carrying out these actions.

Marcela and Elisa are trying to stay together, and in the end, she makes various efforts to get out of the symbolic noose that binds them. Criminal punishment and social sanctions from society regarding same-sex illicit relationships were symbolic forms that existed at that time in Spain. Elisa and Marcela try to get out of the symbolic snares that bind her, so she takes actions that violate existing symbolic ones. Elisa and Marcela have a great passion for each other, so they take various activities to fight "the symbolic:" by taking

Conclusion

Based on the data presented, the subjectivity of Elisa and Marcela as the main characters begins with a symbolic order in the social environment of the community. Elisa and Marcela have different sexual relations that entangle them in a symbolic order. This could happen because there was a ban on same-sex relations in Spain then, which made Elisa and

actions that are not following the norms that apply regarding the forbidden relationship between him and Patrick. According to Žižek's concept, this is a radical act because of his efforts to fight the symbolic made by opposing "the symbolic." As depicted in the quote below:

Data 7:

Priest : Will you take Marcela, here present, for your lawful wife according to the rights of the holy mother church? Now the bridegroom responds: "I will."

Mario : I will

Priest : Now join you in holy matrimony in the name of the father, and the son, and the holy spirit. Amen.

Both : Amen.

(1:11:23) - (1:12:06)

The symbolic dimension of the life of Spanish society, which at that time vehemently opposed same-sex relationships or what could be called homosexuals, consisted of two types of relationships, namely gay and lesbian. Elisa and Marcela, as a lesbian couple, dared to get married by one of them disguising themselves as a man so that both of them could have a legal marriage in the church. This action taken by Elisa and Marcela is radical because they are trying to get out of the symbolic trap in negative ways so that they can unite and live legally by being bound in marriage. However, both of them had violated the symbols created at that time. They committed a big lie to the church that married them and broke the very forbidden rules regarding the rules not carrying out same-sex marriages. This then indicates the actions of the two as radical acts. As in the dialogue above, where they get married like a pair of heterosexual lovers getting married, and consciously they know that their actions are forbidden and violate existing symbols, which actions are called radical actions.

Marcela unable to fight the symbolic. Moreover, both of them lived in a society that was totally against same-sex relations and even considered very disgusting and a disgrace to society in the area. Even so, Elisa and Marcela's passion was too great to make both seem to rebel against the symbolic through radical actions.

Elisa and Marcela already know that the two of them have a desire that should not be present. It is considered illegal when they continue their relationship, but the two of them are still in a relationship, making them both called cynic subjects. After that, those fed up with various social prohibitions and insults made them take actions outside of awareness. Elisa tried to change her identity and disguise herself as a man. This action was included in a

moment of emptiness, where both felt disgusted with all the existing traps. Ultimately, they legally married at the church by committing a big lie to its pastor and all existing people. They did this to fulfill their desires, and this action was included in radical action. This radical action is an attempt by the subject to get out of the symbolic through negative ways.

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