

**MATERIAL INCLINATION TO INDICATE SOCIAL STATUS
IN LAUREN WEISBERGER'S NOVEL
THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA (2003)**

THESIS

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to Obtain Strata I (S1) Degree*



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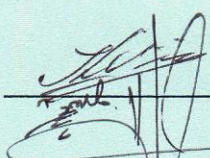
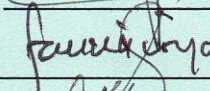
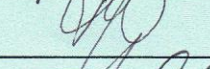
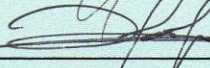

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ABSTRAK

Cesar, Rinaldo. 2013. Material Inclination to Indicate Social Status in Lauren Weisberger's Novel *The Devil Wears Prada* (2003)

**Pembimbing: 1. Dr. Hj. Kurnia Ningsih, M.A
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Skripsi ini merupakan analisa novel *The Devil Wears Prada* (2003) karya Lauren Weisberger. Permasalahan yang dibahas dalam analisa ini adalah sejauh mana novel ini merefleksikan kecenderungan manusia untuk mengejar keberadaan benda dan materi untuk mengindikasikan status sosial. Analisa ini menerapkan *text-based interpretation* yang mempertimbangkan unsur-unsur di dalam teks secara spesifik sehingga memberikan kontribusi dalam pengungkapan makna. Selanjutnya penganalisaan novel ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan *implied author*.

Tujuan analisa ini adalah (1) menganalisa sejauh mana novel ini merefleksikan material inclination, (2) menunjukkan kontribusi elemen fiksi (*implied author*) dalam mengungkap *material inclination* dalam novel ini. Data penelitian ini adalah teks tertulis yang dikutip dari novel. Kutipan teks tersebut kemudian diinterpretasi dan dianalisa menggunakan elemen fiksi *point of view* (*implied author*) lalu dikaitkan dengan konsep *Consumerism* yang dikemukakan oleh Zygmunt Baumann, konsep *Hedonism* yang dikemukakan oleh Ruut Veenhoven dan teori postmodern yang dirumuskan oleh Jean Baudrillard. Hasil analisa menunjukkan bahwa karakter cenderung memposisikan benda-benda materi dan harta kekayaan sebagai parameter untuk mengindikasikan sosial statusnya. Hal ini terbukti dari dua karakteristik: konsumerisme dan hedonism. Benda-benda materi serta harta kekayaan beralih nilai dan fungsi menjadi sebatas komoditas untuk mencapai kepuasan personal. Keberadaan benda-benda materi dan harta kekayaan sangat simbolik sebagai bahasa untuk menunjukkan status sosialnya di masyarakat.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The twenty first century is the era where life has changed magnificently. Skyscraper buildings including offices, apartments and residences were built in big cities all around the world. Shopping centers, fast-food restaurants and supermarkets spread and grow massively and become the endorser of human daily needs. Technology grows rapidly represented by the invention of supercomputers and cellphones with famous brand such as iPhone, Blackberry, Apple, etc.

It is common nowadays to see people spending their time in a mall stretching their legs and freshening their eyes looking and searching for a self-entertainment. Allegedly, most people enjoy eating and hanging out with friends at fastfood booths or fancy restaurants. In some spots at public places, people are bowing their head to an *Apple* laptop or an tablet *iPod* supercomputer and looking busy for personal business. Moreover, it is usual to find a group of young women hanging out together in mall hunting branded fashion and apparels (such as *Prada*, *Gucci*) or looking for an expensive *Rolex* watch as a present for their couple.

Furthermore, a new belief or conviction has born in twenty first century. In most people mind nowadays, a classy life is often comprehended as a life that surrounded by luxurious goods and sophisticated facilities. Kaplan (2006: 179) states that today life is a life spent in pursuit of commodities where people become greed of material goods in terms of status, purchase more and more

consumer goods, must work more and more hours to afford them. As a result, material goods become the priority to reach the status itself. Moreover, Baudrillard in Poster (2005: 29) argues:

Today, we are everywhere surrounded by the remarkable conspicuousness of consumption and affluence, established by the multiplication of objects, services, and material goods. This now constitutes a fundamental mutation in the ecology of the human species. Strictly speaking, men of wealth are no longer surrounded by other human beings, as they have been in the past, but by objects.

Quotation above clearly describe what really happen in today life. People are surrounded by consumption circumstances where material goods become the parameter of wealthy. Most people has poisoned by the premise that social status is referred into objetcs especially luxurious goods.

As a result, people are triggered to pursue material goods. Therefore, material goods become a requirement since it has an important role in human life. Derived from Baudrillard's idea, there is a conclusion that the tendency of people is aimed into one aim: to pursue material goods in order to indicate social status. This condition can be concluded as material inclination. Baudrillard in Poster (2005: 19-20) states:

Objects do not only facilitate material existence through their proliferation as commodities, but, generalized into signs of recognition, they facilitate the reciprocation of status among people. The system of social standing, at least, has the advantage of rendering obsolete the rituals of caste or of class and, generally, all preceding (and internal) criteria of social discrimination.

Baudrillard argues that material goods in social circumstances have a specific function: signaling class and social status among people. The concept of brand become really important. People buy branded products to indicate their social status.

Social status according to Nichol, Brown and Haynes (2008:3) is a structural approaches of class analysis typically measure social class through indicators of socioeconomic status such as income, occupation, and education. Meanwhile according to Weber (1947) class is categorized into working class, lower-middle class, intelligentsia, and upper class. Similar to Weber, the stratification of classes demonstrated through Warner's class model (1949) divides classes into upper, middle, and lower.

Consumerism is one major characteristic that reflects material inclination. Todd (2011: 1) states that Jean Baudrillard claims consumerism as an extension of his idea of the hyperreal. Everything in daily world is a simulation of reality. The simulation is completed through consumption of goods. Consumerism also creating a consumer society, a society where most people consider material goods as a requirement of good life which is destined to be consumed and made it as an exclusive property. Baumann (2005: 22) states that being a consumer means speak of a consumer society, the need to pay money for things meant to be consumed. People will see material goods as the potential stuff of consumption.

Hedonism is another characteristic of material inclination. According to Bujok (2007) hedonism deals with the personal belief that pleasure is the highest good, the pursuit of pleasure, a life-style devoted to pleasure-seeking. Materialistic mind-set is the main cause that urges people to become a hedonist. In most cases, most people buy luxury goods not merely to gain symbolic status, but also to fulfill self pleasure. For a hedonist, material things are very symbolic and say much more than what people may realize. Pursuing luxury goods is merely in

order to fulfill certain personal desires. What people purchase, consume and wear is not just a product, but also a piece of language that creates a sense of who they are. Every branded products that people wear and consume symbolizes who they are in the society, what kind of life they have including their position and their social status.

One phenomenon that can be taken as the example of material inclination is the way of life socialites. Many socialites made famous celebrities, artists and public figures as the role model for their life. Local celebrities such as Syahrini and international celebrities such as Kim Kardashian, Lady Gaga and David Beckham are set as their role model by copying and plagiarizing their way of life including following they appearance, using the material goods they wear and copying their lifestyle. The socialites become the follower as they only concern about the glamour side of celebrities life where material goods become commodity. This condition depicts material inclination since material goods in socialites' life is purposed to indicate social status.

The phenomenon of material inclination is also can be found in literary works. One phenomenon that can be taken as an example of material inclination is in *The Devil Wears Prada* (2003) novel by Lauren Weisberger. The novel portrays the life of high class people who works in fashion circumstances. Consumerism and hedonism are key words that describe the lives of characters in the novel where most characters tend to pursue material goods to indicate social status.

1.1.1 Material Inclination

There are two terms that need to be explained in this analysis. They are material and inclination. The term material refers to goods or objects which used as commodity. According to Baudrillard in Poster (2005: 21) material goods are merely the objects of need and satisfaction at times purchased, possessed, enjoyed, and spent, and yet not consumed. Examples of material goods is the money we have, the clothes we wear, the car we drive, the food we eat, the cellphone we buy, the jewelries we set and so on.

The second term, inclination refers to a person's natural tendency to act in a particular way. The word "inclination" has a similar definition with "tendency" but the difference between these two words is "inclination" reflected through actions meanwhile "tendency" is only appeared in mind. According to Onof (2011: 5) inclination leads into actions through habituation, therefore inclination is manifested as an object of our liking.

Material inclination in this analysis refers to the condition where the tendency of people are pursuing material goods to indicate social status. This condition happens because people tend to put material goods as the parameter of classy life. Material inclination is reflected in two characteristics: consumerism and hedonism. The presence of material goods are very symbolic, to indicate social status.

1.1.2 A Brief of Lauren Weisberger

Lauren Weisberger is an American novelist and author. She was born March 28, 1977. Her mother is a teacher and her father is a department store

president. She spent her early youth in Clark Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania, a small town outside Scranton. At age 11, her parents divorced and she and her younger sister, Dana, moved to Allentown, Pennsylvania, to live with her mother.

Weisberger attended Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, where she was an English major and graduated in 1999. Weisberger began working for Departures Magazine, an American Express publication, where she wrote 100-word reviews and became an assistant editor. She also published a 2004 article in Playboy magazine.

Weisberger had written some literary works. Her first novel is *The Devil Wears Prada* (2003). Second novel of Weisberger is *Everyone Worth Knowing* (2005) based upon New York City public relations world. *Chasing Harry Winston* (2008) is Weisberger's third novel which potrays the fear of woman who are facing the horror of turning 30. In September 2008, it was announced that Universal Pictures had picked up the rights to the book. The fourth Weisberger novel is *Last Night at Chateau Marmont* (2010). Another work of Weisberger is her short story "*The Bamboo Confessions*" which is included in the anthology "*American Girls About Town*."

The Devil Wears Prada (2003) is her best work which won London Circle Book Award in 2010. This novel also received many positive reviews. The novel is mostly based on Weisberger's real life experience at the time working at Vogue as a writer. A movie based on this novel was released by 20th Century Fox in June 2006.

Weisberger is a writer that also concern about woman issue. Most of her works implicitly describes her idea about woman issue. Spiker (2012:1) states in her article:

The Devil Wears Prada is unusual in that the female characters are dominantly viewed in their roles as career women who use power effectively in the workplace. In *The Devil Wears* the main characters, Miranda and Andrea, symbolize two different societal role models for female power.

The quotation above confirms that Weisberger also concern about the issue of woman in real world. Her novel “The Devil Wears Prada” implicitly gives an image of Weisberger’s idea that woman also can exist in society (as a career woman). The characters in the novel *The Devil Wears Prada* strongly depicts Weisberger’s female power idea, proved by Character Miranda who lead a magazine as an editor.

1.1.3 The Devil Wears Prada

The Devil Wears Prada (2003) novel written by Lauren Weisberger indicates the perspective of material inclination. Material inclination is the tendency of human that directed into one aim, accumulate material goods. People tend to pursue material goods to indicate social status. This condition triggers materialistic mind-set since human is determined by what they wear and what they consume. Therefore, material inclination in this novel can be explored through two characteristics: consumerism and hedonism.

Consumerism emphasizes on material possessions which is reflected through buying and consuming. The meaning of consumerism is implicitly stated through Miranda’s daily life habits. It is exposed through character’s actions

buying fashion stuffs, properties and consuming foods. Those actions are spending a lot of money buying a very expensive *Chanel* dress and *Hermes* scarves and many clothes, paying cash for a new release *Porsche* car, delivering dozen bottles of wines and champanges and consuming fast food from *Starbucks* restaurant daily every morning. She is blinded by desire of buying and belonging any latest fashion products.

Hedonism is emphasized on lifestyle that interpose the pleasure and satisfaction where material goods become the stimulus. The meaning of hedonism is implicitly revealed through Miranda's lifestyle. Through implied author, it is exposed that the character lives an extravagant and very luxurious life where material goods and properties becomes the measurement of pride, pleasure, and happiness. The evidences of hedonism is depicted through her activities included character's lifestyle such as: spending many times for vacations around the world, organizing many parties by inviting many famous and rich people, having private island, spending money to order personal plane tickets and wearing *Hermes* scarf everywhere she goes. Her lifestyle is the way she symbolizes who she is in the society.

1.2 Problems of Study

There are several issues that can be exposed in Lauren Weisberger's novel, *The Devil Wears Prada* (2003). Nevertheless, material inclination emerges as an important issue in the novel. Hence, there are some research questions to reveal material inclination. The questions that needed to be answered are:

1. How far does the novel *The Devil Wears Prada* reflect material inclination?
2. To what extent fictional devices such as point of view (implied author) contribute in revealing material inclination?

1.3 Purpose of Study

This study is aiming to find out how Lauren Weisberger's novel, *The Devil Wears Prada* (2003) portrays material inclination. In addition, it is also conducted to figure out the role of point of view (implied author) to disclose material inclination.

1.4 Previous Study

The analysis with reference to this novel that focuses on material inclination issue has not been found yet. However, there are some studies in journals that have given contribution and inspiration in analyzing this novel.

The first study is a paper written by Roy Y.J. Chua and Xi Zou entitled *The Devil Wears Prada? Effects of Exposure to Luxury Goods on Cognition and Decision Making* (2009). This paper analyzes plot in *The Devil Wears Prada Novel* using personal desire theory by Kemp. The author reveals the motives beyond the desire of belonging luxury goods and for what purpose that people are desired to have luxury goods. Chua and Zhou argue that people pursue luxury in part to fulfill certain personal desires. In other words, the basic reason of belonging luxury goods is personal satisfaction. Puy luxury goods not merely to impress social others or gain symbolic status, but also to fulfill self-directed pleasures or gratification for themselves. What people pursue in having luxury

products is basically not only the function or the value of that products itself but also another motives such as personal desire, pleasure, satisfaction, or gaining status. Luxury goods in not a basic human needs, but become a progressive need caused by some motives that mentioned above. This paper also analyzed the presence of implicit motives between the notion of people's mind and luxury goods. Chua and Zhou believes that luxury goods are more effective case to distance people in society rather than money. All in all, this study gives a contribution to material inclination topic that there are many motives related to the tendency of people belonging luxury goods in todays era.

The other study that gives contribution to this study is a journal written by Leaf Van Boven, Margaret C. Campbell and Thomas Gilovich entitled *Stigmatizing Materialism: On Stereotypes and Impressions of Materialistic and Experiential Pursuits (2010)*. This journal analyzes the negative stereotypes of materialistic people. The author used social relationship theory by Kasser and Lane. According to this journal, materialistic people tend to be more selfish and self-centered than experiential people. Indeed, people who are highly materialistic, believing that happiness can be obtained through the acquisition of money and material possessions, have poorer social relationships than people who are less materialistic. In this journal, Van Boven, Campbell and Gilovich believe that most Americans tend to be materialistic, who pursue happiness through material purchases, in contrast to experiential people who pursue happiness through experiential purchases. In short, this study gives a contribution to material inclination topic that most people's decisions in pursuing happiness through material possessions really occur in social contexts.

Both of the studies above give contribution and inspiration to the topic: material inclination. They also enriched the knowledge about the topic. Different from previous study, this analysis focuses on how far does the fictional devices such as point of view (implied author) in Lauren Weisberger's novel *The Devil Wears Prada* (2003) reflects material inclination in order to indicate social status.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The analysis of this novel deals with the concept consumerism and hedonism. Consumerism according to Norton (2009:1) deals with a very large extent on the level of personal consumption, particularly on the purchase of material goods. Consumerism itself emphasizes on material possessions. Martin (1993:3) states that consumerism is the cultural relationship between human and consumer goods and services, including behaviors, institutions, and ideas. Consumerism deals with taste, style, social competition, and the emotional pleasures of acquiring material objects. Moreover, Norton (2009:1) argues:

The United States is an example of a hyper-consumerist society. People are constantly bombarded with advertisements which are urging them to buy things. Such advertisements promote not simply specific products, but also a vision of "the good life" and what it takes to be happy. Shopping is experienced by many people as an exciting recreational activity. People go deeply into debt in order to buy things beyond basic necessities: a larger house, a giant television, a fancy car. These are all the hallmarks of a society within which consumption is at the center of life.

Quotation above gives a clear illustration about the example of consumer society: United States. Consumerism has become the center of life. People are urged to buy things although in fact the things itself is not a basic necessity to be fulfilled.

Meanwhile, Bauman (2005) states that a consumer is a person who consumes, and to consume means using things up: eating them, wearing them, playing with them and otherwise causing them to satisfy one's needs or desires. Bauman (2005) argues that since in our part of the world it is money which in most cases 'mediates' between desire and its satisfaction, being a consumer also means that the things destined to be consumed: buying them, paying for them and so making them one's exclusive property.

The imagination life is referred into a wealthy life surrounded by luxurious goods. People follow market ideology and exist in consumer society in term of social status. Baudrillard (2004: 64) states:

Today's life is the era of the exaltation of an object by an image, the exaltation of buying and of consumption through the sumptuary spending of advertising, it was a mirror held out to the universe of political economy commodity for a moment of glorious imaginary.

Quotation above describes that today life is dominated by buying and consuming. This kind of life has become a proper way of living nowadays. For some people, it is not only an imagination, but also become a real necessity that must be fulfilled.

Hedonism according to Bujok (2007:20) deals with the personal belief that pleasure is the highest good, the pursuit of pleasure, a life-style devoted to pleasure-seeking. Hence, according to Veenhoven (2003:1) hedonism is a way of life, characterised by openness to pleasurable experience and long-term happiness. Hedonism is reflected through lifestyle that interpose the pleasure and satisfaction where material goods become the stimulus. Moreover, Bujok (2007:45) argues:

It can be argued that nowadays consumers often not go just shopping but 'go entertaining'. Then, the concept of hedonism is connected with a unique 'consumption experience' which is more and more often desirable by consumers and associated with 'fantasies, feelings and fun.

Quotation above clarifies that consumption has a closeness relation in reaching pleasure and happiness of hedonism. Shopping as the example, implied the entertaining of consumption (joy, fun and pride).

Veenhoven (2003:1) states that hedonism term 'hedonism' is used to denotes the view that a good life should be a pleasurable life, pleasure seeking is a main motivator of human behaviour and a way of life in which pleasure plays an important role. Veenhoven (2003:1) argues that hedonists are people who are positive about pleasure and who pluck the fruits of pleasure when possible. The reverse is asceticism, which involves the moral rejection of pleasure and abstinent behaviour.

Moreover, this analysis is supported by text based interpretation. Text based interpretation is done by exposing the fictional devices of the text itself. According to Guerinn (2005: 113), text based interpretation focuses on the text by invoked the elements of text such as characters, point of view, setting, plot, symbol and language. Text based interpretation including reading and evaluating the text comprehensively. Thus, the fictional devices which become the focus in this analysis is the point of view (implied author).

Implied author according to Kindt and Muller (1999) is expressly defined as a semantic quantity, a concept constructed by the reader on the basis of textual features. Meanwhile, according to Schonfelder (2010) implied author is the

sensibility that combination of feeling, intelligence, knowledge and opinion that accounts for the narrative consistent with all the elements that we are aware of. The sensibility itself is dealing with the narrator as the best choice of its sensibility or the narrator is not always reliable.

1.6 Methodology

The analysis of this novel will be done through text based interpretation by focusing on the point of view (implied author). Implied author is the key in disclosing the meaning in this analysis through a comprehensive reading to get the meaning that do not appeared in the text, but implied behind the text. This analysis is also supported the concept of consumerism and hedonism.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION

The Devil Wears Prada (2003) novel written by Lauren Weisberger uncovers material inclination. The meaning of material inclination is implicitly revealed through implied author. It revealed in two characteristics: consumerism and hedonism.

Consumerism is implicitly uncovered through the life habits of the character. The evidences of consumerism is reflected by character's actions spending a lot of money buying things that basically she does not needed. Her actions and behaviours are implicitly shown that she a hyper consumer. She only cares about getting new things although must paying a lot of money for it. Much of material goods are used as commodity by her without considering the function and the value of it. It is bought and consumed only for prestige and luxuriousity. In fact, all of material goods that she buys and she consumes implicitly purposed to indicate her social status.

Hedonism is implicitly revealed through the lifestyle of the character. She lives in a very wealthy life that surrounded by extravagant properties. It is exposed through her activities, the place she destined for vacation and the accomodations she conducted. For her, luxury goods and properties is merely purposed in order to fulfill certain personal desires. Her lifestyle is a language that creates a sense of who she is in the society. Her lifestyle is implicitly shows that she is a hedonist. In fact, all of her lifestyle is purposed to achieve personal satisfaction, pride and prestige. Her wealthy is used as a tool to indicate her status.

Material inclination is found in real life. In twenty first century era, material inclination is the reflection of specific people that tend to pursue material goods in order to indicate their social status. People are triggered to get more and more material goods since it becomes the priority to reach the status itself. The satisfaction of life is comprehended by the presence of luxurious things. Furthermore, material goods become commodity since it bought and consumed not for its value and function, but only for its trends and prestige.

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