

# NSANIYAT

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# INSANIYAT

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### The Ideology of Consumerism in *Five Star Billionaire*

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#### Abstract

*The last decades, people can calculate other people's worth only through what they are wearing or their appearances. It makes the phenomenon of commodification and consumerism emerges in the society. This phenomenon might not harm the bourgeoisie, but it is harming the work class. This article discusses how consumerism harm the workers, meanwhile they are not realizing this. This phenomenon is clearly depicted by two main characters namely Phoebe and Gary in Five Star Billionaire, a novel by Tash Aw created in 2013. The portrayal of commodification can be seen through the action of characters in seeing the object or the persons base on exchange and sign-exchange value. This research used qualitative method with Marxist theory about consumerism. The results show that Phoebe and Gary are treated as commodity that have exchange value. Next, Phoebe is used her fake-branded stuff to give other people impression. Last, Phoebe is using Walter Chao to make she lives in luxury. How Phoebe is commodifying her stuffs leads her to follow the ideology of consumerism.*

**Keywords:** *commodification, consumerism ideology, bourgeoisie, working class, Marxist theory.*

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#### Introduction

In capitalist society, an object's value becomes impersonal (Tyson, 2006). This phenomenon emerges a new pop culture called consumerism. Consumerism is a trait that offers people the concept to make a new "self" (Todd, 2012), and it aims to give people illusion that they can be "as good as" the wealthy if they can purchase or have what the bourgeoisie purchase or have (Tyson, 2006). Hence consumerism is a phenomenon where people buy things for their social status. As (Rosida, 2018) stated that all cultural practices including consuming commodity is a part of social construction. The use value of the things



that they buy is not important. What matter is how people judge their social status through what they have or wear which means the things are used based on how it can grant social status on its owner. Then, how people act towards the things that they have is called as commodification. Commodification is people's act toward the objects or other persons in terms of exchange value or sign-exchange value (Tyson, 2006). Commodification is normal in capitalist economic system as the object value lies in how the money or other commodities can be exchanged, or how the objects grant social status on its owner (Tyson, 2006).

The phenomenon of consumerism is an easy occurrence to be followed by the bourgeoisie since they have valued resources to earn money, but not with the workers. They need to work hard with the bourgeoisie to earn money. Bourgeoisie tend to take advantage of this condition by using the workers as commodity, and then exploiting them. It is along with what Habib stated that laborers are people who must sell themselves piecemeal as a commodity (Habib, 2008).

This condition is absolutely not fair to the "have not" or the proletariat. It is supposed to be triggered the proletariat to fight the unequal system that happened, yet as we know the proletariat still live in harmony, side by side, with the bourgeoisie without any fight. This is because the bourgeoisie are trying to make this unequal system looks like the normal thing in life, and it makes the bourgeoisie remain in control on every life aspect. This condition is created by the belief system that we called as ideology. Ideology itself means a belief system that people in society follow to guide them in live their life. This belief system is typically coming from the bourgeoisie class. According to Marxist, ideology is "a belief system produced by the relations between the different classes in a society" (Dobie, 2012). (Eagleton, 1976) also stated that ideology is ways how to feel, to judge, to look at surrounding, and to believe social forces.

*Five Star Billionaire* novel is the perfect representation of the commodification and consumerism phenomenon that happens in society. It is a story about five immigrants from Malaysia to China, and they are from different classes. They are Phoebe Chen Aiping and Gary from proletariat class, Walter Chao, Justin CK Lim, and Yinghui from the bourgeoisie class. Although they come from different social classes, but their background reason to move to China is the same; to earn money (Aw, 2013).

The character of Phoebe as the proletariat class comes from a poor family in rural Malaysia. She leaves school at age of 16 and moved to the capital city of Malaysia to work. She is a hard-worker; she works everyday but she does not get an equivalent salary. So she decides to accept her old friend's offer to work with her as assistant manager in her restaurant in China. However, when she arrives in China, her friend's restaurant has been closed and she cannot reach her friend's phone number. Thus she becomes an illegal immigrant worker, who works from place to place, to get money in order to survive the life in China and to save to buy a ticket to go back to Malaysia. First, she works at a factory in Guangdong with a kind boss that always gives her gifts, and lives in slum dwellings full of laborers. After months she moves to Shanghai and applies to a job as a receptionist in an upmarket beauty spa that Yinghui own. After her hard work such as doing other people's job desk, and work hard alone although she is sick, she is being promoted as the manager by Yinghui. She does not only work to get money but she starts to search for a rich man that she can date to pay her lifestyle and her needs in China. She dates Walter Chao, a young and successful entrepreneur. At first, Phoebe does not have any feeling to Chao, she only takes advantages

of Chao to take her to luxury places and pay for her life needs. One day she steals Yinghui money from the bank, by forged Yinghui's signature in a check, to buy an airplane ticket to go back to Malaysia. She chooses to leave Chao, but before she leaves him Chao already dumped her by not attending their date in a music concert.

Like Phoebe, the character of Gary as proletariat comes from poor family in rural Malaysia who is successfully becomes a popular pop singer by winning a singing contest. His agent brings Gary to China to expand his popularity abroad. Yet Gary feels nothing but sorrow with his popularity; he cannot sleep every night and feels being restrained by his fans' expectations. This sorrow leads him to do improper acts such as starting to watch porn every night before sleep and starting to drink alcohol which leads him into a fight with a drunken man in a bar. These careless actions are the signs that he has already developed false consciousness. The news that Gary drunk and punched another drunken man spreading all over China, and it leads him to his destruction. People from media try to interview every people that know about Gary, including his enemy in his past. No interviewee who stands for Gary, and it makes public assumes that Gary is a violent person since his childhood. This condition leads every sponsor canceled to work together with him and his concerts are being canceled too. After his career is falling apart, suddenly he feels that he misses the old time when he is popular. Thus he tries to contact his management for any works but his management tends to ignore him in his lowest position. In the time of struggle to get an offer to singing again, he is trying to start over his career by singing to one mall to another mall and also singing in a bar.

The other characters are Justin CK Lim and Yinghui. They come from a bourgeoisie class who work as a businessman and businesswoman. They come from the elite family in Malaysia; Justin's family is owned the property business, while Yinghui's father is a minister that taking care about property in his area. Justin's family is being friend with Yinghui's father, and Yinghui herself was dating Justin's brother. Justin is actually also has a feeling towards Yinghui, until one day Justin's family decides to demolish a history building which make Yinghui lost her respect towards Justin's family and chooses to break up with Justin's brother and lost contact with them. Justin goes to China years later to expand his property business by build a real estate. At the same time, Yinghui is also going to China and open a spa business. Yet their businesses are ruined by Walter Chao who has revenge to them. Justin is being rejected by the China people because he wants to demolish a historical building to make the new real estate. Instead of searching for solutions, he is busy overthinking about other people's mocks and opinions which lead him to failure. In this situation, Chao bought the building that Justin wants to buy, and it makes Justin's company bankrupt because of the failure. He is also pretending to want run a project with Yinghui but at the end he left Yinghui who falls in love with him and bring Yinghui's investment money.

Chao himself has the grudge to Justin because Chao and his father go to Justin's uncle to compromise to not torn his building down but what his father got is mocking from Justin's uncle and only little money which make his father do gambling to pay debts. He also has grudge to Yinghui because her father is the minister who allow Justin's uncle to torn the building that he and his father had. After that, Chao's father was in money crisis which makes him overthinking and falls sick, and dead.

From those five main characters, Phoebe and Gary are the only characters who represent the portrayal of commodification and the consumerism ideology. Hence the writer

will only analyze two characters from this novel; Phoebe, and Gary. This research will analyze how commodification and consumerism ideology are portrayed in *Five Star Billionaire* (2013) novel and how it harms the proletariat. The writer is using Marxist theory to analyze the portrayal of commodification and consumerism ideology through the characters.

## Method

The objective of this research is to portray the commodification and the consumerism ideology in *Five Star Billionaire* (2013) novel and to find out the portrayal of commodification and consumerism ideology in this novel. Hence the writers used qualitative method to analyze the portrayal of commodification and consumerism ideology in *Five Star Billionaire* (2013) novel by Tash Aw. Qualitative method is a method that does not use numbers, statistics, or measurement to analyze the data or the problem. The qualitative research can be used to analyze about society, history, behavior, the function of organization, social activities, et cetera (Rahmat, 2009). (Creswell, 2014) also stated that qualitative research relies on text and image. The researcher who used this method hopes that it can produce the deep analyze of the text, utterance, and the behavior of individual, group, society, and specific organization in certain setting (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research aims to get a general understanding towards the fact in society and its participant perspective (Creswell, 2014).

To do the qualitative research, the researcher requires to mention the specific designs of his/her research, tell his/her position or role in his/her research, “drawing from an ever-expanding list of types of data sources,”, using certain steps for recording the data, analyzing the data through many steps of analysis, and mentioning what kind of approaches that have been used for the accuracy of the data collected (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, the information in this research comes from various books, articles, and journals which related to the topic of commodification and ideology. The writers read *Five Star Billionaire* (2013) novel by Tash Aw, and focused on finding the portrayal of commodification and consumerism trait that being represented through Phoebe and Gary characters. In finding the portrayal of commodification and consumerism ideology, the writer was using Marxist theory.

The unit analysis of this research is Aw’s *Five Star Billionaire* (2013) novel as the main data, and the journals, thesis, and books about commodification and consumerism ideology as the secondary data. In collecting the data, the writers used themselves as an instrument by reading the text, identifying the problem, then analyzing *Five Star Billionaire* (2013) novel to find out how commodification and consumerism ideology are portrayed in *Five Star Billionaire* (2013) novel through Phoebe and Gary characters.

## Results and Discussions

In capitalist society, the object’s value lies in money or other commodities that have exchange value and sign-exchange value, it describes the social status. The act towards the objects or persons in terms of their exchange value or sign-exchange value is called as commodification. (Rosida, 2014) also said in consumer culture, the commodification represents social status. The commodification phenomenon is depicted in Aw’s *Five Star Billionaire* novel through Phoebe and Gary’s characters. There are portrayals of how the bourgeoisie class is making Phoebe and Gary as their commodity, how Phoebe is making her dates as her commodity, and how Phoebe is making her fake branded stuffs as her commodity which leads her to follow consumerism ideology.



### **Commodification on Phoebe's character**

Most of the bourgeoisie that Phoebe met are always looking down at her because of her appearance and her lifestyle that is different from them. There is one moment when Phoebe was wrong guessing what kind of music that her rich customer was listening; Phoebe thought it was Spanish music while actually it was Brazilian music. The customer did not even look at Phoebe when he tried to correct Phoebe's guess, and she felt glad that he did not look at her because if he did, "it would have been a you-are-nothing look" (Aw, 2013). Phoebe also says that that kind of look is what she always gets since she arrived in Shanghai; people from high up looking down on her (Aw, 2013). Phoebe's feeling of glad that her rich customer did not look at her with the "you-are-nothing look" shows that she is afraid of how the bourgeoisie look at her, which means how the bourgeoisie look at her is important to her. It leads Phoebe to decide that she needs to change herself to look like the bourgeoisie by changing her appearance and learning how the bourgeoisie thinking to show to other people that she is a bourgeoisie

"She started taking notes on the type of clothes they [the bourgeoisie] wore, how they styled their hair, even the way they walked. When she compared these to her own way of dressing and behaving, it became clear why she had not yet been able to find a decent job in Shanghai. No one would look at her and think, that woman is going to astound the world with her abilities, we should give her a job. No, she was not someone you would even look at twice on the bus, never mind give a job to." (Aw, 2013)

The description above shows that Phoebe agrees with the fact that bourgeoisie appearances are better than her, and it makes them get the decent job. This represents a condition that the proletariats see the bourgeoisie as the one who are needed to be followed if they want to be successful. It is indeed the purpose of ideology; to make people from the bourgeoisie class as the role model of how people need to look like or how people need to live their life, and what people need to pursue in life. This is because the bourgeoisie looks like they are "more intelligent, more responsible, more trustworthy, more ethical..." than the workers (Tyson, 2006). This condition makes Phoebe, as the worker, uses the references of bourgeoisie styles as her guide to improve herself to make her get a decent job. It leads Phoebe to start to buy things like what the bourgeoisie have, not only to make her get a decent job but also to make people look her as the bourgeoisie. How Phoebe uses everything that she bought to make people think that she is a bourgeoisie can be seen as she described that she bought a fashionable jacket to make people think that "... she had just come back from a holiday in an expensive snowy place like Hokkaido.", and she also bought a luxury handbag because people will decide "... if she was a person of class or not." (Aw, 2013). She also uses her handbag to get recognition from her date that she is a bourgeoisie.

"Why nervous?" she said, reaching forward to shift her handbag for no reason whatsoever. His gazed followed her hand and remained on the bag even when she had relinquished her grip. Surely he was admiring the remarkable quality of the leather handle." (Aw, 2013)

These conditions represent the commodification that Phoebe does to her stuffs. She uses her commodities as sign-exchange value. The fashionable jacket and the luxury handbag that she bought give people impression that she comes from bourgeoisie class who just came back from holiday in expensive snowy place. It is indeed the result of commodifying the brands that make people can calculate other people's worth from their appearances and it

promises the consumer that it can add value to their lives (Brancaleone & O'Brien, 2011). This condition also represents the idea of being bourgeoisie is an important value for Phoebe to have. Phoebe's feeling of afraid about how the bourgeoisie look at her shows that the bourgeoisie's ideology, about how people should be looked like and behaved, has been successfully penetrated to her. Moreover the statement that mentioned about the bourgeoisie have the superior quality to the proletariat, such as more intelligent, responsible, trustworthy, and ethical (Tyson, 2006), makes the change that Phoebe does as something normal to make her have a better quality. Her effort to change herself to look like the bourgeoisie is the result of the ideology that she has.

Phoebe's act to imply the bourgeoisie lifestyle in her life makes she needs to get much money to follow their lifestyle. Then to achieve it, she needs to work hard, and it makes the ruling class can take advantage of this situation to make Phoebe runs their business well with her work ethic. The ruling class even can exploit the workers in this condition by making the workers think that their work brings advantage for all.

“...People here are so picky. Pay's not right, they off the next day. Work environment's not comfortable, they're off too. New boyfriend, they disappear. Ask them to work extra hours, they go to your competitor. Sometimes they don't turn up for work because they've argued with their husbands the night before. I don't know ... I think people here are becoming like Westerners.” (Aw, 2013)

From what Yinghui said to Phoebe above reflects the ideology of work ethic that Yinghui has. We can see that the ideology of work ethic that she has is not in the side of her workers. She does not care if the salary of her workers is not equal with their work, and she also does not care with the condition of her workers, they still need to go to work however the condition is. We can conclude that Yinghui expects the hard works and loyalty of her workers whatever their condition. This work ethic is, of course, only advantage the business owner. It makes the business still run well in any condition because the workers need to work even in the ineffective condition. This represents that Yinghui is making Phoebe as her commodity to earn money (exchange value).

When Yinghui accepts Phoebe as one of her workers, she makes promise to Phoebe that she will promote her, from receptionist to administrator or manager, if she proves herself capable on her work (Aw, 2013). This is what happened when the labor power is used as commodity. The employer will make the division at work to make the labor power cheapen. It is like Babbage principle that the employer needs to break the labor into many division to cheapen their wage (Braverman, 1998). The promotion that has been promised by Yinghui makes Phoebe, who from the beginning has purpose to live her life like a bourgeoisie, blinds and obeys Yinghui's ideology without thinking far on it. Phoebe's effort to achieve the promotion, to pursue the successful life, is by exploiting herself for Yinghui. She is willing to keep working although she does not in the health condition, she always forces herself to work overtime, and doing task that is not her responsibility. Yinghui uses the idea of “promotion” to make Phoebe works like she wants. This idea even makes Phoebe has mindset that she needs to give herself entirely to her work, and in return, her work will treat her with respect (Aw, 2013). It entrapped Phoebe in the ruling class ideology as she becomes what Yinghui wants her to be. The promotion is only a mask for the ideology and goal that Yinghui, who is in the ruling class, makes. The promotion itself is also making Phoebe looks at the people in the same position as her in society as competitors. It makes Phoebe thinks that the desire to

“get ahead” as natural thing, which makes competition as natural or necessary being mode (Tyson, 2006). It makes Phoebe compete with them by making herself works harder twice than anybody and rejects any help. It must be harm herself until she got sick and still work twelve hours a day (Aw, 2013), but the promotion makes all the things that Phoebe does seem bringing benefits for her and her work. Unfortunately, Phoebe does not realize that the owner of the business is whom get the most benefit since the workers keep working in their best effort in any condition to get the promotion that has been promised by the owner, which makes the business always run well. Meanwhile what Phoebe does is harming herself.

Olson (1990) stated in his article that money has the most powerful motivation to men’s actions, and nobody can feel enough of it. The feeling of not satisfied for what he/she already has is also happened to Phoebe. It can be seen through Phoebe’s act to use Walter Chao as her source of luxury life when she can get it by herself because she already got the promotion as the manager with threefold salary than before. These acts of Phoebe represent that Phoebe never felt satisfied with what she has and still search for other sources of money. Hence Phoebe does not only commodified her stuffs, but she also commodified Walter Chao. The bottom lines also represent that Phoebe is using Chao to impress her friends which makes Phoebe feel proud about what she can get

“When the other girls forced her into showing them a photo of Walter she let them see one she’d taken on her mobile phone, which showed him dressed in...an outfit that made him appear rich. He was standing in front of his car,... you could clearly make out that it was large black 4x4 with smoky windows. She chose that photo because she knew it would impress the other girls that they would only notice the clothes and the car and not his average looks, and that would be enough to make them say, *Wah, handsome brother*”(Aw, 2013).

Indeed, Chao is a commodity that has sign-exchange value since his richness can offer the feeling of proud to Phoebe that she can get a rich man. Yet Chao does not only have sign-exchange value to Phoebe, but also exchange value since she stated that she would use Chao as long as she could. She would accept his luxury gifts such as handbags, Italian shoes, British raincoats, and jewels from Hongkong (Aw, 2013). She also would not only enjoy the fine dinners, but use the opportunity to learn about the Western countries he had visited and would retell it to her true soulmate (Aw, 2013).

### **Commodification on Gary’s character**

Gary is working as a singer, and is very popular. His management tries to bring Gary’s popularity abroad to China. Yet he does not like the idea of being popular because he feels oppressed by the expectation of his fans, and this feeling makes him does not enjoy his work. Gary still does his work only because his management assures him that his works are the best thing for him. This condition is the portrayal of the success of ruling class ideology to make the worker sees work exploitation brings benefit to all, while actually it does not bring any benefit to him. It only harms him.

The work exploitation is more clearly depicted when the narrator describes how Gary’s life is fully being controlled by his management and how stressful the works that his management gives to him, but he does not take it seriously or he simply feels that he does not have any power to control his own life.

“His punishing work schedule exacerbated these underlying conditions [anemic, low blood pressure, and an elevated cholesterol level], and it was no surprise that he eventually

succumbed to the pressure, the doctor said... Before he left, one doctor asked him if he was stressed... Gary thought for a few seconds before truthfully answering no. Because when he stopped for that moment to consider his life, he realized that there was nothing in it that was within his control. Every minute of his day was organized by his management company, even the number of hours he should sleep. It had been like this for so long that he wondered if he had ever known a different way of living.” (Aw, 2013)

From what the narrator describes above, we can conclude that Gary is giving in by his management exploitation to him. He looks the exploitation that his management does to him as the normal thing.

“... You know what these Shanghainese are like. They will scrutinize your appearance to the very last detail! Please remember what a huge investment we have made for this album – who else gets concerts like the one you’ve just had? Don’t waste this opportunity! . . . Shanghai is at your feet. You can be one of the biggest stars in China, you’re almost there!...”(Aw, 2013)

What Gary’s management says above is related to what Dobie said about the ideology that the ruling class masks makes it seem as a natural thing. Gary’s management tries to achieve their goal to earn more money through Gary by luring Gary with the popularity that he can get. Hence Gary does what his management says without any objection because he is thinking that this is for his own advantage, but actually the one who gets more advantages is his management. Gary is his management’s source of money; he is the one who runs their business. Gary’s management only controls what Gary should do while Gary himself who needs to do the works such as singing and acting.

In Gary’s case, he is already being penetrated by his management’s ideology and makes him feel powerless on his own life; makes him do nothing for his own good. Ideology makes him feel what has happened to him; his hardworking, his sacrifices, and his management controls all the detail in his life are a normal thing in order to gain his own success. The ideology that he follows already affected the way he sees reality. It is too late for Gary to fight the ruling class ideology that has been penetrated him. Gary is ignoring an important reality that he is doing something that actually does not advantage him as he does not want a glittering career and burning ambition because they do not make him happy (Aw, 2013), yet he is still doing his job because of the ideology of making money through popularity that already being penetrated in him. Although he does not fully know the purpose of his work. It is along with Barry’s statement about alienation that it is the result of work exploitation which makes the workers work hard and perform repetitive tasks although they do not fully know the purpose of the work (Aw, 2013).

The ruling class ideology makes Gary see his life’s goals are to pursue popularity that his management provides him to get, although actually he does not want the glittering career. Even in the state of realizing that he does not want the glittering career that his management offers to him, he is still searching for the chance of becoming the popular singer again when his career is falling apart.

“Gary called her [his agent] often, chasing up possible leads, he had begun to realize how much he missed singing, how keenly he felt the loss of his stage personality, the rush of adrenalin he experienced when performing... He knew the way the business worked. If you are a success you wish that you were not, you wish that everyone would leave you alone; and when you are no longer a success, you lose the right to wish for anything.” (Aw, 2013)

It is along with the statement that ideology is typically promotes the ruling class interest. Thus it makes people do something based on what the ruling class needs them to do. It is clearly that Gary does not enjoy his work from the narrator has described about Gary has vacant expression in every dance routine because the absence of his enthusiasm (Aw, 2013), and from his statement that he does not want a glittering career and burning ambition because they do not make him happy and he is also hard to feel present every time he sings on the stage, he always imagined himself elsewhere (Aw, 2013). Yet when his career is falling apart, Gary is showing the contrary reaction about his work; he missed his works which he did not enjoy before. It shows that his management is already successfully entrapped Gary with their ideology about being a successful, and popular singer. In his falling apart condition, Gary still lives in good condition; he still has food on the table and roof above his head, although he needs to move to the smaller apartment since he does not have many jobs as before. All in all, his basic needs are still fulfilled. Yet he still wants to do the job that he hates the most and searches for it from his agent. This motive of act is because Gary does not feel satisfied with what he has; he needs his label of being popular that has been lost. Popularity or glittering career is not what Gary actually wants because it does not make him happy (Aw, 2013), but the idea of them has been penetrated to Gary's mindset by his management. Thus even Gary has everything that he needs, yet he cannot feel it as enough because there is a goal from the bourgeoisie that he cannot achieve. By believing that he has failed to achieve his goal in life, which is actually his management's goal, he feels upset and cannot feel the happiness. In the normal condition, people who are detached from something that they do not like will feel happy but this does not happen to Gary. His mindset that has been trapped in ruling class ideology is thinking that having wealthy life and being popular are what he wants, thus when he fails to achieve it he feels upset. It is along with Hume statement that people who hold the ideology of wealth in their life think that the pursuit of "luxury" contributed in human happiness (Rotwein, 1973). He also stated that the vicious part in pursuit of wealth is "men often act knowingly against their interest" (Rotwein, 1973). This is what happened to Gary as he is still searching for the job that he does not like to pursue nothing, but the goal of his management, which is popularity that leads to gain much money.

Then they make Gary looks at his failure as his punishment for not achieving the ruling class's goal. They punish him by making him feels that he does not have any right to wish for anything anymore and they also indirectly punish him by making him stay at his apartment, prohibit him to go outside, to make him feels how it feels when there is no job from them. By this, his management once again is successfully make Gary entrapped in the situation that makes him uncomfortable and thinks that his routines before are something normal that he wants to do.

"Gary is indeed thinking about himself. Not because he wants to, but because he is barricaded in his hotel room, immobile, for the first time in years. No meetings attend, no chat shows, no dance rehearsals with girls with extraterrestrials, no recording sessions that last into early hours of the morning."(Aw, 2013)

It is indeed the purpose of repressive ideology to prevent people from understanding their true condition in order to keep them subservient to the ruling power system (Tyson, 2006).

The idea of popularity that the ruling class has been successfully penetrate to Gary is also depicted when Gary misses his old concerts that full with crowded and they with

enthusiast obeying what Gary told them to do, then he compares it with the concert that he attend now.

“When he says, *Come on, sing along with me, I know you know the words*, no one joins in. In former times, all he had to do was hold the microphone out, pointing it at the audience, and they would break into song. Whenever he said, *Raise your hands and clap*, thirty thousand hands would move in unison; it was as if he was a puppet master, capable of doing anything he wished. Now, no one is interested, not even to gloat over his being reduced to performing in shopping malls... He will continue doing these humiliating gigs in order to earn some money.” (Aw, 2013)

The throwbacks that Gary does above are one of the proofs that Gary is accustomed to the big concerts with thousand audiences. In other words, Gary is already being accustomed with the idea of being popular that his management tried to penetrate to him. Then the comparison that he makes between the condition of the old concert and of the new one is the result of the ruling class ideology. Gary does not feel satisfied with his new performance condition because he is already accustomed with the idea of being popular; he does not like the idea of people forget about him. That is why he considered his new performance from mall to mall as “humiliating gigs”. Yet he still does these “humiliating gigs” for money reflects that he is also already penetrated with the idea of being live in wealthy and prosperity.

Betham stated that “as long as the individuals believed wealth worth pursuing, its moral value for themselves could not be questioned” (Rotwein, 1973). The belief that pursue the wealthy life is necessary blind him to see the truth that they are used to achieve the wealth for the bourgeoisie, in this case is Gary’s management’s wealth. To achieve the wealth, they make their own life in misery but they see their condition as nothing is wrong. We can see that he cannot think far on what they do; is it wrong or not. Gary does not care if he needs to do the job that he does not like as long as he can achieve the goal that has been set for him. The point is they do not really think or understand the advantage of gaining the wealth, more than what they already have, for themselves.

All in all, the ideology of wealth makes people greedy and wealth is the answer for gratifying this avarice.

“For in gratifying avarice, wealth serves a passion which for the mass of mankind is “one of the greatest” and most durable sources of human gratification. “Everyone who has more than the barest necessities can save. The delights of vanity wear out. Avarice is insatiable. Its pleasures never pall” (Rotwein, 1973).

Thus the feeling of does not satisfied with what Gary character has had, or we can say his avarice, is the result of wealth ideology. The ideology forces him to see “wealth” as something that necessary and need to be gained as much as they can. Once again this ideology is only giving benefit to the bourgeoisie or the business owner, as to gain that “wealth” the workers need to work hard for them. The proletariats also need to do something that against their truly own interest, and justify any means to achieve the wealthy.

All in all, Gary is suffered from the ruling class ideology. He does not feel that he is being exploited by his management. In contrary, he feels that what his management wants Gary to do is normal because he thinks is for his own benefit, while actually it only brings benefit to his management. The portrayal of ruling class commodifying human being is

happened to Gary. Gary is the commodity, to his management, which has exchange value since he helps the management to earn the money his popularity.

### **Consumerism ideology**

Phoebe is commodifying her stuffs leads her to follow the consumerism ideology. Consumerism ideology is a condition where people buy things not because they need it, but because they use it to determine their position in society. It is along with the purpose of consumerism ideology as it aims to give people an illusion that they can be “as good as” the wealthy if they can purchase or have what the bourgeoisie purchase or have (Tyson, 2006). Consumerism gives people “tools” to become whatever they want, and let people decide how they want to be looked in the other people’s eyes (Todd, 2012). Thus in consumerism ideology, the goods are used as sign-exchange value. This is what Phoebe does to her commodities; she uses her fake branded goods to impress other people and make them think that she comes from bourgeoisie class. She bought fake branded stuffs only to make herself look like a bourgeoisie, although she does not really need the stuffs that she bought. Phoebe follows the consumerism ideology because the commodities that she bought can help her to fit in the bourgeoisie world. Consumerism also offers the concept to make a new “self”, which can make people to change their social circumstances (Todd, 2012). It is like Phoebe who is successfully changed her status from the proletariat in the society to the bourgeoisie through her consumerism, but it only brings loss to Phoebe as it does not give her a real identity. Consumerism makes Phoebe believes that she can be like the bourgeoisie, but in fact her pretending does not really change her condition. She always needs to use her money to buy things that can label her as the bourgeoisie while actually in her condition that label is not useful. People who are using the commodity as a sign-exchange value makes them in the condition of “conformist codes”, which means “telling people what they should want and how much more they needed to work to get it” (Bishop, 2010)

Consumerism ideology does not bring any benefits to Phoebe as she needs to work hard to buy branded things, although they are fake. It is because she needs to follow the bourgeoisie lifestyle or up-to-date stuffs to keep her bourgeoisie label. This condition is absolutely bringing benefit to Yinghui as Phoebe’s boss because Phoebe will always work hard and give her best to her work because she is eyeing at the promotion, which has been promised, that will make her salary increase. Hence consumerism brings benefit only to the business owners as their business run well and it makes them become richer, while the proletariat is still in poor condition.

There are two characters in this novel that represent the commodification act. They are Phoebe and Gary. Commodification is the act towards other persons or other commodities in terms of exchange value, which the value lies in the money or other commodities that can be exchanged, or sign-exchange value, which value lies in social status that it grants to its owner. Phoebe who is commodifying her stuffs leads her to follow the consumerism ideology. Consumerism ideology is a condition where people buy things to determine their position in society, not because they need it. Hence in this research, the writer tries to analyze the portrayal of commodification and consumerism ideology through Phoebe and Gary characters. There are two major findings based on the analyzes. First, the ruling class is using Phoebe and Gary as their commodity. Phoebe who is trying to look like the bourgeoisie needs to work hard to get more money to buy fake branded stuffs. Then she is trying to get the promotion, which Yinghui has been promised, in order to earn more money

by working hard and exploiting herself. She even agrees with Yinghui's ideology about work ethic that is not favor the working class. This condition brings benefit to Yinghui as the hard worker makes her business run well. In this case, Phoebe is a commodity who has exchange value to Yinghui. It also happens to Gary who is exploited by his management. Gary is a commodity that has exchange value to his management since he is working to pursue wealth and popularity which are his management's goals.

Second, Phoebe is making her stuffs and Walter Chao as her commodity. Phoebe buys stuffs to try to look like the bourgeoisie. She is using the stuffs that she buys as her sign-exchange value. She buys fake-branded stuff not because she needs it, but to make people look at her as a rich girl who can afford branded stuffs. She does not only use her stuffs to determine her social class, but she also makes Chao, her date, becomes her commodity. Chao has exchange value and sign-exchange value to Phoebe. Chao has an exchange value to Phoebe because she uses him to buy her the original brand stuffs and take her to fancy dinner. Then Chao is also has sign-exchange value because she can impress her friends at work by Chao's richness, which is making her proud to have rich boyfriend. Phoebe's desire to look like the bourgeoisie leads Phoebe into consumerism trait.

The portrayals of commodification of Phoebe character above leads us to the third finding that she follows the consumerism ideology. The consumerism ideology makes Phoebe needs to work hard twice to get the promotion thus she can buy things to make her look like the bourgeoisie. Her hard work leads her to nothing, but the waste of money for something that actually does not useful for her. Yet for Yinghui as the business owner, it advantages her as it makes her business run well and a run well business means more income for her.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the ruling class is using Phoebe and Gary as their commodity. Then, Phoebe is making her stuffs and Walter Chao as her commodity. The portrayals of commodification of characters indicates that they involved in the ideology of consumerism. Moreover, the ideology of consumerism gives advantages for the bussinnes owner or company where the characters in the novel is described.

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## Writing Guidelines

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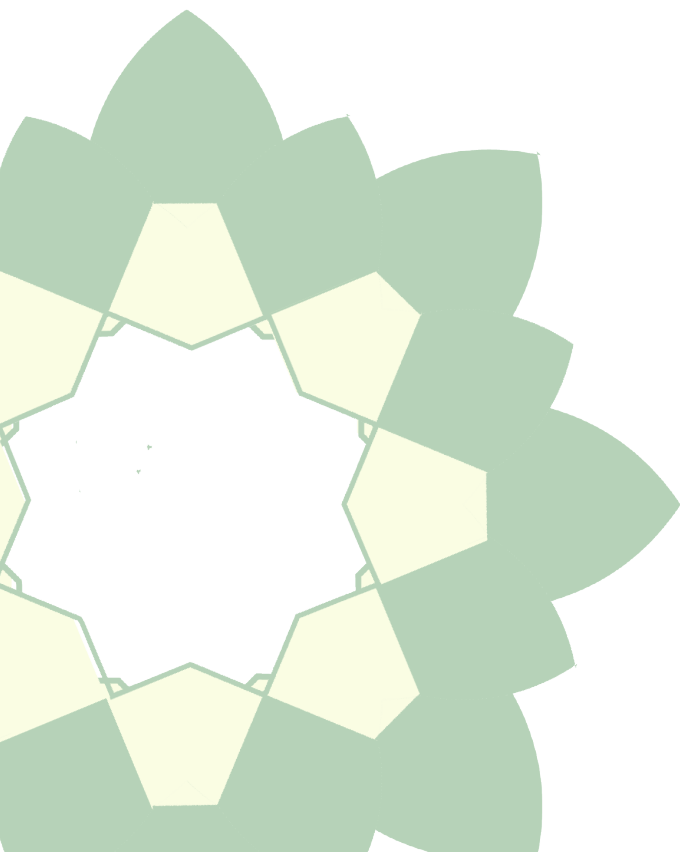
### Guidelines

1. It has not been published elsewhere.
2. The paper is research findings, conceptual idea, science development on a certain field, and theory application study.
3. The Manuscript typed with Microsoft Word, Font Times New Roman size 12, spacing 1 on A4 size paper with a margin of 3.5 cm from the left edge, 3 cm from the right edge, 3 cm from the top and bottom edges. The length of 15-20 manuscript pages including a list of references. Writer (s) must follow the journal template that can be downloaded at Insaniyat Open Journal System <http://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/insaniyat>
4. The article should be written in Arabic or English.
5. Article contains title; writer's name, author affiliation (department, faculty, university / or institution), complete address of the affiliation and Author's corresponding email.
6. Abstract is written for about 250 words. It pervaded research objectives, methodology, discussion and result, and conclusion with maximum 5 keywords that represent the research core.
7. The article consists of **Introduction** (background of study, research problem, research purposes, significance of the research and theoretical basis). **Method** (explaining the chronological research). **Discussion and Result** (containing analysis and result of the research), and **Conclusion**.
8. Citation and reference must follow APA style (American Psychological Association) sixth edition.
9. The references should used min 40% from primary source (International Journal).
10. The references used should be under 10 years (from now).
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