



**SOCIAL MOBILITY DEPICTED BY THE MAIN CHARACTER OF *THE
DEVIL WEARS PRADA* (2006) ANDREA SACHS**

A FINAL PROJECT

**In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Bachelor Degree Majoring
American Cultural Studies in English Department
Faculty of Humanities Diponegoro University**

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PRONOUNCEMENT

The writer truthfully declares that this project entitled “Social Mobility Depicted by the Main Character of *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006) Andrea Sachs” is completed by the writer herself without taking any results from other researchers in S-1, S-2, S-3, and diploma degree of any university. The writer also states that she did not quote any material from other publications except from the references mentioned.

Semarang, 22th January 2021

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Sekarsari

MOTTO AND DEDICATION

“Change the game, don’t let the game change you”

— **Macklemore**

“Everything will be okay in the end. If it’s not okay, then it’s not the end”

— **Ed Sheeran**

This Final Project is dedicated to all of

my friends who support me

both during hard time and happy time

APPROVAL
SOCIAL MOBILITY DEPICTED BY THE MAIN CHARACTER OF *THE*
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Semarang, 22 January 2021

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized, cursive letters that appear to be 'S' and 'A'.

Sekarsari

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ABSTRACT

In this discussion, the writer tries to analyze David Frankel's *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006) movie. The purpose of this study is to analyze several of intrinsic and extrinsic elements of this movie, especially the social mobility phenomenon. The intrinsic aspects cover two main points namely theme and plot; meanwhile, for the extrinsic aspect, the writer discusses social mobility phenomenon existed inside the movie. The research method of this study uses library research method; meanwhile exponential approach, to focus on intrinsic elements, namely theme, plot, character, and extrinsic approach, used to discuss on social mobility issues, are used in this study. The result shows that throughout its story, Andrea Sachs, the main character of this movie, experiences both upward and downward social mobility. Andrea experiences upward social mobility when she works at Runway magazine. Downward social mobility is experienced by her after she decides to quit from Runway Magazine.

Keywords: social mobility; upward social mobility; downward social mobility

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Films are often used as objects of study in terms of social problems that are reflected in the films (Jones, 2018). These usually discuss about the characteristic of certain social group, the mindset of social group, and many more things. From this statement, it can be said that a place consisting of more than one group could be a phenomenon that can be discussed. One of the topics included in the context of social studies is a phenomenon known as socioeconomic mobility. Socioeconomic mobility is a phenomenon the changing of social status in a society, either upward or downward (Stein, 2009). According to Christopher Moses, “The actual history” of American Studies has been as much apart of its self-understanding as any specific theoretical or methodological tract. This includes, as Bailis infers, both intra-disciplinary debates and changing modes of scholarship as well as the social, cultural, political, and economic events composing its larger historical context” (Moses, 1988). One of these knowledge is the social mobility theory by Weber. Shortly, Weber's social mobility theory describes that a person can change his social class based on where he belongs in society (Bendix, 2006).

This phenomenon is best illustrated in the context of the society in the United States. According to a survey conducted by the Pew Charitable Trusts in 2012, it shows that about 57 percent of the population in the United States tends to

experience increased social mobility. Despite experiencing upward social mobility, researcher states that those who experience upward social mobility still have a tendency to experience changes in social mobility when they are adults. They could get enhanced to a higher social status or downgraded to lower social status (The Pew, 2012). Talking about the phenomena of changes in social status, specifically in the United States, the writer observes that the film entitled *the Devil Wears Prada* (2006) reflects a change in social status as depicted by the main character of this film, namely Andrea Sachs.

This film takes the story of an ordinary employee of a magazine company called Runway Magazine, Andrea Sachs. In accordance with the theory adopted in this discussion, namely Weber's theory of social mobility, The author sees that Andrea Sachs is in a market situation that places him on the same social status as an employee. In his journey as an employee of Runway Magazine, the writer observes that Andrea Sachs underwent changes in social status, both up and down, during her tenure as an employee in *Runway Magazine* The author notes that Andrea Sachs's favorable change in social status is reflected in how she dresses and speaks. Given this issue, the author decides to study the film using Weber's Marxist theory which is adapted in a book called *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait* (2006) to prove that Andrea Sachs experienced both upward and downward social mobility.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

Observing the phenomena depicted in the movie, the writer has formulated several questions for this study. The questions can be looked as follows:

1. Does social mobility happen in *The Devil Wears Prada* movie?

2. How is the social mobility process depicted in this film?

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Narrative Elements

According to the definition described by Abrams, narrative elements are explained by Abrams as the main building blocks of a story. Narrative elements include things related to events, actions, the characters themselves, and what the characters do in a story. These elements include characters, themes, settings, plot, and conflicts (Abrams, 2012). In this discussion, the writer focuses on two intrinsic aspects namely theme and plot.

2.1.1. Theme

According to Barnet, a theme can be defined as the main story of a literary work. Barnet also asserts that a good cinema focuses on matters related to themes, namely what happens dominantly in a story. This includes what the characters face or do in a story (Barnet, 2008).

2.1.2. Plot

According to the definition given by Robert and Jacobs, a plot is a series of events that makes a story into one solid unit so that a story is sequenced according to its timeline (Robert & Jacobs, 1987). Robert and Jacobs elaborate again that the plot is divided into five parts, namely:

2.1.2.1. Exposition

Exposition contains the introduction of a story. This introduction begins with an introduction to the characters, the historical background of the characters, their characteristics, etc.

2.1.2.2. Complication

Complication is marked by the emergence of conflicts between two different powers or energies in a story. This plot stage indicates that there will be big problems that occur in the course of a story.

2.1.2.3. Crisis

Crisis is a plot stage where a problem begins to be handled so that it will end soon, even though in some cases, the efforts to solve this problem are not as desired.

2.1.2.4. Climax

Climax is a stage where a problem is at the tense point in a story. The problems that occur can no longer be avoided.

2.1.2.5. Denouement

Denouement is the final stage of a series of stories where the problem has subsided and ended, bringing a story to the final stage before it is finally over.

2.1.3 Character

According to Abrams, a character can be interpreted as an object in a story or literary work that can be interpreted by readers or connoisseurs of literary

works from a moral, intellectual, and emotional perspective. The basis of the interpretation given by readers is based on how they speak which can be seen through dialogue and how they act (Abrams, 2012).

Characters, according to E.M Forster, are further divided into two types, namely flat and round characters. Flat characters are characters that from the very beginning of their appearance in a story have been labeled by the creator of the literary works so that the reader does not need to conclude or interpret how the character or character is. In contrast to these types of characters, round characters are characters in a literary work that have the potential to be interpreted by readers as if they were to judge a person's character and behavior in the real world. Sometimes, too, readers can be surprised by round characters (Forster, 1927).

2.2 External Aspects

2.2.1 Social Mobility

Social mobility, according Weber, is as an individual's ability to change in the context of social strata. Changes in the social strata of an individual do not move for the better, but sometimes they can also lead downward. Changes in this social layer can be built up by several factors, including the social status of the biological family, geographical location, family descent, race, gender, etc. (Weber, 2019). Broadly speaking, Weber further divides this social mobility into two, namely upward social mobility and downward social mobility which will be discussed in the next section.

2.2.1.1 Upward Social Mobility

Upward social mobility is a phenomenon where an individual experiences an increase in social strata towards a higher direction. A person who experiences upward social mobility is usually marked by an increased salary, a more stable life, and a way of dressing that adapts to their financial abilities (Weber, 2019).

2.2.1.2 Downward Social Mobility

Downward social mobility is an event where an individual experiences a decrease in social strata to a lower caste than the previous position. Usually downward social mobility occurs when someone loses their job, has a demoted position, and other things that make the income they earn less. This causes a person to adjust to the financial capabilities he has (Weber, 2019).

3. METHOD OF RESEARCH

3.1. Method of Data Collection

In this research, the author applies library research method proposed by Mary W George. Library research uses sources related to the discussion of a study as long as the data is factual and is able to provide information from the discussions (George, 2006). Resources such as journals, articles, books, and others will be used by the author in this discussion.

3.2. Method of Approach

The writer applies two approaches in order to examine this object of study. As for the first approach, the writer applies narrative approach. Narrative

approach, according to Walter Fischer, focuses with the story which is being told by speaker or writer in order to understand the meaning of a story. Thus, several elements of narrative aspect would be examined by the author namely theme, character, setting, plot, and conflict (Fischer, 1989).

Lastly, the writer applies Marxist approach to examine the upward social mobility phenomena. According to Abrams, Marxist approach can be described as an approach which deals with social issues that happen in a society. It includes things such as power, classes, and position in terms of sociology (Abrams, 2012). The writer applies social mobility theory to examine the extrinsic elements of this movie.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Narrative Elements

4.1.1. Theme

Based on the observation of the writer, the writer sees the main theme of *The Devil Wears Prada* movie deals with social status. As someone who comes from the lower middle class, Andrea Sachs is depicted living with her lover, Nate, in a modest apartment in the New York area. However, due to the demands of work, Andrea must be able to adjust to her new work environment at Runway Magazine, a well-known fashion company in New York City. When she first works at Runway Magazine, Andrea has absolutely no knowledge of fashion. According to her, fashion is not a big deal and the irony is that the environment in which she works demands her to be a fashionable person. Encouraged by the words of Miranda Priestly, the editor-in-chief of Runway Magazine, as well as Andrea's co-workers at the company, Andrea slowly becomes a fashionable person and her speaking style and knowledge are the same as those of the middle and upper class.

The change in Andrea's mindset and fashion sense can be seen in Picture 4.1 where she is chatting with her friends including her boyfriend, Nate. In this scene, it can be seen that Andrea finally finds out about fashion trends and this is proven when Andrea gives some gifts from Runway Magazine to his friends and says that these items are not too expensive.



Picture 4.1
(00:32:38—00:32:50)

4.1.2. Plot

4.1.2.1. Exposition

Exposition is the character introduction chapter of a movie. In *The Devil Wears Prada* movie, the character introduction stage begins when the camera starts directing shots at the main character of the film, Andrea Sachs. In this chapter, the narrator introduces the character Andrea Sachs as a career woman who tries to find job vacancies in New York City. In picture 4.2, Andrea tries to apply for a job at a company in the fashion sector called Runway Magazine. In this introduction, Andrea is described as a person who does not give up easily. This is shown in his conversation with Miranda Priestly, editor-in-chief of Runway Magazine. Although Miranda feels that she does not want to recruit Andrea, Andrea convinces Miranda by saying that she is a hard worker.



Picture 4.2
(00:03:23 – 00:03:27)

4.1.2.2. Complication

Complicated stages in a story where problems start to arise as a result of meeting two different thoughts. Complication, in this film, is seen when Andrea starts working at the company Runway Magazine. Andrea is someone who doesn't really care about fashion meanwhile the people who work, especially the editor-in-chief of the company Runway Magazine, Miranda Priestly, is very much required to have knowledge, interests, and views that reflect that she really sees fashion. The beginning of this conflict is seen when Andrea is chatting with Nigel, one of the fashion consultants where she works. From the scene shown in Figure 4.3, Andrea explains to Nigel that “But I won't be working in fashion forever. I see no reason to change everything about myself because I have this job.” (00:20:37 — 00:20:45). Andrea still contradicts the values held by Runway Magazine.

A new problem arises when Nigel and Andrea get called by Miranda because she wants to review the fashion that will be used in the fashion week in the near event. When Andrea sees that the dress used by one of the Runway

Magazine models looks similar, Andrea then laughs and immediately Miranda makes a harsh remark that can be seen from the following dialogue

Miranda : Is something funny?
Andrea : No, no, no. It's just... It's just that both of those belts look the same to me. I'm still learning about this stuff, so—
Miranda :That color is worth millions of dollars and many jobs...
(Frankel, 2006, *The Devil Wears Prada* 00:22:55 – 00:24:27)

From the conversation above, it can be seen that Miranda gets angry with Andrea because she feels that Andrea does not appreciate the values that Runway Magazine have. The denial nature of Andrea who considers fashion to be just a trifle is then responded to with a curt talk from Miranda who thinks that Andrea is incompetent because she doesn't even have a good sense of fashion.



Picture 4.3
(00:20:43 – 00:24:46)

4.1.2.3. Crisis

The crisis plot in this movie occurs when Emily, one of Miranda's assistants, is unable to attend the fashion week event in Paris because she is hit by an accident that requires her to be hospitalized. Because of this, Andrea is given the mandate to replace Emily to accompany Miranda to the event. Miranda emphasized that she really needed Andrea the moment after she said “That no

longer includes Emily” (01:07:40 - 01:07:43). Although Andrea feels that this opportunity is better given to Emily, Miranda threatens her by saying that she is not responsible for her job. Even though Andrea has previously quarreled with her lover, Nick, Andrea is forced to accompany Miranda to Paris.

4.1.2.4. Climax

The climax of this movie is marked when Miranda is given the opportunity to give a speech at the Paris fashion week event. Miranda announces that Jacqueline Follet becomes the new director of American Runway Magazine and nobody sees it coming. Seeing this as something that Andrea did not expect, Miranda talks to her inside the car. Miranda says his gratitude for having Andrea because she sees Andrea as her manifestation of thoughts. Knowing this situation, Andrea changes her mind and instead denies everything that Miranda says towards her. Andrea says that “But what if it’s not what I want? I mean, what if I don’t want to live the way you do?” (01:38:00 – 01:38:05).

4.1.2.5. Denouement

After realizing that Andrea becomes someone who acts just like the people that Andrea used to hate, Andrea reconsiders the decisions that she has taken. When Miranda tries to call her through her cellphone, it can be seen from Picture 4.4 that Andrea throws her phone into a pond instead. After that, she decides to quit her job at Runway Magazine and begins her new life by reconnecting her romantic love with Nate, her lover.



Picture 4.4
(01:39:10 – 01:39:15)

4.1.3 Character

4.1.3.1 Andrea Sachs

Andrea Sachs is the main character of this movie. Andrea is a journalism graduate who is trying her luck at finding work in New York City. Andrea is described by the director of the movie as someone who has high spirits. This can be seen when Andrea tries to register with a magazine company. Even though Andrea gets rejected on the grounds that there are no job vacancies left for her, Andrea is determined to register with another company whose realm of work she does not understand. Finally, Andrea applies to a company engaged in fashion called Runway Magazine. Even though Andrea knows that Miranda Priestly, editor-in-chief of Runway Magazine, is a very perfectionist, she doesn't give up easily in order to get her position as Miranda's assistant. It can be seen when Andrea replies Miranda “ Okay, you're right. I don't fit in here. I'm not glamorous or skinny and I don't know much about fashion. But I'm smart, I learn fast and I will work very hard” (00:08:54 – 00:09:41).

4.1.3.2 Miranda Priestly

Miranda Priestly is the chief editor of a fashion company called Runway Magazine. She is respected and feared by people, including her employees because she is known as a very fierce and perfectionist. Miranda has very high standards and when her standards are not met, she will not hesitate to reject people's results. Miranda's taste for fashion is very high. She can't see that the people who work in his company are not fashionable. Even though the person she recruits has high capabilities, she will not hesitate to fire or reject her assistant for not looking fashionable. This can be shown when Emily, Miranda's assistant, introduced Andrea Sachs, her new assistant candidate. When Andrea meets her, she immediately interrogates Andrea by making a statement “And you have no style or sense of fashion” (00:08:43 – 00:08:54).

4.1.3.3 Nate

Nate is Andrea Sachs's lover. He is described in this movie as a very simple person. Nate works as a chef at a restaurant in New York. At the beginning of the story, Nate is very enthusiastic knowing that Andrea is trying to apply for a new job so that their economy is helped a little. Nate is also described as a very simple person and accepts someone for who they are. This can be seen from the conversation between Nate and his girlfriend, Andrea, when he was leaving a restaurant.

Nate : You're going to be answering phones and getting coffee. You need a ball gown for that?

Andrea : I think I might.
Nate : I think you look great. Always.
Andrea : You are so full of it.
(Frankel, 2006, *The Devil Wears Prada* 00:11:22 – 00:11:39)

Nate knows that Andrea's new workplace requires its employees to be fashionable. Knowing this, Andrea is worried about the way she dresses. She never wants to look that fashionable. But this time, she must follow her office's rules. Even so, Nate calmly soothing his girlfriend by saying that Andrea looks gorgeous with any dress that she wears.

4.2. External Aspects

4.2.1. Social Mobility

Social mobility is a phenomenon, according to the writer, most dominantly depicted in *The Devil Wears Prada* movie. According to Weber, social mobility can be defined as a person's ability to change his social strata. Moreover, he said that a person has the opportunity to change his social strata to be higher or lower. This is influenced by several factors such as family background, geographical position, family descent, race, gender, etc.

In the perspective of the writer, the writer sees Andrea Sachs, the main character of *the Devil Wears Prada* movie as the representation of a person who experiences both upward and downward social mobility. The casual lifestyle of Andrea Sachs from the beginning of the story and the glamour lifestyle of Andrea after working at Runway Magazine will be explained in details in the next discussion.

4.2.1.1. Upward Social Mobility

The upward social mobility experienced by Andrea Sachs begins to appear when Andrea decides to work at a company engaged in fashion, namely Runway Magazine.

And suddenly Andrea appears in her gorgeous clothes, her makeup impeccable, hair soft, loose and pretty. She looks grown-up, sexy and above all sophisticated.

Emily : (CONT'D) (voice trailing) --disaster.

Andrea sits down at her desk, pretends she didn't hear her.

Emily is still gaping.

(Frankel, 2006, *The Devil Wears Prada* 00:35:58 – 00:36:10)

Andrea does not initially feel that she should dress, think, or even dedicate herself to fashion. However, it changed when Andrea decides to adjust to her place of work by trying to wear fashionable clothes. It can be seen that Emily got shocked since she did not expect that Andrea would wear fashionable dress in the office. It can also be seen from picture 4.5 when Emily is depicted in shock after looking at Andrea. Andrea's decision also makes Miranda get an eye on Andrea because Miranda felt that Andrea has the intention and effort to work for her company.



Picture 4.5
(00:36:58)

He looks her up and down, stunned.

Andrea : What do you think?

Nate : I think we better get out of here before my girlfriend sees me with you.

(Frankel, 2006, *The Devil Wears Prada*, 00:36:48—00:37:07)

The change in Andrea's dress has also shocked her boyfriend, Nate, and her friends. This can be seen when Andrea waits for Nate in front of the restaurant where he works. For a moment, Nate barely recognized Andrea because the clothes she is wearing are so different.

Aside from that, the upward social mobility experienced by Andrea is reflected from the fact that at first, Andrea still has the same attitude towards her friends, including her boyfriend, Nate. When meeting his friends at a bar, Andrea innocently gives some gifts from Runway Magazine which are branded goods at high prices.

Nate : Why do women need so many bags? You get one, it holds all your junk, aren't you done?

Doug : Fashion is not about utility, Nate. An accessory is merely a piece of iconography used to express individual identity.

(Frankel, 2006, *The Devil Wears Prada* 00:39:02—00:39:27)

From the above dialogue, the writer observes that Andrea's lifestyle is slowly starting to change. Andrea, who is known as a person who doesn't care about fashion, suddenly turns into a fashionable person. From the conversation above, Doug implicitly explains that fashion is not just a decoration, but reflects a person's identity. When Andrea wears expensive fashion, her fashion indirectly reflects her financial ability.

However, as Andrea goes deeper into her work, Andrea's character begins to change. Andrea's work ethics has made her a very hard working person so that she no longer cares about small things like Nate's birthday and her friends' values such as a sense of community. Here Andrea already has the mindset that work is everything and she no longer thinks about it. During the phone call with Lily, Andrea simply replies "Better star without me. I'll get there as soon as I can" (01:00:33). From this, Andrea has also begun to show that she must always look attractive by wearing branded clothes like her colleagues in Runway Magazine.

Emily, the other assistant of Miranda Priestly, also says directly towards Andrea that "What gets me about this whole thing is, you're the one who pretends you don't care about this stuff. You don't care about fashion, you just want to be a journalist, blah, blah, blah. What a load of bollocks" (01:12:11).

From the beginning of Andrea's work in Runway Magazine, Emily knows that Andrea is not someone who really cares about fashion, but from the above conversation, Emily directly says that now Andrea is a person who knows fashion more than her. Emily's irritation is clarified by ending her conversation with Andrea with curse words.

The thing that clearly shows that Andrea really enjoyed the abundance of wealth and wealth is when Nate chats with Andrea outside the art exhibition. Lily says "This glamazon who skulks around in corners with some random hot fashion guy? I don't get her." (01:15:10—01:15:21). Coming outside from the art exhibition, Nate expresses what has been bothering his mind by saying "You used

to say this was just a job. You made fun of the Runway girls. And now you've become one of them" (01:16:14—01:16:28).

In the two snippets of dialogue above, the writer observes the fact that Andrea is experiencing upward social mobility can be seen from the statements made by Lily and Nate. In the middle of the exhibition being held, Lily sees Andrea is close to a male fashion designer and Lily immediately tells Andrea that she has changed. What's more, Nate also meets Andrea at the same place. Due to Andrea's unstable emotional condition, Andrea speaks to Nate with crooked words. Nate suddenly responds by saying that Andrea has turned into the person she used to hate in Runway Magazine.

In addition, it is seldom shown in this phase that Andrea Sachs lives in an ordinary apartment in New York City. However, the director of the movie tries to emphasize the lifestyle changes as a result of Andrea Sachs' rise in social status by pointing out more that Andrea rarely returns to her apartment. This shows that even Andrea has more money to live outside of the apartment in which she usually lives.

4.2.1.2. Downward Social Mobility

Apart from experiencing upward social mobility, before the denouement plot, Andrea also experiences downward social mobility. This happens after Andrea joins the fashion week in Paris with Miranda Priestly. When Andrea is applying mascara, she remembers about herself in the past. Picture 4.6 describes Andrea's appearance while not working for Runway Magazine.

In the morning, when Miranda and her workers moved to another destination, Andrea sat with Miranda in the back seat of the car.

Miranda : I never thought I would say this, Andrea, but I see some of myself in you. Your dedication, your focus.

Miranda :People think success happens to you. It doesn't. You choose it. Every day, I choose excellence. Who else does what I do, at my level? Nobody. They don't even understand what it takes, the days, measured in milliseconds... But now you know --and I know -- that you have it in you.

(Frankel, 2006, *The Devil Wears Prada*, 01:37:00—01:37:44)

From the conversation between Miranda and Andrea, Andrea just realized that she has not realized that her lifestyle has changed. It is confirmed by Miranda that she praises Andrea because she sees Andrea as a manifestation of Miranda's work ethic and thinking. However, after realizing this, Andrea decided to quit her job at Runway Magazine.

When Andrea got called by Miranda, she decided to throw her cell phone into the pool next to her. It can be seen from Picture 4.7 At the end of the story, when Andrea met with Nate with the intention of apologizing, Nate said that all this time Andrea was looking for "Shoes. And jackets and belts" (01:40:14—01:40:19).

In the end Andrea got back in touch with Nate and decided to apply for a job at a newsletter called the New York Mirror. Andrea was immediately accepted at her new job thanks to the Miranda Priestly recommendation letter she faxed to the chief editor of the newsletter. Andrea returned to casual clothes and seemed to be enjoying her life more.



Picture 4.6
(01:23:50)



Picture 4.7
(01:39:11)

5. CONCLUSION

From what the writer has observed, she sees that the movie entitled *The Devil Wears Prada* succeeds in depicting social mobility phenomena. By observing two intrinsic elements namely theme, plot, and character, the writer found that Andrea Sachs, the main character of this story, experienced both upward social mobility and downward social mobility.

Andrea Sachs experienced upward social mobility when she decided to work at a company that deals in fashion industry called Runway Magazine. After experiencing feuds with herself, Andrea decided to leave his place of work . Andrea's return to her old life before joining Runway Magazine is a downward social mobility that she experienced.

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