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Veiled Exploitation: The Maintenance of Power through False Consciousness in The Netflix Series *Arcane*

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Abstract

The focus of this research is to identify and reveal how false consciousness is created and utilized to retain the authority of the industrialist Silco in the Netflix series Arcane. This research aims to show how false consciousness is through the creation of class consciousness, and how it is spread and maintained through state apparatuses and commodity fetishism as a method of exploitation to maintain his authority and status as a leader in Zaun. In this research, the Marxist theory of ideology and state apparatuses by Louis Althusser and commodity fetishism by Karl Marx were employed to answer the research questions. The research used a qualitative method of content analysis. The data is collected and identified by watching the series, where the relevant data is collected from visuals, activities, and dialogues within the series so that it can be analyzed further. Based on the data analysis, the series Arcane depicts false consciousness as a method to exploit the people from the proletariat and bourgeois classes to benefit certain people or groups. Silco creates and maintains false consciousness by utilizing state apparatuses such as ideological state apparatus and repressive state apparatus through ideology. Silco also utilizes commodity fetishism from Shimmer as a way to control the people through false consciousness. As a result, Silco managed to maintain his power as a leader in Zaun, which reveals how false consciousness can be utilized to benefit a certain people, group, or classes to maintain their power within society.

Keywords: *Commodity Fetishism; Exploitation; False Consciousness; State Apparatuses*

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Introduction

Arcane (Charrue & Delord, 2021) is an animated series which is created by Christian Linke and Alex Ye, which run for 1 season that consists of 9 episodes. *Arcane* tells the story of the characters Vi and Powder as their lives are affected by the power struggle between the city of Zaun and Piltover. As the story goes, it introduces the main antagonist of the series Silco, an industrialist who acts as the leader of Zaun, utilizes exploitations to obtain total state power of the city of Zaun through means of false consciousness.

The issue of false consciousness is present in the series *Arcane*. According to Karl Marx, false consciousness explains how the proletariat class is unaware of their real status within the capitalist society. Marx was keen to emphasize that classes, and the proletariat in particular, are not always aware of their potential power when talking about class and class consciousness (Allahar, 2004, p. 100). As a result, the proletariat is often time manipulated by the bourgeois, which is contrary to their best interest because they fail to acknowledge the exploitation that is currently happening to them nor do they understand their own social and economic circumstances.

False consciousness needs to meet two criteria, firstly the belief itself contrasts to fact which makes it false, and secondly, it is false because one fails to understand their social interest. As a result, false consciousness is the harboring of incorrect or inaccurate beliefs that are against one's social interest and that, as a result, help to maintain one's disadvantage as an individual or as a member of a community (Jost, 1995, p. 400). In addition, keeping an individual or a group at a disadvantage makes them easier to control and exploit as the lack of social status and awareness leads those who are at a disadvantage to justify and blindly accept the false consciousness that has been created despite going against their interest.

False consciousness can manifest through different types of forms within society, such as the obsession with a commodity or the spreading of a false ideology. When a certain social class is obsessed with a particular commodity, it can lead to a false consciousness where people will start perceiving the commodity as having an inherited value of their own rather than perceiving it from its social relation, which as a result, leads to the distortion of exploitation that is happening to both labor that produces them and the consumer who is unaware of the exploitation that is happening through the mystification of a commodity.

Another form of false consciousness exists within false ideologies. Ideology can be defined as a system of institutions that are all shaped by the ideology of the ruling class; these institutions compel people to accept the dominant production relations (Hirst, 1976, p. 387). With the bourgeois often considered the ruling class, it can lead to the creation of false consciousness where the dominant ideology from the bourgeois may lead to the exploitation of the proletariat, where the ideology itself is used to retain their power within society and to keep the lower class unaware of the exploitation that is currently happening. These two examples show how false consciousness can manifest either through commodity or ideology.

False consciousness is an issue that is present within various literary works, which leads to several researchers discussing the issue in their research. Some of this research reveals how false consciousness is present within literary works such as the short story *The Old Man* by Attia Hosain (Masood & Shafi, 2020) and Looking for Mr. Green by Saul Bellow (Jaeyoung, 2015), the novel The Sorrow of Young Werther by Johann Wolfgang Goethe (Scheff & Mahlendorf, 1998) the play of Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller (Ahmad & Pervaiz, 2020), and lastly the movie The Internship by Shawn Levy (Arisandy & Putra, 2013). These researches share similar findings from the issue of false consciousness, where the issue always originated from the working class being exploited by the ruling class's ideology to retain their power. Moreover, because there has not been any research that reveals the issue of false consciousness within a TV series, this research will be focusing on the issue of false consciousness that exists within the Netflix series Arcane.

As for the series itself, there have been previous research that uses the series as its object of research regarding the animation and the themes that exist within the narrative. However, despite the theme of class struggle and false consciousness being significant in the series, other researchers have not explored the issue. Therefore, this research can help fill these existing gaps by focusing on how the character Silco utilizes false consciousness as a method of exploitation. As a result, it is necessary to explore the issue of false consciousness in the series, which is why the

aim of this research is to reveal how the class conflict between cities in Arcane suggests the creation of false consciousness to maintain Silco's power as a leader and how consciousness can be utilized by the ruling class to exploit a certain social class.

Methodology

This research utilizes the qualitative method of content analysis, which is a research technique aimed at making reproducible and reliable conclusions from texts (or other meaningful materials) by analyzing them in the context of their use (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18). The content analysis method allows the researcher to conduct interpretation and analysis from the textual and visual aspects of the data to reveal the meanings of the content. As a result, the research utilizes this method by collecting the data through visuals, scenes, and dialogues from the series to identify and analyze meanings that are related to the research. In addition, although Arcane consisting of 9 episode, this research will only focus on 7 particular episodes as these episodes contains the relevant data that is correlated to the issue of false consciousness

This research applies the Marxist theories proposed by Louis Althusser and the theory of commodity fetishism by Karl Marx to further analyze the concept of false consciousness within the series. In The Communist Manifesto, Marx discusses how the concept of economic base and relations is what creates the social class system within a society (Marx & Engels, 1848). In his work, he describes how the class systems can lead to the class struggle between the ruling class and the working class, where the ruling class often exploits the working class through various means to retain their power. Marx also explains how these exploitations can manifest through different forms, one of them is false consciousness.

Marx's concept of ideology offers a compelling justification of how the state, religion, law, philosophy, and other bourgeois structures function as "a reflection of the real world," giving the ruling class's beliefs a power generated from their foundation in historical and material circumstances, which is why results from class conflict is known as ideology (Saunders, 2022, p. 2). Marx's concept of ideology is how it only serves the ruling class as it reflects only their beliefs within a society. This may result in the creation of false consciousness amongst the working class as ideology serves to conceal exploitations towards the working class as a way to retain the ruling class's authority within a society. Louis Althusser to expand Marx's concept of ideology further in his work "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (Althusser, 1970) where he explains that for ruling ideologies to be fully realized, they need what Althusser defines as the state apparatus, a collection of institutions within a state.

These state apparatuses are divided into Repressive State Apparatus or RSA and Ideological State Apparatus or ISA. Repressive state apparatus consists of institutions such as the police, the army, and the legal system that functions to maintain the dominant ideology. Meanwhile, Ideological State Apparatus functions to internalizes and spreads the ruling ideology more subtly to the people, which is why this type of state apparatus consists of institutions such as the education systems, the cultures, the religious systems, and the political system. As a result, the dominant ideology cannot fully realize itself without these two state apparatuses as their nature completes one another in fully realizing the ideology. As a result, not only false consciousness can manifest within an ideology, but it can also be maintained with state apparatuses.

As for the theory of commodity fetishism, Marx explains in his work "Capital Volume 1" how the commodity is a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labor is presented to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labor; the relation of the producers to the sum of their labor is thus presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves but between the products of their labor (Marx, 1867, p. 47). A commodity is an object that is produced with the purpose of exchange within a market. Marx believes that commodity should be perceived through the labor that has gone into the commodity itself, which is why a commodity contains social relations that connects the consumers to the

laborers who created the commodity and the capitalist who owns the means of productions. This means that commodity contains a complex social relation that emerges based on the time and labor that produces it. As a result, the exchange value of a commodity also reflects social relations within a capitalist society

Because of this, Marx also believes a fetishization of the commodity emerged when it is falsely believed to be a something that can survive and self-sustaining thing with unique attributes, characteristics, and properties (Cluley & Dunne, 2012, p. 253). False consciousness is one of the exploitations that can manifest through commodity fetishism by creating an inherent value that may lead to a false perception of a commodity. The results of commodity is inherent in its mystical value as a result of the objectification of social relations may become a mean of exploitation by those who produce the commodity itself. The bourgeois who own the production of the commodity could falsely advertise their commodity by glorifying its value as if it has some kind of a higher value than its original nature and alienate any social relations from the labor force itself. This encourages the consumers to buy the commodity not because of its actual value, but because of the inherent value itself that is created by the bourgeois which leads to false consciousness.

Results and Discussion

In Marxism, class consciousness influences class struggle just as much as it causes it (Andrew, 1983, p. 584) Class struggle is the result of the working class achieving a class consciousness, enabling them to share where they share the same interests and to be conscious of their conditions in society, including how the ruling class's exploitations are actually the source of their struggle which leads to a class struggle between the working class and the ruling class. According to Allahar (2004), Class consciousness itself varies based on working-class nationalism, where it can be directed either in a reactionary bourgeois or progressive socialist direction, depending on the movement's leadership, the overall level of class consciousness, and political activity (Allahar, 2004, p. 119).

Reactionary bourgeois direction often emerges from non-proletarian individuals that exist within proletarian movements, where they attempt to appeal to ethnic solidarity and people's emotions as a way to obtain their loyalty. Meanwhile, progressive socialist direction focuses more on the class's character itself while looking past race and ethnic differences for the sake of humanistic goals rather than materialism. Class consciousness that is created from this movement may lead to false consciousness, as the consciousness is not based on the people's interest, but rather from the upper class's interest.

In Arcane, it is shown how Silco's revolution can be considered as a progressive socialist movement to create false consciousness. The reason for this is because he develops his class consciousness by appealing to the people's emotions to garner their support for his own cause. This can be seen in how he utilizes state apparatuses as a way to reinforce his ideology and obtain the people's support to create false consciousness

1. State Apparatuses

According to Marx's works, the positive concept of ideology is connected to class consciousness and class distinctions, which are abundant with references to the critical understanding of ideology as false consciousness (Mollanazar & Fuladi, 2021, p. 1). In the context of Arcane, the class consciousness that has been created by Silco can be considered as false consciousness, where his beliefs are contrary to the facts of what is happening around Zaun, and Zaun's people lack awareness of their societal conditions and interest, resulting in them unable to fully comprehend their common interest.

Silco can be understood as part of the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) because, as a leader and father figure within his community, he holds a significant position of power that allows him to disseminate his ideology to his subordinates, such as Deckard, and even to those who live under his influence in the undercity. As Althusser describes the ISA, it consists of institutions like the family, political

leadership, religion, education, and other cultural structures that promote and enforce the dominant ideology, often without overt force. Silco functions within this framework by using his position to manipulate and control the thoughts and beliefs of those around him, particularly through persuasion and manipulation rather than direct violence.

In Silco's case, his leadership and fatherly role give him the means to instill a particular worldview in his subordinates, like convincing them that using Shimmer is the only way to survive or gain power. This is an example of **false consciousness**, a concept where individuals are manipulated into believing and accepting ideas that serve the interests of the ruling class (in this case, Silco), even when it goes against their own self-interest. Deckard's willingness to be the first human test subject for Shimmer is a reflection of this, as Silco has successfully convinced him that this dangerous and exploitative decision is in his best interest or that it's a necessary sacrifice.

Systematically, this false consciousness is applied to the society of the undercity, where Silco's ideology is normalized. As a leader, he shapes the narrative that people must endure suffering and submission to gain power or freedom, maintaining a system where his authority remains unchallenged. Though Silco is technically not a part of the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA), which relies on overt coercion through police, military, or enforcers, he controls these forces as the de facto ruler of the city. These enforcers act as the RSA, carrying out violence and oppression when necessary to maintain Silco's rule. Silco uses the RSA as a tool to reinforce the ideology he spreads through the ISA, making sure any resistance is crushed while keeping people convinced that their subservience is part of the natural order.

Thus, false consciousness isn't just applied individually to people like Deckard but systematically across the entire society, where Silco's manipulation ensures that the undercity remains under his control, with people falsely believing that their exploitation is for their good.

The first example of Silco utilizing false consciousness is to exploit his people when he persuades Deckard, one of Silco's underlings, to become the first human test subject of *Shimmer*, as seen in his dialogue

> *Silco: "You see, power, real power doesn't come to those who were born strongest, or fastest, or smartest. No. It comes to those who will do anything to achieve it* (Linke & Yee, 2021a, 22:22).

Initially, Deckard refuses to drink *Shimmer* because he knows how dangerous the effect is, yet Silco manipulates Deckard by telling him how true power is not achieved naturally, but rather it is achieved by those who are willing to sacrifice everything to obtain it. Silco's definition of true power shows how he uses his beliefs to shape his ideology as a way to regain Deckard's trust. Moreover, Silco being Deckard's leader means that he can be considered as an ideological state apparatus, where he has the power to shape Deckard's perception of reality with the purpose of subtly controlling him. As a result, Deckard chose to drink Shimmer by his own will after his perception has been changed by Silco.

However, Silco's perception of Shimmer can be considered as false where his potrayal of Shimmer conceals its true nature. This can be seen in figure 1.

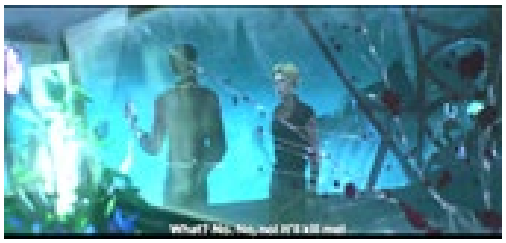


Figure 1. (Linke & Yee, 2021a, 22:11)

Figure 1 emphasizes how Silco's perception of Shimmer can be considered false, as the shot reveals the danger of Shimmer through environmental storytelling, where it subtly depicts a visual metaphor that reveals the true nature of Shimmer being a dangerous substance. It can be seen how the shot shows a broken glass display with blood splattered all over it. This shot refers to how previously Silco used the glass display to test Shimmer onto a rat, which led to the rat being mutated and having its strength enhanced

significantly up to the point where it uncontrollably attacks a cat and kills it instantaneously, leaving the display broken and blood splattered everywhere. The shot itself subtly implies how those who drink Shimmer may end up with the same fate as the rat, strengthening the idea of how dangerous Shimmer is for those who drink it.

Moreover, the shot itself may also foreshadow Deckard's fate, as Silco is attempting to persuade him with false consciousness to drink Shimmer, revealing how Deckard's fate will be the same as the rat, becoming a test subject to test how dangerous Shimmer's effect truly is. As a result, this scene implies the contradiction between Silco's perception of Shimmer, where Silco developed the perception of Shimmer to Deckard positively as a power-enhancing drug, yet the scene depicts the aftermath of Shimmer's usage as a dangerous drug that would lead to the dangers of death, revealing how Silco's perception of Shimmer can be considered as false because he tries to depict Shimmer positively to while concealing its dangerous nature from Deckard. As a result, this reveals how Silco's perception of Shimmer can be considered false consciousness as his statements conceals the dangerous nature of Shimmer.

Another evidence of Silco utilizing false consciousness is when he explains to Vander the reason for his hatred towards Piltover, and he tries to justify his reasoning so that he could persuade Vander to join his cause.

> *Vander: You'll get people killed. For what? Pride?*
> *Silco: For respect. Opportunity. Everything they've denied us.*
> *Vander: You had my respect. The Lanes' respect, but that... that was never enough for you.* (Linke & Yee, 2021b, 10:10)

Here it is seen how Silco's claims of the people lacking the proper opportunity and respect from Piltover can also be considered as false consciousness. The reason for this is because Piltover has always treated the people fairly as long as they comply with the government rules. An example of this can be seen in the character Viktor, who managed to have a successful career in Piltover despite being one originating from Zaun, as seen in his dialogue

> *Viktor: Nobody's ever believed in me. A poor cripple from the undercity. I was an outsider the moment I stepped foot in Piltover. I didn't have the benefits of a patron or a name. I simply believed in myself* (Linke & Yee, 2021a, 32:46).

Here it can be seen how despite Viktor being a handicap who originated from Zaun and having no royalty to his name, he is still given the proper opportunity and respect from the people of Piltover, which led him to become the dean assistant of Piltover's Academy. As a result, Viktor's story reveals how Silco's claims of the people struggling to obtain respect and opportunity from Piltover can be considered as false as it is contrary to facts.

In addition, another evidence of Silco spreading false consciousness through ideology is when he persuades Jinx to support his cause. This can be seen throughout Silco's dialogue to her.

> *Silco: She and the enforcer are back for the crystal. Not for you. Have you forgotten how she left you? Who found you? Who cared for you? Gave you a home? I am your family. Everyone else betrays us."* (Linke & Yee, 2021f, 20:21).

This statement from Silco can be considered as false, where Vi's intention is to find Jinx and frees her from Silco's control. Fearing that Silco might lose Jinx's trust, Silco creates false consciousness to convince Jinx that Vi does not care anymore about her. Silco not only emphasizes that he is Jinx's family instead of Vi, but he also strengthens the idea that Vi is allying herself with The Enforcer of Piltover, indirectly implying that Vi betrays both Jinx and the people of Zaun.

This shows how Silco once again uses his role as an ideological state apparatus to build false conscsiousness, where he attempt to reshape Jinx's perception of the current situation where Vi and The Enforcers are instead an enemy of Jinx and the people of

Zaun. Silco hopes that this would help him regain Jinx's trust and strengthen her obedience to Silco's ideology and cause of making Piltover and those who ally with them as an enemy of the people.

In Addition, Silco later on reveals his true intention why he have to regain Jinx's trust. This can be seen in his dialogue ""I need you. Now more than ever. You have to complete the weapon." (Linke & Yee, 2021f, 20:41) This dialogue shows how Silco's intention of obtaining Jinx's trust is so that he could use her to create a weapon from the stolen gemstone. With Jinx already under Silco's control, he can trust Jinx to create the weapon that will be used to attack Piltover and start a class struggle. This shows how Silco utilizes false consciousness to maintain his rule by obtaining state power from Piltover by creating a weapon that would start a class struggle between Piltover and Zaun.

Another example of Silco utilizing his role as an ideological state apparatus to create false consciousness can be seen when he tries to comfort Renni, one of the members of The Chembarons, by appealing to her emotions and winning back her trust. This can be seen in his dialogue

> *Silco: We all mourn the loss of your son, Renni. At least, we have the solace of knowing he died fighting for our cause, instead of some petty personal dispute, as so often occurs here"* (Linke & Yee, 2021g, 04:12).

Silco's statements shows how he uses Renni's son as a way to reinforce obedience, where Silco attempts to shapes her perception of reality where he portrays her son's death positively for attempting to defend the factory from Piltover. This method reveals how Silco indirectly tries to reinforce obedience to the ruling ideology by making Renni's son a role model, hoping that portraying her son's death positively would encourage her to keep fighting for Silco's cause and emphasize how Piltover is the true enemy of the people.

However, Silco's sympathy to Renni can be considered false because that is not his true intention. The evidence of this can be seen in Figure 2.



Figure 2. (Linke & Yee, 2021g, 04:08)

In Figure 2, it is seen how Silco goes to check the damages of the factory with The Chembarons. However, this scene subtly reveals Silco's true focus within the situation, where he instead puts his focus on the damaged machine rather than the fallen workers around him. This reveals how Silco prioritizes profits more than the condition of his workers, where he concerns himself more about the loss of profits from losing one of his machines as the means of Shimmer production rather than checking the deceased workers around him.

As a result, Silco's action contrasts differently with what he says to Renni, which reveals how Silco's main concern is on the loss of profits rather than the condition of his workers. When Renni starts questioning Silco's leadership, Silco utilizes false consciousness to instead create the perception that her son dies as a hero for defending the factory. With this, Silco hopes to appeal to her emotions in order to regain back her trust so that he can keep using her and the rest of The Chembarons to maintain his ruling ideology in Zaun.

After utilizing his role as an ideological state apparatus, Silco's next plan to maintain false consciousness and his ruling ideology is to take control of the state's repressive apparatus through illegal means. The repressive state apparatus that holds the authority for both Piltover and Zaun is The Enforcers, the police force that functions to maintain the ruling ideology of Piltover's government. To do this, Silco bribes The Enforcers' leader, Marcus, so that he can utilize Marcus as his repressive state apparatus to maintain his false consciousness.

An example of how effective Silco's bribery to control the repressive state apparatus can be seen when he bribes Marcus to avoid the crimes Silco has commited. availability of money as a weapon of control allows the repressive state apparatus to flourish (Ezinne Odinye & Anaelom, 2024, p. 9). Silco uses his wealth through bribery to encourage Marcus to carry out his plan, which proven to be effective as Marcus reports back to one of Piltover's council members, Jayce, and reports to him that the attack was caused by the Firelights, as seen in his dialogue

> *Marcus: Chief suspect is an undercity gang. They call themselves the Firelights. They operate like phantoms, doing hit-and-runs on civilians and disappearing into the night."* (Linke & Yee, 2021d, 09:40)

Here Marcus purposely falsifies his reports, so that the government of Piltover believes that The Firelights are a criminal gang who starts the attack on Piltover. This is false considering how the Firelights is not the one who starts the attack on Piltover, but rather it was Silco himself who did it. This reveals how Silco utilizes repressive state apparatus to create false consciousness.

Moreover, Marcus's role as the repressive state apparatus is shown when he maintains Silco's ruling ideology by employing violence against Ekko who threatens Silco's ruling ideology. Violence goes by many names, such as state terrorism, state oppression, homicide, and genocide, but ultimately violence always begins with ideological disagreement and ends with physical assault (Abid et al., 2022, p. 662). The conflict between Ekko's group and Silco's group is the result of ideological disagreement, where Silco's ideology only benefits him and his group to claim total control over Zaun through false consciousness, while Ekko and the Firelights' ideology serves to liberate the people of Zaun from Silco's exploitation. This ideological difference would eventually lead to conflict and could threaten the status of Silco's ideology as the ruling ideology in Zaun. Marcus' disposal of Ekko through violence shows how he attempts to maintain Silco's ruling ideology by eliminating those who disagree with the ruling ideology, whle also indirectly maintaining Silco's false consciousness.

Silco utilizes the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) to systematically reinforce his ideology in Zaun, not just through individual interactions but through broader social structures. The ISA includes institutions such as culture, informal education, politics, and moral values, all of which Silco controls to propagate a narrative of resistance against Piltover. Through culture, Silco crafts the perception that Zaun is an oppressed city, needing to rise up against Piltover, which is portrayed as the oppressor. This cultural narrative shapes the collective consciousness of the people of Zaun, creating a shared identity as victims who must rebel for their freedom. Politically, while Silco doesn't lead a formal government, he acts as the de facto ruler, leveraging his power to spread his ideological vision. He makes people believe that the only way to end their suffering is by overthrowing Piltover, solidifying his position as a leader.

Additionally, although there is no formal education system in Zaun, informal education takes place through mentorship and community influence. Silco "educates" his followers by instilling loyalty and a worldview that positions him as their protector and Piltover as the enemy. This fosters widespread class consciousness in Zaun, making people believe that rebellion is their only option. The ISA also works on a moral level, where Silco spreads values that justify the use of violence and manipulation to achieve their goals. While the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA), such as police and enforcers, maintains order through violence, the ISA subtly controls thoughts and beliefs, ensuring that the people of Zaun are not only physically but also ideologically subdued.

With Silco utilizing ideological state apparatus to reinforce his ideology, and repressive state apparatus to repress those who are against his ruling ideology, Silco has succeded in creating a class consciousness that leads to class struggle between the two cities for his own benefit. By creating the perception of Piltover being the oppresor to Zaun, the people of Zaun's perception is shaped to

believe that they must rise against Piltover to end their struggle.

However, the class struggle that emerged from this conflict only benefits Silco's interest instead of the people's. Because of the conflict, Silco demands to Piltover's government of giving him state authority for Zaun by making the city independent, while also demanding also other things that only benefit him such as trade routes, amnesty, and the technology Hexgate. The reason for this is that not only he can obtain more profits through free trade routes and the usage of Hexgate, but to also avoids any criminal charges by demanding amnesty for all the crimes he has committed. Fearing the starting of a war between Zaun and Piltover, Jayce, as a member of Piltover's governmetn, agrees with Silco's condition as long as he stops his *Shimme*r productions and returns the stolen gemstone. Despite Silco losing Shimmer industries and having to return the gemstone, Silco does not worry because by obtaining the things he demanded, Silco benefits only himself as the things he demanded can be used to maintain his status as the only ruler of Zaun.

As a result, this reveals how Silco utilizes state apparatus and his reactionary bourgeois movement managed to create and maintain false consciousness. By aligning his ideology with the people of Zaun's interest, Silco manages to create a class consciousness by appealing to the people's emotions to gain their loyalty and support. By appealing to Jinx's and other people's emotion such as Deckard and The Chembarons, Silco managed to convince them to support his cause, which led someone such as Jinx to start an attack on Piltover that would eventually led to a class struggle where Zaun's people rose and started a riot on the blockade as they and their trades were prevented from entering the city.

However, this class consciousness is proven to be false consciousness as it is built upon false perception of reality and is maintained through false consciousness. This shows how Silco's method of developing his class consciousness can be considered more a reactionary bourgeois direction, where he uses the people's emotions and appeals to their interest as a way to gain their allegiance, making it easier and more effective to develop his class consciousness among the people as it slowly becomes the ruling ideology of the city. In addition, Because Silco's class consciousness is proven to be false consciousness, Silco managed to utilize state apparatuses to maintain and reproduce his false consciousness by utilizing his role as an ideological state apparatus while also using Marcus as the repressive state apparatus.

2. Commodity Fetishism

When Silco rises to become the new leader of Zaun, he creates a plan to spread false consciousness to the people by creating an industry of drugs called Shimmer as a way to maintain his authority. Shimmer is an addictive drug that is created both to enhance a person's strength while also acting as medicine to heal injuries. At first, Silco utilizes Shimmer to create an army of powerful soldiers in order to attack Piltover. However, seeing as the effect of Shimmer on a person's body is only temporary and Piltover is getting more advanced in technology, Silco feels that his plan of attacking Piltover might not work out in his favor.

Silco sees an opportunity within Shimmer, where the addictive nature of the drug may not only help him create a business opportunity that could fund his agenda but also control the people of Zaun indirectly by making them addicted to it. This leads Silco to create an industry of Shimmer that is supervised by The Chembarons. As a result, Silco's plan with Shimmer is not only to get more profit but also to spread false consciousness through the fetishization of commodities.

Commodity fetishism can be utilized as a method of exploitation by the ruling class, one of these exploitations can manifest as false consciousness. Commodity fetishism is a situation in which social relationships of productions take on the imaginary characteristics of relationships between objects (Skotnicki, 2020, p. 4). Marx argues that through commodity fetishism, commodities are perceived with mystical and imaginary values inherited which obstruct the social relation behind the commodity itself, resulting in the alienation of the workers from

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their labors within a capitalist society. This can lead to exploitations such as false consciousness, where it may lead to the true value of commodities being obstructed and distorted. This creates a false perception of reality, where commodities are inherent with mystical values and are independent of the labor that goes behind them, which leads to the perception of these inherent values as natural and conceals the exploitative nature within the capitalist system.

Silco utilizes commodity fetishism as a way to spread his false consciousness through Shimmer in Zaun. With Zaun dominated by the working class and Silco is one of the few ruling classes within the city, Silco is capable of using his product Shimmer as a way to create false consciousness that could allow him to exploit the people by creating an inherent value within the commodity. Although the working class in Zaun is not aware of their true class interest, commodity fetishism will allow Silco to create a false consciousness within the city through the inherent value of Shimmer that would lead to the false perception of the commodity itself.

Silco's goal to monetize *Shimmer* as a profitable business starts with him concealing *Shimmer's* true nature through the mystification of its value as a consumable to satisfy people's needs. Mystification, like all others, stems from the materially mediated connections' appearance as "things" whose nature is fixed and socially-historically established rather than as what they actually are (Kavoulakos, 2020, p. 9). As mentioned previously, *Shimmer*'s original purpose functions as a medicine to heal wounds while also enhancing the strength of an individual. However, Silco mystifies *Shimmer's* value as an object of desire, a consumable that provides hallucinogen effects to those who consume it.

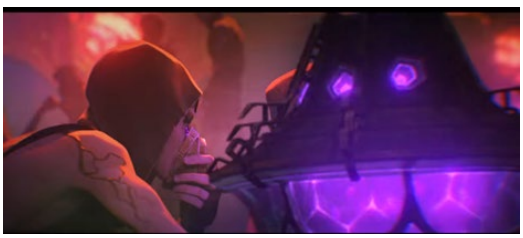


Figure 3. (Linke & Yee, 2021c, 17:21)

In Figure 3, it can be seen how *Shimmer* is being consumed by one of Zaun's denizens by inhaling it to obtain its hallucinogen effects, indirectly revealing how the people perceive *Shimmer* as an object of desire. This shows how the mystification of *Shimmer* functions, where they only see the inherited value of it being an object of desire instead of perceiving it from its true nature as a medicine along with the social relation that goes through its production. This results in how the mystification of *Shimmer* can conceal the exploitative nature of the drug and naturalize the inherent value of *Shimmer* instead to distort the people's perception of the commodity.

Althusser argues that as opposed to their actual circumstances, the impoverished people find delight in their imaginations. That's why the state's ideology forces the impoverished to imagine a glorious life that they can live (Shrivastwa, 2022, p. 415). Commodity fetishism is used to distort the people's reality to subtly accept the exploitation that occurs within a capitalist society. With the people of Zaun struggling to achieve a prosperous life within the city, they often seek a new way to entertain themselves as a method of escape from their current reality. Silco, aware of the current condition in Zaun, sees an opportunity with Shimmer. Silco not only creates a new industry for Shimmer to boost his profits, but also he utilizes Shimmer's addictive nature to exploit the people. Shimmer's effect allows the people to enhance their imagination, which results in Shimmer being perceived as a commodity that gives off the effect of escapism from their current reality.

An example of the people perceiving Shimmer only through its inherent value can be seen when Caitlyn questions Huck's motive of consuming Shimmer as a method of escapism. This can be seen when Huck explains his reason in his dialogue "I just wanted to feel what it was like to be somebody. To make other people afraid." (Linke & Yee, 2021e, 21:11) Here, Huck tries to justify how he is consuming Shimmer to satisfy his ego by consuming it as a method of escapism. Previously, Huck is depicted in the series as a weak person who could not stand up for himself when others tried to exploit him and

his business trades. With Shimmer, not only does it allow him to enhance his strength for a short amount of time, but the hallucinogenic effect of Shimmer also strengthens his imagination to achieve his desire, despite the drug making him sick the more he consumes it.

This reveals how Huck does not perceive Shimmer as its true function being a medicine, where instead he sees Shimmer as a product of a desire to satisfy his need for escapism from the reality of his struggle. This shows how Huck fetishizes Shimmer as a product, where his perception of Shimmer is distorted where he only sees the inherent value of being something to satisfy his needs rather than its true purpose of being a medicine

The people's distorted perception of Shimmer shows how Silco creates false consciousness through commodity fetishism. By concealing the true value and function of Shimmer, Silco can inherit the value of Shimmer and mystify it as a commodity that would encourage people to consume it. This affects the class consciousness of the people, where they are less likely to unite and be aware of their true interest because the exploitative nature behind the inherited values is slowly being naturalized to obstruct their perception, allowing them to believe a false consciousness that is created from the fetishization of commodity.



Figure 4. (Linke & Yee, 2021c, 18:31)

In addition, Silco's utilization of Shimmer signifies the true nature of the product, which also reveals how he conceals its true nature to the people as a way to spread false consciousness. Figure 4 shows how Silco utilizes Shimmer by using only a small dose of it through a syringe in order to treat the wound on his eye. This subtly reveals how Silco is aware of Shimmer being a dangerous drug if consumed in high doses, which is why he only uses it following its true function of being a medicine rather than an object of desire. This indirectly also shows how Silco is using Shimmer to spread false consciousness, where he inherits the value of Shimmer being a consumable that provides satisfaction, mystifying its value to encourage the people's desire to purchase the drug while also concealing its true nature.

By obscuring the true value of Shimmer through its inherited value, Silco's action leads to the creation of false consciousness as it distorts the dangerous effects of Shimmer and instead creates a false perception of the commodity through the inherited value. This results in Silco's capability of exploiting the people as the inherited value of Shimmer slowly naturalizes to the people's consciousness, allowing him to not only obstruct the people from realizing their true class interests but also exploit their addiction to Shimmer for his own benefit.



Figure 5. (Linke & Yee, 2021e, 28:03)

Later on, it is revealed how Silco exploits the people with Shimmer in an attempt to kill Vi and Caitlyn. Figure 5 shows how Silco is holding Shimmer as the impoverished people are kneeling in front of him, begging him to give them Shimmer. This scene can be interpreted as a visual metaphor for depicting how Silco obtains authority in Zaun through Shimmer, where he mocks Vi by showing her how powerful Shimmer is up to the point where he could make the people kneel to him without any force, signifying how Silco has subtly seized Zaun's control through the false perception of Shimmer as a commodity.This scene results in Silco controlling the people around him to reveal Vi's location, where Huck, one of Vi's allies, betrays her by revealing her location to Silco when he offers him Shimmer.

This reveals how Silco exploits the people through commodity fetishism, whereas the

ruling class, he creates an inherent value within Shimmer so that the people would consume it, allowing them to naturally accept the exploitative nature of becoming addicted to Shimmer so that Silco can control them easily.

In addition, the impact of the people's addiction to Shimmer reveals how the false consciousness that emerges from Shimmer's false perception leads to more struggle for the people. The impact of Shimmer on the people can be seen in Vi's dialogue when she explains to Caitlyn about the sick people's camp "It's where the kind of people you topsiders don't want to think about, wind up. It was never this big, though." (Linke & Yee, 2021e, 16:30) Vi explanation indirectly reveals how not only the people who are sick because of Shimmer are thrown into the camp instead of being treated, but also how more people are getting sick because of Shimmer which leads to the camp becoming larger.

Another evidence of Shimmer exploits the people can be seen when Ekko talks about how Silco does not care about what happens to the people after they consume Shimmer "After Vander died, Silco flooded the lanes with Shimmer. He didn't care what it did to people. Everyone here was an addict or a victim" (Linke & Yee, 2021f, 16:26). As a result, Shimmer's dangerous nature is making the people struggle even more as they become sick because of it, leading those who are addicted being thrown away from Zaun to become refugee to a camp as Silco does not care enough for the people to treat them of their illness because of Shimmer's consumption.

In conclusion, the mystification of commodity allows Silco to create an inherent value that creates false consciousness as a way to control the people of Zaun and obstruct their true class interests. With the people only perceiving the inherent value of Shimmer, it allows them to perceive the commodity as an object to satisfy their needs instead of its true purpose being a medicine to heal wounds. This leads false consciousness to emerge and spread among the people, as the people only perceive the commodity from the inherent value of Shimmer, which obstructs the true value of the commodity itself, resulting in the glorification of the commodity.

This results in the naturalization of exploitative nature such as the addictive effect of Shimmer being disregarded by the people, resulting in them being addicted and sick because of it while also allowing Silco to easily control their allegiance. As a result, because the people only perceive Shimmer from its inherent value, Silco can control the people's allegiance through commodity fetishism and ensure that the people are unable to be aware of their true class interest, resulting in Silco maintaining his status as a ruler in Zaun.

Conclusion

With Althusser's theory of state apparatuses (Althusser, 1970) combined with Marx's concept of commodity fetishism (Marx, 1867) it is revealed how false consciousness can be utilized to further benefit a certain group of people to maintain their power and authority. Based on the theories, this research revealed how false consciousness is created and maintained through commodity fetishism and state apparatuses as a method of exploitation to benefit a certain group of people or class to maintain their power and status within a society.

Based on the research's findings, it is revealed how Silco's class consciousness can be considered false consciousness as it creates a false perception of reality amongst the people and obstructs their true interest. Silco utilizes commodity fetishism to spread false consciousness to control the people of Zaun. Silco utilizes commodity fetishism by creating the product Shimmer, which allows him to obstruct the people's perception of the product by mystifying value and concealing the true nature of Shimmer being a dangerous drug. As a result, this can be considered as false consciousness as it creates a false perception of reality that benefits Silco as he exploits the people through their false perception of Shimmer, allowing him to control the people of Zaun with ease to further maintain his power in Zaun as a ruler.

Another finding of this research is how Silco's ideology maintains and spreads false

consciousness through the utilization of state apparatuses. To ensure that the people do not achieve awareness of Silco's false consciousness nor their true class interest, he creates the ruling ideology in Zaun based on his interest and utilizes the ideological state apparatus and repressive state apparatus to maintain the ideology. Silco utilizes his role as an ideological state apparatus that is capable of reproducing the value of ideology to his subordinates. Silco also utilizes a repressive state apparatus by using the police force of the two cities to repress anyone who opposes his ruling ideology. By utilizing state apparatuses, Silco manages to ensure and control the people's obedience to his ideology while also utilizing force and violence to repress those who attempt to threaten it, which allows Silco to spread and maintain false consciousness further for his own benefit of maintaining his rule.

As a result, Silco's success in subtly controlling the people through false consciousness as a way to maintain his power in Zaun reveals how false consciousness can be utilized to benefit certain people, groups, or classes to maintain their authority. Silco being one of the bourgeois class of Zaun is an example of how false consciousness can be used by a certain class such as the ruling class to maintain their authority over the working class. By creating a false perception of reality through false consciousness, the people are unaware of their true class interests as false consciousness obstructs their perception of reality, allowing them to unconsciously believe the exploitative nature of false consciousness as it only benefits a certain class to maintain their power within a society.

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