

## **The Anatomy of Capitalist Society and Class Struggle in Emilia Perez (2024) on Marxist Perspective**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This research analyzes the representation of the capitalist structure and the dynamics of class struggle within its system through a study of the film Emilia Perez (2024), utilizing the perspective of Marxism. The method employed is a descriptive qualitative approach based on Marxist critique. Data is collected from the characters dialogue, scenes, and visual representations, which showcase the conflict inherent in the capitalist environment. The analysis focuses on a critique of illicit activities within the capitalist setting and the struggle experienced by the social classes involved. The research verifies that the film strongly reflects that class contradiction within capitalism between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Furthermore, the film supports the Marxist analysis that the capitalist system maximizes absolute surplus value by employing economic power to modify legal frameworks. This demonstrates that the interest in capital accumulation becomes the primary objective, surpassing moral and legal boundaries.*

*Keywords: Capitalist Structure, Class Struggle, Marxism.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The phenomenon of capitalist society is marked by the dominance of capital, a system that perpetually creates economic struggle. As Karl Marx outlined, the relations of production are inherently exploitative, where surplus value increases as a result of the low wages received by workers. In contemporary conditions, this struggle is not only about wages but extends to working conditions, safety, and even the existence of illicit activities compelled by the dominant capital group for maximum profit.

This research employs qualitative methods for an in depth and structure analysis literary work, specifically film. The film *Emilia Perez (2024)* serves as a potent cultural narrative, clearly illustrating how the capital member systematically structures its social reality. (Borde, 1996) Film is a literature art form composed of narrative, audio, and visual, enabling it to convey specific messages and information. The main characters in the film (Emilia) represents a segment of the capital class who controls the means of production. The film visually demonstrates how the pursuit of absolute surplus value enables capital to lower working standards and enforce illegal employment practices. The struggle experienced by the labour power in this film represents an existential fight, where the need for social reproduction forces workers to submit to dangerous

conditions. The film also reveals the moral struggle experienced by the capital group, showing that they lack nothing materially, they suffer from spiritual emptiness. Furthermore, the film strongly emphasizes the legal superstructure, demonstrating that the economic power wielded by the capital group is capable of subduing the judicial system, which should ideally be a neutral part.

Several studies have tested how Marxism is represented in film through the general theme of social antagonism. However, to date no researcher has focused on the film *Emilia Perez* (2024) to critically analyze the relationship between the struggle of the two groups (Bourgeoisie and Proletariat). This research is thus established to fill that void, testing the relevance of Marxist theory in addressing the complex dominance of capital. Therefore, this study focuses on the main topic: How does the film *Emilia Perez* (2024) represent the dominance of capital and the struggle between the two social classes within the context of capitalist society? The objective of this research is to analyze the system of dominance of capital and its corresponding class struggle through the lens of Marxism. Significantly, this study provides a theoretical contribution by supporting Marxism as a relevant framework for examining economic power that transgresses boundaries. The research also offers critical knowledge regarding the condition of labour power in capitalist society. The subsequent section will systematically outline the struggle between the classes within the capitalist context as depicted in the film.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The study of literary works in the form of film is a critical practice that seeks to critique and interpret a film's ideology and message. (Simons, 2009) defines film as a video based medium that originates from or is generated by real world ideas, and which must incorporate elements of both entertainment and meaning. Film is a medium that not only presents objective reality but also serves as an expression of ideas, a work of reflection, and a form of meditation (Rascaroli, 2008). Interpretation of a film requires the identification of prominent symbols as compelling data for further in depth analysis. This study selects the film *Emilia Perez* (2024) as the object for an in depth critique of the ideology embedded within it. The film features two characters who have been categorized according to the Marxist framework utilized. The first character belongs to the upper class, namely: Emilia/Manitas, as a member of the bourgeoisie, and the second is Rita, as a member of the proletariat. Through this critical perspective, the message will be effectively conveyed to the audience, thereby providing information and opening up new insights.

### **Karl Marx Perspective of Marxism**

Marxism as a social critique theory introduced by Karl Marx, is a primary framework for analyzing social relations within a capitalist theme. The core of Marx's view is that society is defined by a history of class struggle. Marx divides society in two classes: the bourgeoisie (owner of capital) and the proletariat (sellers of labour power). According to Marx, Marxism presents an alternative vision in the form of a socialist society, where the means of production are collectively managed and people can live more meaningfully, equal, and just lives "from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs" (Gilabert, 2023). Marxism aims to identify the structural disparities present due to exploitation within the context of surplus value. The Marxist

critique relevant to this film represents how commodification extends to identify and is dominated by money. The contradictions between these two classes are termed class struggle. As a consequence of capitalism, the proletarian experience alienation, which conflicts with their reality and morality. Thus, the film *Emilia Perez* (2024) as a reflection of the conflicts occurring within the capitalist order.

### **Capitalist Society**

Capitalist society is an environment that adheres to a system of mapping the owners of the means of production and the labour force. This ideology reflects the control exerted by the dominant class (Urfiani et al., 2016). This system creates a sharp division between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, whose connection is characterized by exploitation. A capitalist system is driven by the motive of capital accumulation, propelled by a production process that generates value. The consequence of this accumulation is that social relations are reduced to transactions where money is always prioritized. Beyond the issue of financial domination, capitalist society is characterized by a strong free market system. Here, prices are determined by supply and demand, leading to fierce competition among companies to innovate and be efficient. Although this competition drives technological development and wealth creation, it also inherently generates significant inequality. In a cultural context, this system fosters a cold sense of individualism where decisions are based solely on cost benefit analysis. Drawing from these two familiar aspects (capital domination and the free market system), it demonstrates that capital society is defined by the existence of conflict and distinguishing elements in the relationship between individuals.

### **Struggle Class in Capitalist Society**

Marx reviewed capitalist society through the inherent class conflict between the bourgeoisie (owners of resources) and the proletariat (owners of labour power). When the proletariat becomes aware of such injustice, class struggle emerges in the form of social movements and revolutions aimed at overthrowing bourgeois domination and creating a more just society (Tualeka, 2017). The resulting conflict triggers an economic struggle, which is a competition regarding the distribution of the value produced. This struggle is intensified by the existence of reduced worker standards, which maintains high job pressure. The suffering experienced by the proletariat points to an issue rooted in the bourgeoisie's effort to maintain their position as the dominant force. Based on their efforts to establish their position, the bourgeoisie manipulates the labour power as an intermediary for the struggle they possess. The main character's role as the representative of capital who controls the resources in the film is the core dynamic of the struggle in capitalist society.

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

This research uses a qualitative description design linked to the method of Marxist critical analysis. This method is the most suitable for analyzing a literary object such as a film, allowing the underlying ideology to be accurately conveyed, particularly the representation of the capitalist structure and class struggle. The data collection procedure is systematic: (1) repeated viewing, (2) identifying scenes, (3) transcribing and taking screenshots. This study also includes steps by

analyzing data: (1) filtered and categorized data, (2) presented thematically in the form of narratives or tables, (3) finding presented data relevant to research questions, and (4) repeatedly verified.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This research classifies 6 pieces of results the dynamics of capitalist society and class struggle in the film *Emilia Perez* (2024). The results and discussion were accumulated through visual and narrative analysis (dialogue excerpts and image fragments) within the framework of marxism.

### **Interpretation of Capitalist Society in the film Emilia Perez (2024)**

The film features several pieces of evidence that represent the context of capitalist society and are relevant to Marxism. The workers' temporary victory through reduced working hours and increased wages is followed by capitalists replacing less efficient workers with machines, illustrating the ongoing nature of the conflict (Schmidt, 2017). The screenshot below displays a scene set in a plastic surgery hospital. Several people (patients) are visible sitting in wheelchairs with their faces covered in bandages. This suggests that patients underwent surgical procedures to alter their facial features.



**Figure1.** Visualization of capitalist society in surgical hospital (minute 00:21:26)

This signifies a strong desire by individuals to transform themselves through self surgery. Interpreted more deeply, a person desiring identity change will do anything, which is known to require significant costs. This scene conveys the understanding that money can be used to facilitate illegal acts, including changing one's identity. This portrayal derived that capitalism fosters and exploits individual dissatisfaction with the self. Dissatisfaction becomes an opportunity where financial power can penetrate the most personal aspects of life for the purpose of accumulation.

### **Bourgeoisie Exerts Pressure on the Proletariat**

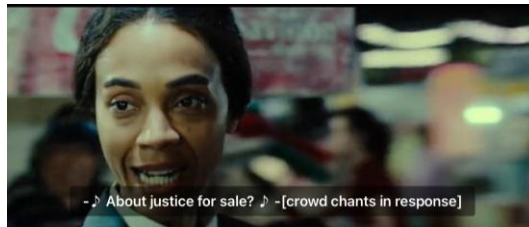
In a scene from the film, there is dialogue where Emilia coerces the proletariat with the lure of financial rewards. This portrayal interprets that capitalism fosters and exploits individual dissatisfaction with the self. This dissatisfaction becomes an opportunity where financial power can penetrate the most personal aspects of life for the purpose of accumulation.

Man : (musical)..Answering the question would mean you've accepted the mission and it's secret, once i tell you what it is there's no turning back, hearing is accepting, also you must know if i tell you what is about and if u agree considerable sums of money (minute 00:16:45-00:17:02).

In this dialogue snippet, the bourgeoisie uses the phrase “considerable sums of money” as the primary control mechanism to pressure Rita into accepting a secret and illegal mission. The phrase “hearing is accepting” implies that Rita is under financial duress, where the need for a wage restricts her freedom of action. This interprets that capital domination damages morality, making money the main factor in transactions, even unethical ones, purely for the interest of the upper class.

### **Legal Superstructure: Justice for Sale**

The final image evidence for the context of capitalist society shows Rita explicitly criticizing the commodification of justice. Rita, as a professional worker who handles many clients from the dominant class, frequently encounters news being covered up or justice being sold for the profit of specific individuals.



**Figure 2.** Proletariat critic about justice for sale (minute 00:06:11).

This scene serves as a profound critique of the legal superstructure that can be transacted under capitalism. Rita's sharp critique, encapsulated by the phrase “justice for sale,” indicates that the legal system no longer stands independently and is diverted to protect the interests of the bourgeoisie. Rita's experience sharply confirms that the domination capital can easily subvert legal truth, which should otherwise stand for justice. This strongly supports the Marxist concept of capitalism, where capital is the primary factor.

### **Interpretation of Class Struggle in Capitalist Society**

Class struggle refers to the tension that arises due to differences in interests, power, and resources within a society. This tension occurs through various means, such as economic competition, political unrest, and conflicting ideological and cultural differences. Marx argued that class struggle lies at the center of the capitalist social process, in which the proletariat fights against bourgeoisie to survive or transform the existing social and economic structure (Leipold, 2021). In the context of the *Emilia Perez* (2024), the struggle is manifested through moral conflict, resistance against layered oppression, and economic struggle experienced by the proletariat. The

following are several pieces of evidence from the scenes that interpret class struggle in capitalist society.

### **Woman Proletarian with Layered Oppression**

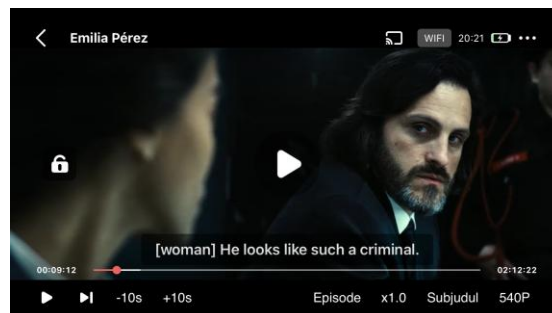
This evidence shows a dialogue from the film featuring a proletarian woman complaining about the oppression she experienced. The woman visits a protection foundation and recounts experiencing physical and moral violence from her own partner. As a proletarian woman, she finds it extremely difficult to escape the snare of oppression she suffers.

Woman : “I thought he was to be he, i was scared i had five years of peace then i got your letter, he used to hit me, steal my moneys, rape me. If weren't dead, I'd i'd have.. I even brought knife”.(minute 01:23:15 until 01:23:50).

That short dialogue interprets the layered oppression experienced by the proletarian woman. The struggle of proletarian women is understood as an effort to resist this double exploitation and to assert class consciousness as well as resistance against patriarchal capitalism (Hikam, 2025). Her inherent limitations structurally impede her search for freedom from the violence she endures. The physical and moral violence, alongside the leftover of her money by her own partner, illustrates that exploitation is not confined to the workplace but also accesses the private domain of the household. What her partner does, the stripping of capital and resources necessary to safely escape the oppression, confirms that the struggle experienced by the proletariat is not solely against the bourgeoisie; the context of patriarchy reinforces the systemic inequality.

### **A Site of Domination of the Legal (Subjective Alienation of Proletarian)**

The image evidence this time shows Rita, a professional worker and a member of the proletariat, against the background of a minimal courtroom gazing at her client while murmuring to herself. She handles clients from the bourgeoisie group who are actually guilty. However, due to the dominance of capital possessed by the client, Rita as their lawyer is silenced to ensure the client is not found guilty.



**Figure 3.** Rita as proletarian inner murmur to her suspect client (minute 00:09:12)

This image evidence visually represents the phenomenon of subjective alienation experienced by Rita while simultaneously affirming the concept of justice for sale. Although Rita works as a legal expert, she is compelled and her inner murmur underscores a cold and unethical

work environment. Rita's muttering reveals an internal moral conflict; she is alienated from her own profession due to the economic demands placed upon her as a proletarian. Thus, as a professional worker in the legal system, she cannot escape the structure of domination. Rita, as the lawyer, must secure her financial standing, substituting it with a moral struggle displayed by her murmur, "He looks such a criminal," directed at her client.

### **Emilia as a Bourgeoisie Showing Moral Struggle (Self Redemption)**

The final evidence this time displays the struggle experienced by the bourgeois member, Manitas (*Emilia*). At minute 00:18:07, Manitas engages in a conversation with Rita, forcibly engaging the lawyer to help her escape the emptiness he feels. He told Rita that he wishes to transform herself from Manitas, the cartel leader, into a woman named Emilia.

Manitas : I want to be a woman (minute 00:18:07).

Manitas : I dont lack sky, i dont lack money, i dont lack murder, i dont lack lust, but i lack desire (minute 00:34:00-00:34:37).

This dialogue interprets the profound conflict occurring within the bourgeoisie. Although Manitas (*Emilia*) feels self sufficient in material wealth and power declaring, "i dont lack sky, i dont lack money, i dont lack murder, i dont lack lust" he paradoxically suffers from a deep subjective alienation or emptiness "but i lack desire." he subsequent wish, "i want to be a woman," is an effort to redeem this emptiness by commodifying identity a desperate attempt to buy a true self. This illustrates that the capitalist environment ultimately alienates the bourgeoisie class from their moral essence. Therefore, Manita's struggle is not about economics; rather, it is an existential fight to reclaim the submerged species being (authentic self).

### **CONCLUSION**

Viewed through a Marxist lens, this research explains that the film *Emilia Perez* (2024) successfully represents and critiques the intensity of capitalist society and class struggle. The film demonstrates a capitalist domination marked by financial power that permeates the social superstructure, where politics and law are commodified to prioritize the interests of the bourgeoisie. The concept of commodification is shown to extend beyond labour and production, with acts of self transformation illustrating the extreme nature of capital's domination. The class struggle is presented multidimensionally, with the proletariat fighting not only for economics but also for morality, and struggling to be free from layered oppression. Marx argued that class struggle ultimately leads to revolution, in which the proletariat rises to seize the means of production, abolish private ownership, and establish a socialist society (Yaris et al, 2014). Overall, film *Emilia Perez* (2024) is relevant as a sharp tool for social critique, enriching academic knowledge on how literary works in narrative form dissect and visualize the complexities of Marxist in a modern context.

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