

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Background of the Study

The United Nations Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs estimated the world population (the total number of humans currently living) at 7.9 billion as of October 2021. More people mean more needs and more needs mean more resource exploitations. How each individual exploits the resources is determined by the ownership and control of the means of production (all, most, some or little) (Ishiyama & Breuning, 2011); and it, in turn, defines what class an individual belongs to.

A class is those who share and are conscious of common economic interests and participate in collective action to gain those interests (Andrew, 1983). The level of how much a man possessing and managing the means of production will decide how much economic power a man has. Since economic power always include social and political power as well, it is common to refer economic class to socioeconomic class (Tyson, 2006).

The thought that class is determined by its relationship to the means of production was proposed by 19th century German philosopher, Karl Marx. He introduced a method to understand, according to him, the most important aspect of

human life, economy. It is economy that makes the world go round; it is economy that gives birth to human culture and activities. If a theory or ideology does not try, even the slightest effort, to point up the important of economic roles in human culture, then it fails to understand human culture (Tyson, 2006).

In general, Marxist theory divides socioeconomic class into two main classes: the bourgeoisie, who owns the means of production and the proletariat, who must sell their own labour power. The Marxist theory itself, as well as other many theories, has developed into many schools of thought and none acts as definitive Marxist theory (Wolff and Resnick, 1987).

As propaganda or otherwise critics to capitalism, Marxist theory can be found and applied in almost any issues. Literary works are the best instances of this. Many literary works slip or even blatantly take up Marxist theory as their themes. One of the literary works that takes up a theme around economy, capitalism and Marxism is *Cosmopolis*.

*Cosmopolis* is the thirteenth novel written by American writer, Don DeLillo and first published in 2003. Don DeLillo himself is known for his works that cover wide range of genres and topics, from politics and economy to nuclear war. He is praised by the way he drives his readers and the complexity of his works. Upon its release, *Cosmopolis* gained mixed reviews, particularly compared to DeLillo's previous works. David Kipen (2003) of the *San Francisco Chronicle*

wrote: “*DeLillo continues to think about the modern world in language and images as quizzically beautiful as any writer now going*”.

Walter Kern (2003), otherwise, in *The New York Times* was not quite impressed by the works by writing: “*Beware the novel of ideas, particularly when the ideas come first and all the novel stuff (like the story) comes second. Cosmopolis is an intellectual turkey shoot, sending up a succession of fat targets just in time for its author to aim and fire the rounds he loaded before he started writing*”.

*Cosmopolis* adapted to the big screen by Canadian director, David Cronenberg in 2011 and premiered in 2012, met with, yet again, mixed reviews.

There have been several studies conducted to analyse DeLillo’s *Cosmopolis* through Marxist viewpoint. Some of them are “*Icarus Falling – A Marxist Study of Don DeLillo’s Cosmopolis*” by Anna Sundelius (2014), “*A Satire on Capitalism in Don DeLillo’s Cosmopolis*” by Gabriel C. Sudibyo (2014) and “*The Currency of DeLillo’s Cosmopolis*” by Mark Osteen (2014). The first study tries to show that *Cosmopolis* portrays the imperfectness of modern capitalism and the attempt to make the work as a starting point for an emergent counter, as well as discuss the psychology of the main character as a fictional creation and as a representative of the capitalist system and using Marx’s theory of alienation. It also argues that *Cosmopolis* has a theme of cyber-capital.

The second study investigates the intrinsic and extrinsic elements, which focuses on false consciousness, alienation and class struggle. It finds that the book itself is none other than a critic to capitalism through a satire and a good irony to real life situation.

Lastly, the third study mentioned above examines how the book employs postmodern, derealised money to represent the psychic and social conditions of the early twenty-first century, as embodied by the main character. It also concludes that human body is the most significant undeniable power of countercurrencies.

The first and second studies analyse the portrayal of capitalism as well as theme in the book and the form of the book a satire of capitalism, respectively. Both studies discuss one or more intrinsic and extrinsic elements in the book and talk about Marx's theory of alienation. The third study doesn't even mention false consciousness. Even though the second study also attempts to discuss the false consciousness aspect, it only discusses it in a brief discussion, let alone mentioning Manhattan as the setting. Therefore, this study is conducted to deepen and widen the understanding of false consciousness based on *Cosmopolis*' Manhattan as a literary work. This study, in particular, examines how socioeconomic classes create false consciousness in Manhattan as depicted in Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis* by using Marxist class theory for it will clearly show the relations between the two main classes in creating false consciousness of proletariat class to bourgeois one.

## 1.2. Research Questions

1. How false consciousness is depicted in *Cosmopolis*?
2. How the proletariat in *Cosmopolis* keep promoting the interests of the bourgeoisie instead of fighting for the real cause of an equal condition in the societies?

## 1.3. Purpose of the Study

This study aims to analyse the author's way to depict false consciousness in *Cosmopolis*' "fictionalised" Manhattan through the proletariat's actions toward the bourgeois main character in keeping on promoting of the latter's economic interests.

## 1.4. Scope of the Study

This study focuses on how false consciousness is depicted in *Cosmopolis*' Manhattan where proletariat keep promoting the interests of the bourgeoisie instead of fighting for the real issue. However, the writer limits the "bourgeois character" to only the main character: Eric Packer; and the "proletarian characters" to only seven people who work (for full time or only a period of time) for the main character: Torval (his chief of security), Ibrahim Hamadou (his driver), Shiner (his head of technology and cyber security), Michael Chin (his currency analyst), Jane Melman (his chief of finance), Dr. Ingram (his physician) and Vija Kinski (his chief of theory).

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

This study is expected to provide meaningful insights in understanding Marxist false consciousness in literary works in particular and in understanding history and current events in general. The writer also hopes the study would meaningfully help anyone who desires to see the world from a different perspective.

