

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the Research

The American dream for American is the spirit of a nation to settle the goal of success. Along with the changes in era and situation in America. The meaning of the American Dream has transformed through time. Since the term has discovered in the year of 1930s, American Dream's meaning once ever faded among the atmosphere of American people due to crisis in America in the 1930s. Then, the meaning of the American Dream is surfaced again in the years of 1950s after World War II. Even the true meaning of the American Dream's term towards the American people is still arguable.

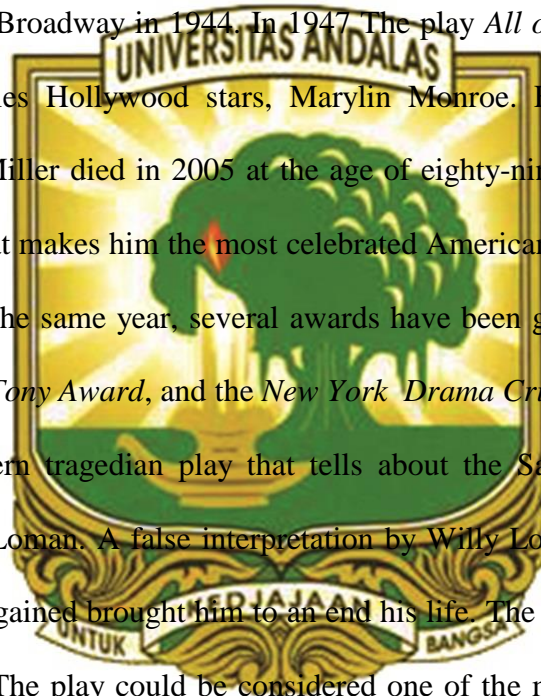
The American Dream term has influenced the literary works in order to criticize the society through the work. The critique in literary works can be implicitly or explicitly depend on the way of analysis. The differentiation of literary works to other written texts in criticizing the society that literary works can reflect the real situation into fiction. Literary works have multiple ways to tell the meaning itself. Despite written works, some literary works are aimed to be presented on the stage.

A play categorized as literary work that is presented on the stage. Broadway is a stage known as the place where the best masterpiece among the lucky playwright in America to present their masterpiece. During the 1930s Broadway purposing some of the play that can be presented in a stage must be “, in some measure, the malaise of the thirties, even when, superficially, the plays seemed to be setting out directly only to entertain, to provide for the spectators an evening's welcome escape from the disheartening Depression just outside the doors of the theater” (Kaplan 580). “A performance to be held on Broadway is a mark of success that is considered to be the highest level attainable for commercial theater. Attending a production of Broadway Theater is a popular tourist activity in New York”

(Theaterseatstore.com, 2018). *You Can't Take It With You* (1936) is considering as the best masterpiece in the certain of wittiness and the red rose of the desert, along with the stock market crash during the 1930s. The American people began to love the play by the first appearance in Broadway, which shifting the vague of American people into joyful and enjoyable play that ever exists. Theatre has been the primary business for the artist who dedicated their life for the art of acting.

Arthur Asher Miller or Arthur Miller is an American author who was born in Harlem, New York, in 1915. The play *The Man Who Had All The Luck* is the first play that makes a Miller's Play debut in a Broadway in 1944. In 1947 The play *All of My Son* also appeared in Broadway. Miller marries Hollywood stars, Marilyn Monroe. Four years later, they are committed to divorce. Miller died in 2005 at the age of eighty-nine in Connecticut. In 1949 Miller wrote the play that makes him the most celebrated American playwright at that time in *Death Of Salesman*. In the same year, several awards have been gained by winning *Pulitzer Prize* for the Best Play, *Tony Award*, and the *New York Drama Critic Circle* for the work and the playwright. A modern tragedian play that tells about the Salesman, who is the main character named Willy Loman. A false interpretation by Willy Loman toward the American Dream that he has been gained brought him to an end his life. The play has already converted into several languages. The play could be considered one of the most excellent plays of the 20th century. The play has been adapted into the movie around America and the UK.

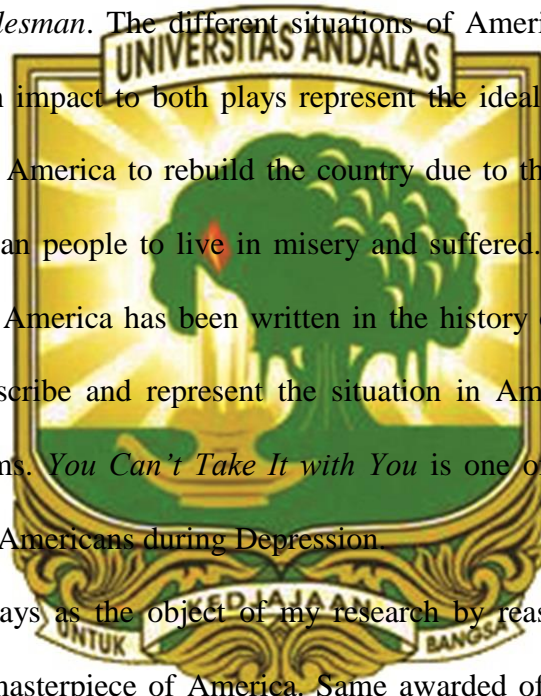
George S. Kaufman is known as the Great Collaborator, who won two Pulitzer Prizes in Drama. He was born in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, on November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1889. Kaufman is engaging in being a columnist writing for the *Washington Times*, and he moved on to *New York Times* as a drama reporter in 1917 and lasting to 1930 as a drama editor. The playwright career on the title *Of Thee I Sing* is the first musical play winning the *Pulitzer Prize* for Drama in 1931. *Of Thee, I Sing* is the play of the collaboration between Kaufman and the



lyricist Ira Gershwin. The collaboration between Kaufman and several figures of drama is yielding the nickname of The Great Collaborator. By the time Moss Hart comes, the collaboration between Kaufman and Hart, which lasts almost ten years from 1930 to 1940. In the following year, Kaufman earns the second *Pulitzer Prize* for the Drama in *You Can't Take It with You* (1936) with the newcomer collaborator Moss Hart.

Apart from both plays represent the American Dream as the arguable term in America, the Great Depression, as written in the history of America, takes a role situation to describe the transformation meaning of the American Dream between *You Can't Take It With You* and *Death of A Salesman*. The different situations of America during Depression and after Depression give an impact to both plays represent the ideal of American Dream. The great Depression causes America to rebuild the country due to the fallen economic system, which led many American people to live in misery and suffered. The representation of the effect of Depression on America has been written in the history of America. Literary work becomes the tool to describe and represent the situation in America, as can be found in Novels, Plays, and Poems. *You Can't Take It with You* is one of many literary works that describe the situation of Americans during Depression.

I derive these plays as the object of my research by reasons. First, both plays are considered as the best masterpiece of America. Same awarded of *Pulitzer Prize* for Drama and also made an appearance in Broadway. Second, the theme of both play are contradicted and the different perspective of meaning the American Dream. Third, both plays portrayed the same situation of America in the 1930s, and a different theme, which makes me as the researcher wants to know more about the life of American at that time. Fourth, the American dreams' issue becomes controversy among American people. In analyzing the research, I am considering Comparative Literature. Therefore, I entitle my research **The Portrait of**



## **American Dream in *Death of a Salesman*, and *You Can't Take It With You*: A Comparative Reading**

### **1.2. Identification of the Problem**

I notice the differentiation of ideal and perspective of American Dream between the two plays. I eager to know how American Dream is portrayed by the two plays which is a representation of American people's ideas. The issue of American Dream in *You Can't Take It with You* and *Death of a Salesman*, give an impact in representation by the authors. The different perspective between two plays in comprehending the meaning of American dreams that leads into different theme. Both plays describe the leaders who put their own ideal about the American Dream into the family. Martin Vanderhof in *You Can't Take It With You* show his ideal of being freedom and preventing his family to the thought of systematic and industrial minded. While Willy Loman In *Death of A Salesman* encouraged his children to be a man of well-liked and demanded them to be a man of business.

### **1.3. The Scope of the Research**

In this research, I focus on comparing the issue of American Dream in both American plays that is *You Can't Take It with You* and *Death of a Salesman*. Comparative Literature will be the tools of this research. The concept of comparative Literature in the same language and history is the focus element source for this research. The importance of the American dream that becomes a fundamental thing of issue American society since post WWI.

### **1.4. The Research Questions**

The research will answer this following question:

- 1) How does Arthur Miller at *Death of a Salesman*, Kaufman and Hart in *You Can't Take It With You* to represent the American Dream in their plays?

- 2) How are American people represented in of *Death of A Salesman* and *You Can't Take It With You* deal with their own perspective on the American Dream?

### 1.5. The Objective of the Research

I have divided the objective of the research into two points. First, I will analyze the representation of the American ideology dream between the two plays. Second, I want to examine the behavior of American people who deals with their perspective of the American Dream. After analyzing these two points, I will find out the true meaning of the American Dream based on two perspectives of both plays.

### 1.6. Review of Related Studies

In order to do legitimate research, reviewing the preview studies is necessary. It can be shown that this research is not imitating another research which has already existed before and supporting my idea also. I found some studies which relate to the topic.

The article in Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences written by Esin Kumlu entitled *Building a Bridge between Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature*, which concerning the term of American Dream that reflected in American play Miller's *Death of A Salesman* and Albee's *The American Dream*. The article compares both plays the American Dream, which influenced the history of American the world. Although both plays tell about the pessimistic family, which leads into intrinsic elements, however, the author of the article concerning the extrinsic element, which is the development of culture in America since the concept of American dream spread over in America. I argue that by comparing both plays which have similar conflicts and situation can help people to explain the traumas of the modern world from a different perspective.

The article in the International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature entitled *The Concept of Blindness in Sophocles' King Oedipus and Arthur Miller's Death of a*

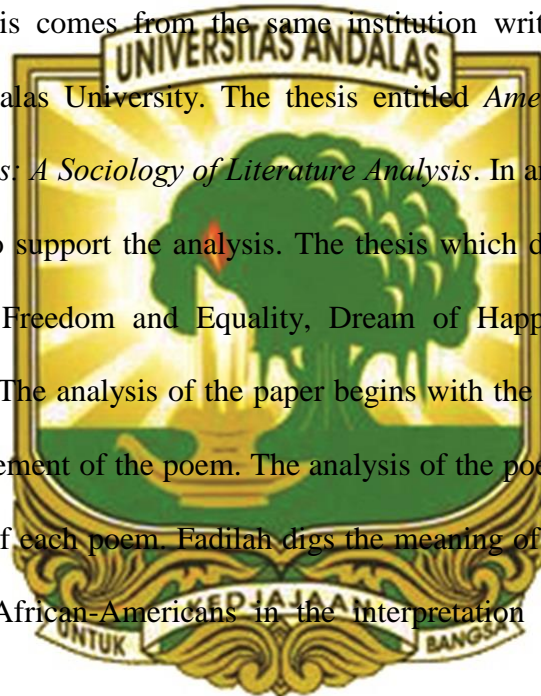
Salesman, written by Md. Ziaul Haque and Fahmida Kabir Chowdhury. Both of the authors are Bangladesh. The imaginary blindness is the reason to be the subject's perspective of the authors to see the conflicts. Both of these characters are the leader in both plays. The article focused on the American dream's conception, where the authors are comparing the similar conflict between Willy Loman and King Oedipus. The articles elaborate on the meaning of being blind to both characters. Both of the characters are in 'blind' even they can see things. The term 'blind' refers to the effect of being the stress and avoid a thing, which can resist them as the subject both characters in order to search their dreams of happiness.

American dreams in perspective of Chinese immigrant or mixed Chinese-American whose seems unaffected for their wish. The article entitled *Conceptions of the American Dream*, which is consolidating in Inquiries Journal that is written by Olivia A. Murphy. In this article, Olivia defined the term of the American dream, which is not suitable for the person who is coming from a foreign country. The author observed the material of the novel *Bone*, which is informed about the life of Chinese immigrants in the United States, where they are searching for the meaning American Dream. The author of the novel is Chinese-American named Fae Myenne Ng. The article concludes that the character, which involves along with the story by demanding the meaning of the American dream for his effort to claims their career in America. The result can be seen as the failure since the different statuses over the American and also the different cultures, which is the main reason to reach the American Dream. The term American dream does not require mostly, besides referring to the American of Immigrant. However, the central conflict is attainable towards the dream.

The thesis of Undergraduate student of English Student at Andalas University, which entitled *The Great Depression of American Society in the 1930s As Reflected in George S. Kaufman's Play You Can't Take It With You*, the thesis is written by Rudy Sukmaiza. The thesis focuses on the Great Depression of American, which affected the people of America in

the 1930s. The thesis is elaborated on the focus of the research into three-part. The term of Unemployment, then Materialism and ended with the term of struggling lower class people. In analyzing the research, Rudy uses the Sociology of Literature, which refers to Alan Swingewood. The portrayal of American society in the 1930s during the depression era has been influenced the playwright George S. Kaufman in creating the situation in a contradicted rather than a real situation. Thus, the analysis of the thesis is bordered by refers just into a single play. The thesis is in lack of material to elaborate; it would better to compare the same situation or different situation in one original research.

The second thesis comes from the same institution written by Fadilah. He is an English Student at Andalas University. The thesis entitled *American Dream in Langston Hughes's Selected Poems: A Sociology of Literature Analysis*. In analyzing the paper, Fadilah uses H.A Taine's idea to support the analysis. The thesis which detailed the term into three categorized, Dream of Freedom and Equality, Dream of Happiness, and the Dream of Prosperity and Success. The analysis of the paper begins with the extrinsic analysis and then moves to the intrinsic element of the poem. The analysis of the poem focuses on the meaning of the word in the line of each poem. Fadilah digs the meaning of the word through creating the research of black African-Americans in the interpretation words of Dream towards American.



### **1.7. The Theoretical Framework**

The reflection of real society in a specific time and place can be seen through literary works. As Abrams states in *The Mirror and The Lamp: Romantic Theory and The Critical Tradition* as follow

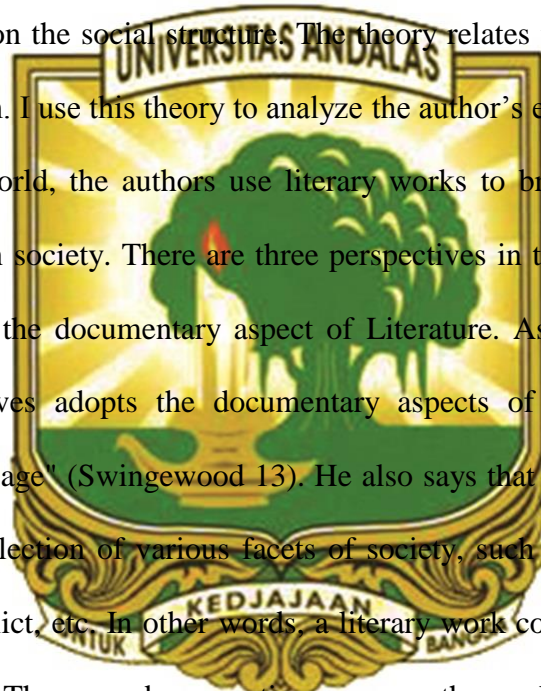
“But although in many later in mimetic theories everything is comprehended in two categories, the imitable and the imitation, the philosopher in the Platonic dialogues characteristically operates with three categories. The first category is that of the eternal and unchanging Ideas; the second, reflecting this, is the world of sense, natural or artificial; and the third category, in turn reflecting the

second, comprise such things as shadows, images in water and mirrors, and the fine arts.” (8)

I use the sociology of Literature proposed by Alan Swingewood in analyzing the research because the theory is suitable to analyze the problem that I found in both plays. Sociology is the study of society through literary works. Swingewood on *The Sociology of Literature* says "Sociology is essentially the scientific, objective study of the man in society, the study of social institutions and social processes; it seeks to answer the question of how society is possible, how it works, why it persists" (Swingewood 11). The theory explains that sociology is the study of society and the process whereby society changes from one type of society to another and the effects on the social structure. The theory relates to the research in terms of the object of the research. I use this theory to analyze the author's experience in the past.

In the literary world, the authors use literary works to bring her/his idea to reflect various aspects of life in society. There are three perspectives in the sociology of Literature. The first perspective is the documentary aspect of Literature. As Swingewood states, "the most popular perspective adopts the documentary aspects of literature arguing that it provides a mirror to the age" (Swingewood 13). He also says that the documentary aspect of Literature is a direct reflection of various facets of society, such as social structure, family relationships, class conflict, etc. In other words, a literary work concerns with various social problems in human life. The second perspective concerns the work of Literature itself to the production side, and especially to the social situation of the writer (17). It means that the writer and their literary work are related to each other. The third perspective is concerning with the reception of a particular society toward the literary works. Swingewood says, "One demanding a high-level skills, attempt to trace how a particular society receives a work of literature at a specific historical moment" (Swingewood 21).

From the perspective written above, I will use the first perspective, which is concerning social problems and documentary aspects of Literature. The documentary aspect



of Literature in both plays *Death of a Salesman* and *You Can't Take It With You* to have similar aspects that reflecting American people, especially in the middle class worshipped the American dream is a real goal to reach a successful life. The American dream worship and the struggling from Depression have been directed to reflect in the two plays. The reflection can be seen through the fictional character of both plays without tracing the life of the authors.

*Comparative Literature* has many definitions and a range of analysis. It depends on the scholars. Dass (2000) gives a brief explanation about comparative Literature as follows "The simple way to define Comparative Literature is to say that it is a comparison between the two works of Literature. Comparative literature analyses the similarities and dissimilarities and parallels between two works of Literature." (Dass 21).

In analyzing the term of the American dream, which is comparing the two literary works coming from the same country and ideology, Matthew Arnold believes that everywhere there is connection. He says, "Everywhere there is a connection, everywhere there is an illustration. No single event, no single literature is adequately comprehended except concerning other events, to other works of Literature." (Bassnett 1)

D'Haen concludes the former idea in referring to analyzes the work which coming from the same field, "There is scarcely any valid kind of criticism that is not based upon comparison: comparison between authors in the same field, comparison with earlier work of the same author, comparison with "standards" which are themselves the result of comparison..."(D'Haen: 2012). I nearly focused on the statement comparison between the authors in the same field, due to my research is concerning on comparing the two plays which come from the same field and the same nations.

### **1.8. Method of the Research**

In conducting this research, I will apply the library research. Elmer E. Rasmuson Library explains the library research,

“Library research involves the step-by-step process used to gather information in order to write a paper, create a presentation, or complete a project. As you progress from one step to the next, it is commonly necessary to back up, revise, add additional material, or even change your topic thoroughly. This will depend on what you discover during your research (Rasmuson, 2016).

I will follow three steps. Those three steps are collecting data, analyzing the data, and presenting the data. In collecting data, I will take it from two sources, primary data and secondary data. The primary data are taken from two plays, *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller and *You Can't Take It With You* by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart. I focused on an extrinsic element to find out the representation of the American Dream's perspective by the authors, which represented in both plays. The secondary data are any information from related materials such as books, online journals, articles related to the topic that is available in the library, and the internet. In analyzing the data, I read both plays and other sources in depth. Then, I will identify both plays to find out the representation of the American dream. After that, I apply the theory of Sociology of Literature and Comparative Literature. In presenting the result of the analysis, I use the qualitative method. According to Hancock B., Windridge K., and Ockleford E in an online book titled *An Introduction to Qualitative*, “Qualitative research attempts to broaden and/or deepen our understanding of how things came to be the way they are in our social world” (2007) It proves the analysis by emerging arguments and opinion since the data are words, statements or paragraph and not in the form of number

