

**THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF THE AMERICAN DREAM
IN CAPITALIST SOCIETY AS SEEN IN
ARTHUR MILLER'S
DEATH OF A SALESMAN**



A Thesis

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By
FAJRI HIDAYAT
04 985 005

**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT-FACULTY OF LETTERS
ANDALAS UNIVERSITY
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ABSTRAK

Skripsi ini membahas dampak-dampak negatif American Dream di dalam sistem ekonomi kapitalis yang dianut oleh masyarakat Amerika dalam drama Death of a Salesman karya Arthur Miller yang diterbitkan pada tahun 1949. Penulis menemukan sejumlah permasalahan yang diakibatkan oleh konsep materialistis (American Dream) yang merupakan akar dari kehidupan masyarakat Amerika. Dalam kasus ini, masyarakat kelas bawah merupakan korban yang paling menderita akibat sistem ekonomi kapitalis.

Dalam penelitian ini penulis menganalisa drama dengan menggunakan pendekatan Mimetik yang memandang karya sastra sebagai sebuah refleksi keadaan sosial pada saat karya itu diciptakan. Kemudian, penulis juga menggunakan teori Marxisme untuk melihat dan mengungkap konflik antar kelas sosial, permasalahan kaum kelas bawah, dan dampak-dampak kapitalisme di dalam karya. Di samping itu, penulis juga dibantu dengan pendekatan sosiologi dalam menganalisa permasalahan sosial yang terjadi di dalamnya. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif yang menganalisa data-data yang berkaitan dengan permasalahan sosio-ekonomi di dalam karya. Kemudian, dalam melaporkan analisisnya, penulis menggunakan metode deskriptif.

Setelah menganalisa drama ini, penulis menyimpulkan bahwa American Dream dalam masyarakat dapat mengancam ketentraman hidup masyarakat yang ada di dalamnya, terutama bagi masyarakat kelas bawah yang gagal meraih impian tersebut. Dapat dilihat bahwa ide ataupun konsep pemikiran materialistis dalam American Dream tersebut menyebabkan konflik-konflik sosial seperti kecemburuan sosial, ketidakharmonisan dalam keluarga, penolakan sosial, alienasi, dan sebagainya yang berujung pada aksi bunuh diri yang dilakukan oleh Willy Loman. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa American Dream sebagai ideologi pendukung bagi kelangsungan sistem kapitalis dalam masyarakat Amerika membawa dampak negatif bagi masyarakat kelas bawah dalam drama ini.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Background of the Research

Ashabraner states that American Dream is a popular idea during the nineteenth century when millions of people immigrated to America in search of better life. They came to the "New World" for economic reasons and better life in the future as well. They saw United States as a new land of opportunity. They believed it could offer them jobs, lands, homes, and educations (Ashabraner 12; 1983). It is about the dream to be sure to have valuable possessions. In addition, it purposes to have a high standard to their life in the new world. It is a kind of materialistic idea.

As we know, United States is the greatest country around the world. There are so many hard competitions in the society. It is caused by the dream above. Actually American Dream is a good idea that makes United States becomes the greatest country around the world. The dream will present a competitive life in the society. Then, it demands people to do the best. When every people do the best, it will create the best result for the society. Then, this materialistic concept brings them into the capitalist system since the coming of "laissez-faire" doctrine. Conte and Karr explain that this doctrine is asking for the freedom system in running business in America. The government are not allowed to interference in the economic sector too much (Conte and Karr 33; n.d). This system opens many chances for the Americans to get jobs. Then, the business sector grows in big strides.

However, as the consequence, capitalist system opens the chance for the deviations in the application. Harry Shutt, in his book Runtuhnya Kapitalisme (translated by Hikmat Gumilar), states that in the application, capitalism triggers the deviation and the corruption (Shutt 43; 2005). He sees capitalism as a system that is looking for private benefit only. There is no public benefit. It will create the inequality in the society, because the Capitalists possess the economic sector too much.

Marx describes America as a country which applies Capitalism in their economic system as well. It can motivate people to do the best to be the best. But sometimes there are some negative impacts that damage stability of the social condition. The impacts can be seen through American literary works. Among them, it is Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman. There are socioeconomic problems that affect the social condition in the play. Tindall, in his book: America: A Narrative History Brief Second Edition, explains that many of the best novels and plays of the post-war period reinforced the image of modern American society as a "lonely crowd" of individuals and also as the critics of the social conditions (Tindall 825-28; 1989). Therefore, it is clear that the Death of a Salesman can be seen as the reflection of the Post-World War II condition in America.

Death of a Salesman tells about a sixty years old salesman (Willy Loman) who has many problems in social life. The problems are caused by the over estimation of American Dream idea in Willy's mind. During his life, Willy spent his time to struggle as a salesman in order to fulfill his dream to be a rich and respectable person. Unfortunately, his desire never becomes reality and brings him into socioeconomic problems. In his perspective, a person who has good job and much money is the success one. The real

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

After analyzing Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman, the writer finds some negative impacts of the American Dream in the Capitalist society. Here, American Dream supports the capitalist system. American Dream is good for the capitalist system, but it sacrifices the people who cannot achieve it. The negative impacts can be seen through the main character's social life in the play. The American Dream brings the American into the materialistic concept of thinking. Then, it brings them into the Capitalism after the coming of the "laissez-faire" doctrine. American Dream can be a nightmare if people cannot achieve and control this idea carefully as seen in Willy's character. The first negative impact is the social problems in the lower class. The social problems are caused by the failure of Willy in achieving the dream and the over estimation of American Dream ideology. There are three forms of the problem that appear in the play. They are; social jealousy in a friendship, the inharmonious relationship between father and son (Willy and Biff), and the social ignorance: the absence of people in Willy's funeral.

The social jealousy is caused by the failure of achieving the American Dream and the wrong perspective of the main character (Willy) about the dream. Willy wants to get the high appreciation from the society by showing his existence. Social jealousy is a problem that can bother the freshness of the social condition. Then, the next is the inharmonious relationship between father and son (Willy and Biff). It is caused by the different perspective between Willy and Biff in seeing the success. Meanwhile, the social

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