

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the basis for the study topic to express the problem. An in-depth exploration will be conducted to find details of the objectives and methods used in this study. This chapter provides an outline of the study focus, including the background, research question, objectives, significance, and limitations.

1.1 Background of the Study

Alienation became a common problem after World War II that affected the cultural patterns of American society in the 20th century. This post-war impact resulted in modernisation and urbanisation supported by technological advances and rapid economic growth. In line with this, Fang (2023, p. 87) states that after World War II, America became more advanced, and modern as well as a booming economy, but these conditions resulted in people feeling alienated for the sake of material pursuits rather than socialising. When relationships between people become materialised, they are limited to reciprocal interactions. The collapse of close social attachments causes emotional connections between individuals to break down and lose their identity (Soomro et al., 2022, p. 533). Modernity does offer progress, freedom, and great economic opportunities. However, on the other hand, modernity also creates social pressures that encourage feelings of alienation for individuals who find it difficult to adapt to a high-speed society. This means that although modernity provides freedom for individuals, it undermines traditional values that give a sense of attachment and security (Alwuraafi 2021, p. 3).

The concept of social alienation often appears in 20th-century literary works, where it describes the struggles of individuals who are alienated from themselves and society. Through a socio-psychological perspective, the concept of social alienation would be relevant to explore the issue of disconnection in modern literature. As explained by Islam (2019, p. 90), the concept of social alienation that is often depicted in literature is based on Seeman's perspective, including powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement. Seeman's theory of alienation provides a tool to understand why and how

individuals experience alienation and its impact on social relationships. Lundmark (2021, p. 12) revealed that social alienation theory can provide an interpretation of the causes of disconnection between individuals and themselves and their environment. Therefore, the focus of social alienation theory is to provide results on how feelings of alienation are caused by the misalignment between the desire for freedom and social pressure.

Alienation is not only caused by capitalism, but also by social and psychological pressures that make individuals feel disconnected from themselves and others. As society becomes more individualistic and fast-paced, people often lose emotional connection and struggle to find meaning in daily life. This condition is not just tied to economic systems, but also to the weakening of social values and human relationships. Seeman's theory (1959) explains five forms of social alienation: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement. These forms help describe how people feel detached from their surroundings and themselves. In many literary works, especially from the 20th century, these experiences appear in characters who seem unsure of their place in the world. Holly Golightly in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* is one example. Her desire to stay free while facing social expectations causes emotional distance. Alienation is a state of feeling excluded from self, others, and society, which leads to helplessness and lack of direction (Seeman, 1959, p. 784). It often comes from injustice in social structures, especially those affecting women and minority groups. Holly's story shows how social pressure can separate a person from community and identity, even while she keeps searching for freedom. This idea aligns with Shaaban (2021, p. 47), who discusses how modern life can weaken the bond between individuals and society.

This study chooses Truman Capote's novella *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, which is set in New York City during the 1950s, an era shaped by urban transformation, individualistic lifestyles, and rising identity struggles. While the story takes place in a lively post-war city filled with glamour and change, the novella focuses more on Holly Golightly's personal journey, her feelings of being out of place and her struggle to understand who she really is. Using Seeman's theory of social alienation, this study explores five forms of alienation that Holly experienced,

including feeling powerless in shaping her life, struggling to find meaning, rejecting social rules, drifting away from others, and losing connection with herself. All these experiences show how Holly's search for identity takes shape while dealing with the challenges and confusion of city life in a changing era.

The novella *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1958) by Truman Capote tells the story of Holly Golightly, a young woman who realises the complexities of modern femininity and searches for self amidst the glitter of New York City. Although Holly lives a life of luxury and frequents the Tiffany & Co. jewellery store, she feels alienated in the hustle and bustle of city life, where she feels calm and safe when she visits the store. Holly struggles with her inner conflict of solitude and tries to find herself through love and recognition from wealthy men to gain individual freedom. This issue becomes the main theme of *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, where Capote sows the love and hopes of New York City into Holly's self-discovery despite being surrounded by people while following the movement of New York society rather than true happiness.

Truman Capote, author of *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1958), is recognised as an influential American novelist, playwright and actor of the 20th century. His acclaimed works of stories, novels, and plays have been adapted into more than 20 films and shows, including the novella *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1958) and *In Cold Blood* (1966). Combining profound character illustrations and elegant prose, he also frequently writes works that explore themes such as identity, alienation, human relationships, and maturity in life. Through *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, Capote explores the complexities of Holly's struggle with alienation. He also shows his views on society and how people search for meaning in life. *Breakfast at Tiffany's* is one of Capote's most iconic works. It is still regarded as one of his best works, showing his prowess in writing about human feelings and depicting the colourful and unconventional nuances of life.

This study examines alienation in the character Holly in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* by Truman Capote. This study focuses on what forms of alienation Holly experiences based on Seeman's (1959) conceptualisation of social alienation. *Breakfast at Tiffany's* reveals that there are five forms of social alienation, namely powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement.

This study also explores how Holly's character overcomes her alienation based on the utterances presented by the author using Rachel Jaeggi's (2014) appropriation theory. By analysing Holly's self-appropriation efforts and interactions with her environment, this study aims to reveal the process by which Holly's alienation is portrayed and overcome through the novel's narrative.

Taking inspiration from several previous studies, there are four that are particularly relevant to this research. The first is by Ngore et al. (2022), which examined the alienation of the main character in *The Other Hand* within the socio-political context of England using Seeman's theory of alienation. In contrast, the current study explores the alienation of the main character in the novella *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, which is set in post-World War II America, and adopts a dual theoretical framework by combining Seeman's conceptualisation of alienation with Jaeggi's theory of appropriation.

The second previous study by Gledic (2020) examined the differences in the main character's figure in the concepts of otherness, mimicry, and colonial desire in the novella *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. Although the main character's alienation was analysed with a postcolonial framework, her theoretical approach did not use Seeman's alienation theory and Jaeggi's appropriation to address alienation. Meanwhile, the current study uses alienation and appropriation theories in analysing the main character in the novella *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.

The third previous study by Bobak, H & Bobak, M. analyse interaction, turn-taking, and maxim violation in the novella *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. The theories adopted in this third prior study are Paul Grice's cooperative principle theory (1975) and Geoffrey Leech's politeness principle theory (1983) to analyse the interaction between characters. On the other hand, the present study analyses the main character's alienation from the same novella; however, it adopts alienation theory and appropriation theory to overcome his alienation.

The fourth previous study by Islam (2019) examines alienation in Tagore's *Banshi* poem based on Seeman's alienation theory with a qualitative method. Islam's analysis addressed the structure and stylistics of post-World War II Indian poetry. Meanwhile, the present study uses a novella whose social context is post-World War II America instead of poetry, and combines Seeman's alienation theory with

Jaeggi's appropriation to analyse the main character's alienation in the novella.

The fifth previous study discusses the alienation of three main characters in 19th-century Victorian sensation fiction novels, including *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) by M.E. Braddon, *Basil* (1852) by Wilkie Collins, and *East Lynne* (1861) by Mrs Henry Wood. Qian's research only used Jaeggi's alienation theory to analyse alienation and went on to identify the alienation using Jaeggi's main criteria of appropriation. In contrast, the current study analyses the alienation of the main character of the novella *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, which is set in the 20th century, and combines Seeman's alienation theory with Jaeggi's appropriation for analysis.

Based on the review of previous studies, three of them analysed alienation by adopting the same alienation theory as the current study, and two of them used the same data source. Unlike the five previous studies above, the current study combines Seeman's alienation theory to explore the alienation of the main character with Jaeggi's appropriation theory to overcome the alienation. This new approach, which has never been applied in American literature, makes the study of Holly Golightly's Alienation in Capote's *Breakfast at Tiffany's* important.

1.2 Research Questions

To fill the gap based on the background of the study and the use of the issue of social alienation, there are two research questions in this study, as follows:

1. What types of alienation does Holly Golightly experience in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* based on Seeman's theory?
2. How does Holly overcome her alienation as portrayed in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study related to the first research question and the second research question are the following:

1. To analyse the five types of alienation experienced by the main character, Holly Golightly, based on *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.
2. To explore how Holly Golightly tries to overcome her alienation using Jaeggi's idea of appropriation.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research provides two contributions that the author hopes to make,

specifically theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this study is expected to expand the understanding that alienation does not only occur from work or the capitalist system, but can also occur in the social environment. This research expands insights into how the relationship between self and others, social structures, and cultural expectations can affect the occurrence of a person's alienation experience.

Practically, the results of this study are expected to expand readers' knowledge about the social alienation experienced by the main character in the novella *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. This study also encourages readers' awareness of the often-unconscious phenomenon of social alienation, as well as the forms of alienation that occur in the living environment. In addition, this study understands how individuals deal with alienated conditions through the appropriation process. That way, readers can better understand the phenomenon of social alienation that occurs around them and regulate their mindset to create genuine and meaningful relationships.

1.5 Scope and Limitations

The scope of this research is the theory used, namely the theory of social alienation according to Seeman (1959). Social alienation theory is used to analyse what forms of alienation are experienced by the main character caused by modernisation. Then, appropriation theory by Rahel Jaeggi (2014) is used to analyse how the main character overcomes her alienation as portrayed in the novella *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. Lastly, the limitations of this study only focus on the character's utterance and the author's narration in the novella *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.