CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the general description of the paper. It consists of the research background, statement of the problem, research objective, research significance, previous study, and definition of key terms.

1.1 Research Background

Film combines various elements such as moving images, sound, and narration into a cohesive medium. Film can express stories and influence the audience's emotions and perceptions. Films are entertainment mediums that blend storylines, visual imagery, and audio within an artistic framework. These three elements are present in all aspects of filmmaking, which is why films are often utilized as educational tools. (Palapah & Syamsudin, 1983). Through the use of visual composition, stunning cinematography, appropriate music, and compelling screenplay writing, films can provide a profound and captivating experience for viewers. Films can be interpreted as a form of artistic expression, conveying ideas and narrative concepts, as well as functioning as a tool for conveying various messages to the general public through storytelling.

In the contemporary world, film has evolved into one of the most influential cultural products. Beyond entertainment, it serves as a medium for social commentary, philosophical inquiry, and psychological exploration. Films allow audiences to confront themes of morality, identity, justice, love, suffering, and existential dread all within the confines of a narrative structure. With their ability to simulate real-life emotions and scenarios, films have become essential in examining human behavior, including the psychological dimensions of characters.

In literary studies, films are often analyzed through the lens of narrative structures, character development, and thematic exploration. Although films differ in form from literature, their shared storytelling nature provides a common ground for analysis. As Klarer (2004, p. 56) explains, both literature and film are performative arts that portray character and narrative through time-based structures, albeit through different media—words versus images and sound. Films often mirror literary techniques in characterization, dialogue, conflict, and dramatic arcs, thus making them suitable for literary-based interpretation.

In terms of structure, films frequently follow classical narrative patterns: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. These elements are not only used to move the plot forward but also to develop characters in a way that invites audience empathy or criticism. According to Pratista (2008), every film is composed of two fundamental elements: narrative and cinematic. The narrative element includes plot, character, setting, and conflict, while the cinematic element involves mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing, and sound. The integration of these elements results in a holistic storytelling experience.

The narrative elements serve as the foundation for understanding various aspects of the film. The narrative element is contained in the film script as a written narrative, as a means of telling stories through dialogue between characters. (Sudarisman, 2019). The narrative elements are often structured in a three-act pattern: Exposition (establishing characters, setting, and story), middle (building conflict and reaching the climax), and resolution. On the other hand, the cinematic element refers to how the film is visually crafted and presented. It encompasses the technical aspects of filmmaking and adheres to the principles and techniques of cinema.

Characterization plays a central role in both literary and cinematic storytelling. In films, characters are not only constructed through dialogue and action, but also through visual cues such as facial expressions, body language, costume, lighting, and spatial framing. As Aminuddin (2013)

notes, characterization is a vital aspect of plot development, as it reveals a character's motivations, values, fears, and transformation over time. Character development in film often mirrors real-life emotional processes, thereby allowing audiences to witness and internalize the character's journey.

One of the most compelling methods for deep character exploration is through the framework of tragedy. A tragic narrative focuses on the downfall of a character who is fundamentally good but flawed, often driven by internal conflicts or moral dilemmas. According to Aristotle's Poetics, a tragedy must feature a tragic hero—someone of noble character who experiences a downfall as a result of a tragic flaw (hamartia), excessive pride (hubris), a reversal of fortune (peripeteia), recognition (anagnorisis), punishment (nemesis), and emotional purging (catharsis). This structure allows for a profound emotional engagement and moral reflection on the human condition.

In the film, tragedy is used to create a narrative that evokes emotions and provides profound reflections on the human condition. One of the important elements that distinguish tragedy is the presence of tragic characters. According to Aristo, a tragedy must feature a tragic hero: "a leader in his society who mistakenly brings about his downfall because of some errors in judgment or innate flaw" (Sophocles, 1956). Tragic characters serve as the focal point of the narrative, and their journey becomes the focus of the story. Tragic characters often face challenging situations and navigate a series of events that lead to their downfall or a sorrowful ending. From this perspective, tragedy is a form of drama that tells a somber story. These characters are confronted with internal and external conflicts that put them against their desires, societal expectations, or even fate itself.

Tragedy in film serves to humanize abstract philosophical questions. Tragic characters are typically constructed with psychological depth, illustrating the tension between desire, duty, morality, and fate.

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These characters evoke empathy because their downfall often stems not from evil intent but from inherently human vulnerabilities. The audience is invited to reflect on their own decisions, fears, and limitations through the tragic character's journey.

Characterization in tragedy plays an important role in bringing narrative elements to life and conveying emotional depth. Tragic characters are built with deep complexity, showing ambitious, vulnerable, and often conflicting sides within them. Tragic characters not only represent human faults or weaknesses, but also become characters that reflect the inevitable contradictions and conflicts between individual wills, social demands, and destiny. These tragic characters evoke empathy and understanding from the audience, as they often struggle with devastating internal and external conflicts and are forced to face the inevitable consequences of their choices. With strong characterization, tragedy in film provides an opportunity for the audience to reflect on human ignorance, weaknesses, and limitations, as well as confront a complex and unavoidable reality.

One such film that deeply explores characterization through the lens of tragedy is David Fincher's Se7en (1995). Set in a bleak, unnamed city plagued by moral decay, the film follows two detectives—William Somerset and David Mills—as they investigate a series of gruesome murders inspired by the seven deadly sins. The younger detective, David Mills, serves as the emotional and narrative center of the film. Initially portrayed as idealistic and determined to make a difference, Mills gradually becomes emotionally destabilized as he confronts the sadistic logic of the serial killer, John Doe.

The character of David Mills undergoes a tragic transformation that aligns with classical notions of a tragic hero. His commitment to justice, while noble, is undermined by impulsiveness, pride, and emotional vulnerability—traits that are manipulated by John Doe. As the film progresses, Mills' belief in justice is tested and ultimately shattered, culminating in a moment of devastating recognition and irreversible loss.

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His downfall is not only external (the loss of his wife and unborn child) but also internal, as he loses faith in humanity and himself.

David Mills is assigned to investigate a series of murders committed by a genius and sadistic serial killer. This killer follows the motif of the seven deadly sins from the Bible: greed, wrath, sloth, pride, lust, envy, and gluttony. The character of Mills develops throughout the film, starting as an enthusiastic police officer and transforming into someone who is deeply affected by the cruelty that exists in the world. He is confronted with difficult choices and must face the consequences of his actions.

The tragedy begins when David Mills encounters a clever and manipulative serial killer who tests David Mills' integrity and beliefs in the justice system. This character undergoes a significant change and must confront difficult moral choices. Throughout the investigation, David Mills becomes engaged in a psychological game with the mysterious serial killer. He becomes increasingly obsessed and disturbed by his task of catching the killer. Gradually, David Mills becomes trapped in despair and frustration as he feels unable to stop the crimes from occurring

David Mills becomes a victim of the ambitions of the serial killer, who seeks to test the strength of his beliefs and integrity. The difficult choices that David Mills must make lead to a bitter realization of the destruction and corruption present in the world. As a tragic character, David Mills becomes trapped in the inevitable moral paradox. He desires to do good and eradicate evil but is ensnared in the cruelty he opposes. The changes that occur in David Mills throughout the story are a tragic journey depicting his fall from conviction to doubt and suffering.

Film *Se7en* attracted the researcher's attention to be the object of research by revealing the tragic character represented by the main character, David Mills. In this film, David Mills exhibits complex characterization. Initially, he is depicted as a detective dedicated to eradicating crime. However, as the story unfolds, his character undergoes

significant changes, confronting injustice and cruelty that shake his principles. Additionally, the film portrays the tragic journey of David Mills. He becomes involved in the investigation of a horrifying and sadistic serial murder case. This journey leads Mills into despair and suffering, testing his humanity and his belief in justice.

The reason for choosing David Mills as the object of research is due to the expertise of the director, the awards for the film, the complex characterization, and the exploration of the concept of a tragic character in a narrative context. David Fincher, a director known for his dark and atmospheric works, received wide acclaim and several nominations, including the Academy Award for Best Film Editing (1996) and the Golden Trailer Awards for Best of Decade (1999).

The film Se7en by Fincher received critical acclaim and became one of the best works in the psychological thriller genre. The complex characterization of David Mills, played brilliantly by Brad Pitt, allows for a deep dive into Mills' emotional and moral journey in the face of horrific crimes. An exemplary tragic character, Mills becomes entangled in a tragic game with a serial killer, whose own faults and weaknesses lead him to a tragic character.

This depth of characterization is what drew the researcher to analyze Mills as a tragic character. Fincher's Se7en provides not only a compelling narrative but also a rich psychological landscape for academic exploration. The film has received critical acclaim for its direction, script, and performances, including nominations for the Academy Awards and recognition in various film festivals. Its thematic complexity, coupled with its cinematic sophistication, makes Se7en an ideal subject for literary and cinematic analysis.

This research aims to uncover how the characterization of David Mills, when examined through M.J. Murphy's techniques of characterization and Aristotle's tragic theory, reveals a modern reimagining of the tragic hero. Through this lens, the study investigates how narrative

elements, cinematic techniques, and character development coalesce to portray a profound moral and emotional journey.

Thus, the researcher formulates the title:

"Tragic Character in David Mills in Se7en by David Fincher (1995)"

This study intends to explore the depth of David Mills' character transformation and how it reflects classical elements of tragedy in a contemporary cinematic context.

1.2 Statement of Problem

The main issue in this research is the characterization of the main character and the journey to becoming a tragic character in the *Se7en* film. Therefore, the researcher will elaborate in detail on how characterization and the character of David Mills undergo a tragic character. Thus, the question can be summarized into two questions. The research questions are:

1. How is David Mills' characterization portrayed in the film *Se7en*?
2. How can David Mills be classified as a tragic character in the film *Se7en* by David Fincher?

1.3 Research Objective

In this research, analysis of the characterization and tragic character of the main character in the film *Se7en* has several purposes, namely:

1. To find out the characterizations of the main character that appears in *Se7en* by David Fincher (1995).
2. To find out David Mills' character can be classified as a tragic character in the film *Se7en* by David Fincher (1995).

1.4 Research Significance

1.4.1 Theoretically

This research is expected to contribute to readers who will study narrative elements in films, especially characters, characterizations, and tragic characters. This research enriches the theoretical understanding of characterization and tragic

characters for reference to similar research. This research is also expected to inspire researchers who will conduct research related to narrative elements in films. Then, they can apply some of the same theories in their research.

1.4.2 Practically

This research is expected to provide relevant contributions for researchers in the application of film analysis methodology to study the characterization and tragic elements in a film. This research is also expected to provide practical applications and insights that can enrich the understanding of tragic characterization and storytelling in the context of the film.

1.5 Previous Studies

To facilitate the research process in this study, researchers also present some previous research from several sources. This previous research is used to help researchers understand what will be researched because there are many theories related to this research. These previous studies have different problems and research questions to compare and adjust which research is related to this research. These sources are in the form of theses and journal articles. Previous research becomes a reference for researchers in research with topics that are similar to this research.

The first study related to this topic is a journal article entitled Tragedy and Tragic Hero in Ibsen's Enemy of the People by Fitriana Amalia Hafizah (2018) from Yogyakarta State University. This article delves into Henrik Ibsen's play, "Enemy of the People," analyzing the tragic elements and the tragic hero's characterization. The study aims to identify the characteristics that make the protagonist a tragic hero and explore the moral and societal dilemmas faced by the character. This article has similarities in the selected topic, namely the characteristics that make the main character a tragic hero, but with different objects. The theory used is a structuralist approach and a combination of drama and tragedy theory to analyze the play.

The second related study is a thesis entitled Severus Snape as The

Tragic Hero in Harry Potter Series by J.K. Rowling by Rosa Virginia Dhyinta Pratama Putri (2019) from Sanata Dharma University of Yogyakarta. This article examines the character of Severus Snape from J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, considering Snape's portrayal as a tragic hero. The study explores Snape's complex personality, his motivations, and the internal conflicts that lead to his tragic fate. This paper has similarities in the selected topic, which discusses how the character aligns with traditional tragic hero characteristics. This paper applies the structuralism approach and theory of tragedy and tragic hero.

The third related study is a journal entitled *Representasi Kepustakawanan dalam Film Se7en (1995)* by Achmad Fahmi from the University of Indonesia. This paper has similarities in the selected object, namely the Se7en film, but with different topics. This study discusses the representation of the functions and values of librarianship in the film Se7en. The process of data analysis in this film uses Roland Barthez`s semiotic method. This study aims to identify how the role of the library, the role of the librarian, the position of users, and the value of the information used are raised in the film's story.

The similarity of this research with previous research is the selection of topics related to the characteristics that make the main character a tragic hero and the chosen object namely the film Se7en. The difference between this study with previous research is in the chosen theory, because previous research used structuralism and semiotic theories, while this research focuses more on narrative elements so it uses characterization theory and combines it with tragic hero theory. This study discusses the characterization of the main character and his journey to becoming a tragic character.

The topics discussed in previous research are tragedy, tragic heroes, and the representation of the functions and values of librarianship in films. In this study, the researcher will focus more on narrative elements in the Se7en film because of the

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complex characterization of the main character and the journey that makes him a tragic character. Therefore, the researcher chose this object and topic that have never been studied before, especially in terms of characterization and tragic characters. In addition, researchers will focus more on discussing narrative elements, not structuralism and semiotic elements as in previous studies.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

    a. Characterization: According to Wayne C. Booth: Characterization is the process of assigning attributes and traits to characters in a narrative to create a sense of life and realism in fiction. This involves expressing the characters' uniqueness through actions, speech, thoughts, and interactions with other characters.

    b. Tragic Character: According to Aristotle, a Tragic Character is a protagonist who has noble qualities and extraordinary achievements, but ultimately faces destruction or a tragic fate. They are often affected by tragic weaknesses or fatal flaws in their character.

    c. Tragedy: Aristotle defines tragedy as a literary form that explores the suffering and breakdown of a noble hero. Tragedy has an ordered structure and involves the hero trying to achieve his goal, only to be faced with failure and breakdown due to tragic weakness or fatal error.