

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study

When humans were born, there is something powerful yet unknown that leads people to do something ‘important’ in the journey of their life. This kind of drive becomes an energy that makes people believe they can get and achieve whatever they want if they try, whether they do it in a good way or bad way. Then, it is revealed that this kind of motive and energy is a drive that appears in human mind to get their success, portrayed on the anxiety state of human life. As it is explained by Cohen in his book, *The Science of Evil*, anxiety is a drive, it was been proposed that individuals who are characteristically anxious and tense must ordinarily experience bigger drive level called ambition (300). This also explains why people seem to have this invisible drive that comes out of their mind to get what they want. Furthermore, this kind of energy is found to be an ambition that leads people to do something or react to the environment treatment that will determine what someone will be on the future.

This kind of ambition also occurs in *The Prestige*. It is an English fiction novel written in 1995 that might capture the phenomenon related to our society nowadays. Ambition is one of the reasons why people keep their courage and spirit to make their life better. Also, ambition is an important thing that leads to many inventions in this world. Without ambition, it is impossible to reach what we already gain right now. Ambition always creates a path for a person’s success. However, for this reason, somehow, an ambition could turn into a bad action if it

is based on jealousy of other person success. This kind of wrong ambition can be found in *The Prestige* novel. As it is stated by Norman in his book *Psychology: The Fundamentals of Human*, indecision is also a barrier, especially when one is unable to choose between equally attractive or equally repelling alternatives (306). It is shown in the novel that the indecision comes from his mind but the ambition itself leads him back to do anything against his own desire.

This novel is written by Christopher Priest, an English science-fiction writer and novelist. He wrote several novels that also got prize and award among international writers. Priest, a British novelist was born in Manchester; he left school at 16 and became an accountant. He began to be a writer of science fiction with speculative novels such as *Indoctrinaire* (1970), *Fugue for a Darkening Island* (1972), *Inverted World* (1974), *A Dream of Wessex* (1977), *The Glamour* (1984), *The Quiet Woman* (1990) and so on. He has also written short stories, film scripts, and a book for children about film-making. For *The Prestige*, he received the James Tait Black Memorial prize for fiction and also World Fantasy Award in 1995

His novel is an interesting one, because of the plot that appears inside it, which is created from the diaries of both main characters. The novel also has been filmed with the same title, *The Prestige*, in 2006. It is starred by Hugh Jackman and Christian Bale, and produced by Christopher Nolan. The film also gets an award on Academy Award as nominations for Best Cinematography and Best Art Direction.

In this story, Priest tells about rivalry on two young magicians, that are Rupert Angier and Alfred Borden, in 19th century and ends with tragedy. The

rivalry comes onto these magicians since they first meet, and it becomes clearer when Borden makes mistake when they perform together with Angier's wife, Julia. As it happens, they have a bit discussion before they go to the stage, but Angier does not agree with Borden's idea to change the trick. Then, the accident happened. The accident happens when they perform a trick called Jacoby Rope Tie, a trick in which the performer tied on the chair and then dropped into a tank full of water. The performer has to release him/her before dropped into the water, then run away into the backstage, therefore when the curtain opens, the performer is not in the water but stand on the stage. In this case, Borden makes the tie with the different way so it is hard to pull off, which results Angier's wife dropped into the water and then died. Angier that points Borden as the suspect could not do anything to claim that Borden is the one that is guilty of his wife's death. Then, from this stage, the rivalry becomes more intense as each other tries to reveal and sabotage trick of their performance. For this reason, it is also stated by Roy F. Baumeister in his book *Meaning of Life* that suffering and unhappiness tend to be characterized by a loss or lack of meaning (232). The loss that is felt by Angier, in this case he loses his wife, leads his ambition to make revenge and also strengthens his ambition to become the greatest magician. He wants to prove that this accident does not decrease his spirit, but it boosts it up and makes him feels that Borden deserve to get a revenge for his mistake.

As Roberts explains in his book *Writing about Literature*, the character in literature generally, and in fiction specifically, is an extended verbal representation of a human being, the inner self that determines thought, speech and behavior (143). Actually, Angier and Borden still do the sabotage in such a normal way because they do not want to hurt each other. They just want to

embarrass and decrease the popularity of each other that increases as both of them are known as young talented magicians. The intrigue becomes shaped when Borden invents a new trick; called The Transported Man. Angier that cannot sabotage or reveal the trick becomes obsessed to find out how the trick works. Then after he gets several evidences and also does a harmful thing to Borden assistant, it becomes a nightmare for both of these magicians. It turns into a deathly game between them, which ends with the death of Angier and also Borden identical twins.

From this novel, the writer chooses to analyze the ambition that leads the action of Angier. Because Angier becomes obsessed with this new trick that is invented by Borden, he chases it with all the way he can do. The ambition that makes Angier do such a bad thing, actually, can be pointed to a better idea. As it is stated by Charles G. Morris in his book *Psychology: An Introduction* (Tenth Edition), a motive is an inner directing force—a specific want or need—that arouses the organism and directs its behavior toward a goal (346), the motive in this novel as it appears on one of the main characters' behavior is such an inner force to make his dream comes true and also to make his goal reached in his life.

There are parts of the texts which show that Angier has such a great ambition that controls all of his action and lead him toward his goal in the novel *The Prestige*: “When Mama speaks pessimistically of what is to become of me, I dare not tell her what I plan, but deep inside me I feel a knot of confidence that when I am eventually cast adrift from this half-life in Derbyshire I shall have I carrier to follow (Priest 161)”. The jealousy itself comes with the ambition that is buried deeply in Angier's psychology. Thus, the analysis of ambition is the main

point of this study, to seek how it works and influences the psychological condition of one of the main characters in the novel.

From brief explanation above, it is clear that the writer will focus on the ambition that occurs in Angier's life, precisely about how it influences his life and so on. The main interesting point here is the ambition itself. The writer chooses the ambition factor because nowadays, with the fast improvement on many sectors like technology, ideas and so on, ambition is the foundation to reach something. And the foundation itself is reflected on what people do to fulfill their ambition to get the goal. Many people turn in a wrong way to get their goal; this is because they have been controlled by their ambition to reach their goal. And this phenomenon is not strange anymore among people in this fast changing global world.

Ambition also becomes a drive that makes people walk through their path, no matter what will happen next. Then, the drive itself also combines the good effect and bad effect. Like what appears on one of the main characters' problem, to get his ambition he will do anything including bad things and anything. The main reason why ambition becomes the main point here is because an ambition can lead someone to be a good person or not, to be a successful person or not, or even to become nothing because of the ambition has controlled all thought and mindset itself. Therefore, it is important to know where we control or are being controlled by our ambition.

1.2. Statement of the Problems

1. How is Angier's ambition portrayed in this novel?
2. How does Angier deal with such ambition?

1.3. Objective of the Study

1. To know how the ambition portrayed in his life.
2. To find out Angier's action related to his ambition.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The writer of the thesis hopes that the readers' awareness of ambition will increase, so that they may not only get benefit in their life and careers but also avoid doing harmful to others. This issue also happens in the real life and it is expected to be reflection about how ambition is portrayed in the society. In addition, this study can give contribution towards the study of literature, especially in the English Department of Airlangga University. The writer also hopes that the study can give worthy information among all readers.

1.5. Scope and Limitation

The object of analysis is the work of Christopher Priest entitled *The Prestige*. Therefore, the writer limits this study by focusing on Angier's rivalry as the main character with Borden, and other characters that are related to the surrounding issues and work become the limitation of this analysis.

1.6. Theoretical Background

In order to focus on the main problem in this novel, which is the analysis of Angier's ambition, the writer decides to apply some literary theories and supporting approaches related to the main character condition. Therefore, the

theory that will be used is new criticism theory to analyze the main character. In new criticism theory, the writer using the intrinsic approach in objective theory by Abrams, so the writer will use elements in literary work such as plot, setting, and characterization. As it is stated in *The Mirror and the Lamp*:

The objective orientation which in principle regards the work of art in an isolation from all these external points of reference, analyze it as a self-sufficient entity constituted by its part in their internal relations, and sets out to judge it solely by criteria intrinsic to its own work of being (Abrams, 26)

By using this theory, we do not need to look at the outside of the work to get a clear understanding about the work. The writer thinks that this theory is appropriate because based on the new criticism theory, we can really pull out information that we need only from text, without any references to the work.

From this theory, the writer sees that the intense ambition that leads Angier become the “bad” man is his motive to become the greatest magician and also to seek revenge for his wife. Ambition is the desire for personal achievement. It provides the motivation and determination necessary to achieve goals in life. Ambitious people seek to be the best at what they choose to do for attainment, power, or superiority. Ambition can also be defined as the object of this effort. Ambition is a quality valued in leaders. One of the key traits of dark horse presidential candidates is ambition. They inspire others with their power, confidence, and energy. Such ambition that appears in this novel is a strong one, to be a great magician, and also to make revenge to his rival.

1.7. Method of the Study

Qualitative method is used to help the writer in completing this study. Data and information related to the issue and topic are compiled from books, reviews, critics and also from internet. The main media is the novel itself. The writer also tries to find any related information from particular books dealing with the literary theories and approaches that will be used in the analysis. For the subject of the study, the writer use descriptive analysis. Therefore, the analysis will occur in describing problems through dialogues, events, and actions of the story. Then, it will be clarified by the data that the writer has already collected in advance.

1.8. Definitions of Key Terms

Ambition : An eager or strong desire to achieve something, such as fame or power.

Depression : The condition of being depressed.

Magician : Someone who perform magic for entertainment.

Rivalry : The state or condition of being a rival.