

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Background of the Study

Quoting what is said by Walt Whitman that “in the civilization of today it is undeniable that, over all the arts, literature dominates, serves beyond all,” it means that literature has become part of human life. The term ‘literature’ itself is defined as “writing in which expression and form, in connection with ideas and concerns of universal and apparently permanent interest, are essential features” (Shaw 223). Based on this definition it can be inferred that any kinds of writings that have such criteria can be labeled as literary works. Generally, they are in the forms of prose, poetry, and play. But, nowadays with the development of technology, there are many more media in expressing literature, and one of them is film. Film is undoubtedly a result of modern technology, which uses visual media. For that reason, film is categorized as popular culture, as stated by Easthope in his book titled Literary into Cultural Studies. He explained that popular culture could be distinguished from high culture simply by looking at the media used. If it used great contemporary media-- such as radio, television, and film--, especially the visual one, then it tended to be labeled as popular culture (p. 76). Moreover, Easthope summarized that there is tendency to think that popular culture is always bad and high culture is good (p. 79). But nowadays, postmodern culture has made the split between the high culture and the popular culture fade away (p. 103). Film is part of human culture, so does literary

work. There is characteristic of literary work that can be seen in film since it also reveals literary elements such as characters, plot, and settings.

“Films are human achievements with extraordinary power to create comprehension of what it means to be human, in the form and imagery by which we otherwise also comprehend ourselves” (Gollin 184). From what has been said by Richard M. Gollin, it can be noticed that literature really dominates in human civilization these days. Since the discussion is about film, it also relates to the screenplay, which can be categorized as work of literature (regarding the definition of literature mentioned before). It can be comprehended that screenplay is similar to a play. Both of them are written as literary composition, but the difference is that a play is intended to be presented on a stage, whereas a screenplay is to be filmed.

Among many screenplays exist up to this day, the writer chooses Seven written by Kevin Andrew Walker to be analyzed. This screenplay is an interesting one. There is a comment that the writer finds in a review of Seven about this work which said that:

Seven was undeniably one of the most unnerving and unsettling films of all-time, a modern masterpiece that was as relevant this day as it had been at the time of its released. It was a film that is needed to be seen by everyone, everywhere. Few films had ever managed to tackle the notion of just how cruel people could be to each other and the world around them, and none had ever done that with as much style as Seven. (btinternet.com n. pag.)

For that reason, the writer tries to find out more about the work through its screenplay.

Derived from other review of Seven, it is known that the screenplay of Seven was written in 1994 and filmed in 1995. It was written by Kevin Andrew Walker, who had written several screenplays such as 8 MM and Sleepy Hollow (an adaptation from Irving's work). It had been nominated and won several awards. Its screenwriter had been the winner of Saturn Award in 1996 for best writing, whereas the screenplay itself had won the International Fantasy Film Awards at the same year (Racodepedralbes.com n. pag.).

The film itself gets many attentions from its audience. This fact can be noticed from many reviews made for this film through numbers of sites on the internet. From the comments given, it seems that Seven may not meet all people's pleasure, but it makes them aware of what the film is all about. Moreover, there is a remark, which stated that the film is more than merely telling about murders (Jackson n. pag.). Far beyond that there is something to be learned.

Seven tells about the condition of society in the modern era, in which its people do not care about each other and are busy with their own business. They do not pay attention whether others around them do crime or tricky things to gain their goal in order to live. As a matter of fact, there are too many evils happened everywhere in the city.

Such condition arouses different responses among the society. Most of them are ignorant. They considers evil as a common thing happened everywhere, but not

for John Doe. He has different reaction towards the situation. He fights against it in an extreme way. He wants to remind people of what they had become, that is a society that seems no longer believes in sins (Godawa n. pag.). He kills people based on religious doctrine 'Seven Deadly Sins,' and that is the reason why the film is entitled Seven.

As an addition, 'Seven Deadly Sins' are the terms that are familiar and can be found in the work of Dante Alighieri's The Divine Comedy (in the screenplay it is told that John Doe also uses this book as his inspiration in killing his victims). It consists of three parts: "Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso", which talk about hell, purgatory, and heaven. And, in Purgatorio, it was mentioned about 'seven deadly sins.' It is believed that people have to be purified from those seven sins so that they will be able to enter the heaven, and John Doe believes that. It inspires him to kill his victims.

By killing his victims, John Doe wants to teach people since he saw there were many bankrupt moralities happened in the society. What he does, of course, brings controversy. On one hand, he has a good intention to arouse people's awareness of what kind of world they live in. On the other hand, he has done evil things himself by taking someone else's life.

The condition of the society depicted in Seven describes the society in which we live now, the society in modern era with rationalism as its main characteristic. The development of science and technology, as the results of rationalism, do not only bring advantages in mankind's life, but also disasters. Modernity has become the

trigger of violence happened. Human has lost their human values so that violence considered as trivial problem happened everywhere. The person like John Doe is the one who tries to fix the nihilism experienced by mankind through his own way.

### **B. Statement of the Problems**

Regarding the title of the thesis, the writer formulates the problems as follows:

1. What makes John Doe uses religious doctrine 'Seven Deadly Sins' in killing his victims?
2. How does it represent the negative result of postmodern relativity of the society in the modern era?

### **C. Objective of the Study**

1. To find the reason why John Doe kills people using religious doctrine 'Seven Deadly Sins' as the reaction towards the condition of the society.
2. To give description about the negative result of postmodern relativity of the society in the modern era depicted through the actions done by John Doe.

### **D. Significance of the Study**

The importance of this study is mainly as a means for giving appraisal towards work of art, especially film that is considered as popular culture. "Movies extend our personal experience into places most of us never travel, dramatizing

events or ordeals most of us never confront or would wish to confront as ourselves, in worlds inhabited by people more fascinating or amusing than their counterparts in our own lives” (Gollin 20-21). Thus, film can give enlightenment or merely an entertainment. By giving appreciation, there are useful things for mankind life that can be gained.

Additionally, film allows people to enter other world (that is different from their own lives) where it shows conflicts, moral or psychological dilemmas that can be identified and resolved, the eventual purposes are revealed. “In films, as in novels and dramas, but not in life, ultimate reasons finally reveal themselves” (Gollin 22). Furthermore, it is hoped that this study can give contribution for the progress of literary study.

### **E. Scope and Limitation**

In analyzing Seven, the writer focuses on the screenplay as the main source. Since there are many versions of the screenplay that can be found, the writer chooses the one found in Hunland site. Nevertheless, since the screenplay has close connection with the film, the film cannot be neglected. Lyotard has explained the relation between the two media via Raman Selden and Peter Widdowson’s A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Literature Theory. “In *Discours, figure* (1971) he distinguished between the *seen*, the visual and three-dimensional (the ‘figural’), and the *read*, the textual and two-dimensional (the ‘discursive’).” Moreover, he stated that “the ‘figural’ and ‘discursive’ are not to be thought as sequential” and that “the

figural can appear within the discursive” (qdt. in Selden and Widdowson 182-184). Based on this explanation, it can be noticed that the film as the figural and the screenplay as the discursive are closely related. But, in this study the film only takes part as the reference since the reviews collected are based on the film.

Furthermore, regarding the objective of this study, the writer mainly focuses her analysis on the character of John Doe and his conducts without neglecting other characters in the screenplay. This writing will also give description about the condition of the society where John Doe lives, as the trigger of John Doe’s deeds.

As an addition, in this writing, it will discuss about the action done by John Doe in two points of view. First of all, the action will be observed through the philosophical point of view that is existentialism. Whereas, postmodern worldview will be the second point of view in examining the problem.

## **F. Theoretical Background**

The writer uses several theories in analyzing the screenplay. The theories are applied and supported by many reviews made by critics about the film and tries to combine and compose them into an analysis. As the main source in making this analysis, the writer uses articles written by Brian Godawa. He wrote about postmodern cinema. He believed that “behind the veil of every entertaining movie is a worldview or value system being communicated through story.” Thus, what is called postmodern cinema is film that conveys postmodern worldview. Furthermore,

he added that “existentialism that is the dominant influence on the values and worldviews portrayed in our postmodern cinema” (n. pag.).

Seven has also been discussed as one of postmodern film, and for that reason it is important to use existentialism theories in the analysis. And, the theories used are Nietzsche’s nihilism, Kierkegaard’s existentialism, and postmodernism. In this study, the intrinsic element, that is the setting is used in explaining the condition experienced by society in the modern era. The existentialism theory is applied to describe John Doe’s actions as the reaction towards the society. To support the analysis, the writer also includes some reviews on Seven in the related studies, due to the approaches used.

### **G. Method of the Study**

In collecting the data, the writer uses library research and internet online services. The writer tries to find many sources related to the study such as theoretical books, article on newspaper, and dictionary through the library research. Whereas, in finding the screenplay as the main source of the writing and several reviews on Seven, internet online services is used.

In analysing the screenplay, the writer applies eclectic method. This method is used inline with the approach employed. This method combines information, explanation, elucidation, and praise on a given work (Daiches 281). Thus, it collects many sources related to the work and processes them in order to make a coherent analysis.



## H. Definition of Key Terms

**Seven deadly sins** : Sins of gluttony, greed, sloth, envy, pride, wrath, and lust. Those sins as believed by the Christians as sins that can make their faith distract (qtd. in SevenSpacey2.com n.pag).

**Existentialism** : The doctrine that existence takes precedence over essence and holding that man is totally free and responsible for his acts. This responsibility is the source of dread and anguish that encompass mankind (qtd. in Wyatt n. pag.)

**Modern society** : in this study, the words refer to society, which hold the idea that ratio is put in the first place as a means in explaining everything, and that technology takes part their in daily lives.

**Postmodernism** : a basic worldview that rejects all absolutes—all absolutes, of any kind whatsoever (qtd. in Godawa n. pag.)

**Postmodern relativity** : postmodern as a worldview that has no fix reference in giving justification whether one's deed right or wrong. Therefore, every person may has his or her own standard of truth, and this arises the comprehension that truth is relative

**Victims** : they refer to the chosen people (including John Doe himself), that John Doe considers as the perfect people to represent each of the seven sins

## CHAPTER II