

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Anxiety is a psychological and physiological state characterized by cognitive, somatic, emotional, and behavioral components. These components combine to create an unpleasant feeling that is typically associated with uneasiness, apprehension, fear, or worry. Anxiety is a generalized mood condition that can often occur without an identifiable triggering stimulus. As such, it is distinguished from fear, which occurs in the presence of an observed threat. Additionally, fear is related to the specific behaviors of escape and avoidance, whereas anxiety is the result of threats that are perceived to be uncontrollable or unavoidable.

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button is a 2008 American fantasy-drama film directed by David Fincher. The screenplay by Eric Roth and Robin Swicord is loosely based on the 1922 short story of the same name by F. Scott Fitzgerald. The film stars Brad Pitt as a man who ages in reverse and Cate Blanchet as the love interest throughout his life. The film was released in the United States on December 25, 2008. The film received thirteen Academy Award nominations, including Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor for Pitt, and Best Supporting Actress for Taraji P. Henson. It won Oscars for Art Direction, Makeup, and Visual Effects.

David Leo Fincher is an American filmmaker and music video director, known for his dark and stylish thriller movies, such as *Se7en* (1995), *The Game* (1997), *Fight Club* (1999), and *Zodiac* (2007). He received an Academy Award nomination for Best Director for his 2008 film *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*. Fincher was born on August 28, 1962 in Denver, Colorado, the son of Claire, a mental health nurse who worked in drug addiction programs, and Howard Fincher, who worked as a bureau chief for *Life* under the name Jack Fincher.

When Fincher was two years old, the family moved to San Anselmo in Marin County, California. Fincher moved to Ashland, Oregon in his teens, where he graduated from Ashland High School. Inspired by *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, Fincher began making movies at age eight with an 8 mm camera. Fincher eschewed the film school route, getting a job loading cameras and doing other hands-on work for John Korty's Korty Films. He was later hired by Industrial Light & Magic in 1980, where he worked on productions for *Twice Upon a Time*, *Return of the Jedi* and *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. In 1984, he left ILM to direct a commercial for the American Cancer Society that would show a fetus smoking a cigarette. This quickly brought Fincher to the attention of producers in Los Angeles and he was given the chance to direct the documentary *The Beat of the Live Drum* featuring Rick Springfield in 1985. Though he would continue to direct spots for companies like Revlon, Converse, Nike, Pepsi, Sony, and Levi's, Fincher soon discovered music

videos and went on to direct many promos. Set on a directing career, Fincher joined video-production company Propaganda Films and started off directing music videos and commercials. Like Fincher, other directors such as Meiert Avis, David Kellogg, Michael Bay, Antoine Fuqua, Neil LaBute, Spike Jonze, Mark Romanek, Michel Gondry, Paul Rachman, Zack Snyder, Gore Verbinski, and Alex Proyas honed their talents at Propaganda Films before moving on to feature films.

A story about life and death, *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* is Fincher's latest film. It is an adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's short story of the same name. The film was Fincher's third with Brad Pitt. The film started shooting in November 2006 in New Orleans, before moving on to the Virgin Islands, Montreal, and L.A. Both *Zodiac* and this film are co-productions of Paramount Pictures and Warner Bros. Pictures. The budget for the film was estimated at \$150 million, partly due to the CGI effects used to reverse the aging in Brad Pitt's character. The film is the first PG-13 film directed by Fincher. It received 13 nominations at the 81st Academy Awards, including Fincher's first nomination for Best Director.

The film opens up with a tight close up of a very old woman on her deathbed in the hospital. There is a terrible storm raging outside the window. Clearly in pain, the old woman is struggling to speak and her daughter (Julia Ormond) is at her bedside. The mother is at the end of her life because when she cries out in pain and her daughter fetches the nurse, the nurse tells her that she can have as much pain medication as she wants. The daughter has come

to say goodbye to her mother, but their relationship seems strained. The woman asks in a feeble voice for her daughter to bring her a diary from her belongings and to read it to her. The diary looks like a journal with tickets and photographs glued to the pages. The daughter begins reading from the diary and it turns out to be the story of Benjamin Button.

The story begins with the old woman, Daisy, reminiscing about a blind clockmaker who built a clock for Grand Central Terminal in New York. While he was building the clock, his only son goes off to war (WWI) and dies in battle. Through his grief, he continues building the clock. The reveal of the clock is a major event with President Theodore Roosevelt in attendance. When the clock is unveiled, the second hand surprisingly turns counterclockwise and the clock is measuring time backwards. The crowd is shocked and the clockmaker reveals that he wishes that time move backwards so that the events of the war can be reversed and that all the soldiers who died can return to their families. Shortly thereafter, the clockmaker closes his shop and disappears.

Then people cut to the end of World War I in 1918. Throughout the streets of New Orleans, people are flooding the streets in celebration. A young man (Benjamin's father), however, is rushing home to check on his wife who has just given birth. His wife appears to have hemorrhaged during childbirth and is on the brink of death. The presence of the priest who has come to give her last rites confirms this. Before she takes her last breath, she asks her husband to ensure that their child have a place in this world.

Benjamin's father then grabs the baby and tears out of the door. He hears people inside the house and then impulsively places his baby on the steps of the house and leaves whatever money he has with the baby.

Within seconds, a young black couple comes out of the house. They are flirting with each other, completely unaware of the baby. They begin to descend the stairs and one of them almost trips on the baby. The woman, Queenie, picks up the baby and Benjamin looks like an octogenarian infant. When the doctor examines Benjamin, he tells her that the baby suffers from arthritis, is nearly blind from cataracts and has osteoporosis. Over the next few years, Benjamin spends his early years as a short, frail, bald elderly man with glasses when in fact, he is only 5 years old. Then one day, Queenie takes him to an evangelical healer. After healing Queenie's infertility, he commands Benjamin to walk during a dramatic healing. After Benjamin stumbles and takes his first steps, the preacher suddenly drops to the floor and dies.

Benjamin progresses physically, being able to walk with the help of crutches. He soon befriends a charming Pygmy man who takes Benjamin into town and they seem to connect over their uniqueness. Queenie throws a party at the retirement home for visitors, and Benjamin, now able to walk without crutches, soon meets the granddaughter of one of the tenants. She is a striking red-haired girl with blue eyes named Daisy. Benjamin develops an instant boyish crush on her even though he appears to be an elderly man. In his diary, Benjamin remembers this as the day he fell in love with Daisy. Benjamin and

Daisy quickly form a bond. They curl up with Daisy's grandmother as she reads them children stories. Daisy is quick to realize that Benjamin is no ordinary elderly man because of his childlike ways.

Benjamin visits the docks of the harbor and one day volunteers to work for a salty tugboat captain named Captain Mike. Despite his elderly appearance, Captain Mike agrees to take Benjamin on and Benjamin mostly scrubs the decks and doing light work. This is all very exciting to Benjamin and the two quickly become friends. At about 17, Benjamin still looks like an older man but desires to leave home and work on Captain Mike's tugboat. Daisy is about 12 and makes Benjamin promise that he writes to her from wherever he travels to. While Benjamin travels from harbor to harbor on the tugboat, Daisy grows up and trains as a ballet dancer. During his travels, Benjamin befriends an unhappily married Englishwoman named Elizabeth (Tilda Swinton) at the hotel he lives in. Benjamin writes to Daisy and tells her that he is falling in love. Then, one night, Elizabeth disappear, leaving only an impersonal note saying it was nice to have met him. Benjamin's father, Thomas Button, meets up with Benjamin again. Benjamin has a hard time taking it all in, but eventually realizes that Thomas wants to reconcile with him before he dies. Before Thomas dies, Benjamin takes him to the lake to watch the sunrise and both men are at peace with the past.

A few years later, Benjamin appears to be about 40 when he speeds on a motorcycle and wearing aviator sunglasses, a dead ringer for James Dean. Daisy, having recovered and able to walk again, visits Benjamin at

Queenie's house. When they return from their travels, Queenie's house is empty and the couple learned that Queenie has just died. In spite of this, Benjamin, who is watching, clearly still loves and admires Daisy. She remarks that they finally met halfway in time (Benjamin is 49 and Daisy is 43), and then Daisy reveals that she is pregnant. Back to modern times, the daughter suddenly realizes from reading the diary that Benjamin is her real father. Daisy had remarried and the daughter, Caroline, had grown up thinking that her stepfather was her birth father.

Now about 23 years old in appearance, Benjamin visits Daisy's dance studio one night and Daisy, now about 60, is startled by his return. Benjamin is youthful and strikingly handsome while Daisy has naturally aged. He meets his teenage daughter and Daisy's husband. Benjamin lives out his 20s, drifting and traveling. He wanders around India and works odd jobs, often sleeping in abandoned buildings. Then one day, Daisy receives a mysterious phone call and takes a cab to Queenie's house. Child Protective Services has found Benjamin, now a minor, living in an abandoned building in New Orleans. They managed to trace Daisy from all the references to her in his diary. Benjamin is now a pimply 12 year old who is afraid of human contact and is showing signs of dementia. He doesn't remember Daisy but feels like he should know her. Like a loving and patient grandmother, Daisy seems to be able to calm him and she reads to him from the same children book her grandmother once read to her and Benjamin. In one heartbreaking scene, Benjamin regresses to a four year old and talks about having the

feeling that he is lived an entire life but can not remember any of it. Another day, he ends up on the roof and Daisy talks him down. Benjamin regresses to a toddler and then finally an infant in elderly Daisy's arms. Daisy narrates that one day, Benjamin take one last knowing look at her and then dies in her arms.

Fully spent by this story, Daisy and her daughter share a sense of relief and closure that comes with the revelation of long-hidden truths. In the background, Hurricane Katrina is getting dangerously near the hospital and soon diverts Caroline's attention away from her mother. Daisy looks to the window and sees a hummingbird approach and then fly away into the storm. The camera pans out to reveal hospital staff scurrying to evacuate patients and transport medical supplies.

There are four reasons why the writer chose this movie. The first is because the story of this movie is unique and interesting. The second is the relationship of humanity. The third reason is the struggle of Benjamin. And the last is because the love story in this film.

The first is because the story of this movie is unique and interesting. On November 11, 1918, just as the people of New Orleans are celebrating the end of the Great War, a baby boy is born with the appearance and physical maladies of a very elderly man. The baby's mother dies shortly after giving birth, and the father, Thomas Button, abandons the infant on the porch of a nursing home. Queenie and Mr. Tizzy Weathers, a couple who

work at the nursing home, find the baby. Queenie, who is unable to conceive, decides to take the baby in as her own and names the baby Benjamin.

The second is the relationship of humanity. In this movie there is woman who picks up the baby and Benjamin looks like an octogenarian infant. She brings the baby into the house and puts him in the top drawer of her dresser. Unable to have a child of her own, the woman decides that Benjamin is a child of God and takes on the responsibility of raising him. She names him Benjamin and introduces him to the elderly tenants of the house as her sister child.

The third reason is the struggle of Benjamin. Benjamin spends his early years as a short, frail, bald elderly man with glasses when in fact, he is only 5 years old. He begins to learn to read but cannot walk and is confined to a wheelchair. Then one day, Queenie takes him to an evangelical healer. After healing Queenie's infertility, he commands Benjamin to walk during a dramatic healing. Benjamin develops an instant boyish crush on her even though he appears to be an elderly man. In his diary, Benjamin remembers this as the day he fell in love with Daisy. During the party, Queenie announces that she is pregnant and Benjamin feels slightly jealous.

The last reason is because the love story in this movie. The love story begins at the time Queenie throws a party at the retirement home for visitors, and Benjamin, now able to walk without crutches, soon meets the granddaughter of one of the tenants. She is a striking red-haired girl with blue eyes named Daisy. Benjamin develops an instant boyish crush on her even

though he appears to be an elderly man. In his diary, Benjamin remembers this as the day he fell in love with Daisy. Benjamin and Daisy quickly form a bond. They curl up with Daisy's grandmother as she reads them children stories. Daisy is quick to realize that Benjamin is no ordinary elderly man because of his childlike ways. They spend a lot of time together and sneak off one night to talk but are caught by Daisy's grandmother who accuses Benjamin of inappropriate motives. Queenie tells Benjamin that he is no ordinary child, that he is a man-child, and that people will misunderstand him.

Based on the previous reasons the writer will observe *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* movie by using psychoanalytic approach. So the writer constructs the title ANXIETY IN DAVID FINCHER'S *THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON* (2008): A PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH.

B. Literature Review

Based on the researcher's observation, *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* was already analyzed by Eken Nihat Ali (2009). She focused the research on "The inferiority in David Fincher's *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*," using individual psychological approach. On her research, she analyzed about the inferiority of the people in David Fincher's *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* movie. The results of the study are as follows. Firstly, the structural elements of the movie present a unity. It appears in the beginning, the middle, and the end of the story. Secondly, the

psychoanalytic analysis shows that trauma leads the affect of life such as the feeling of panic, fear, shock, and confused.

The second researcher's observation was already done by Purwantoro Harsa Iman (2008), with is the title "Coping Behavior of Benjamin Button in Eric Roth's The Curious Case Movie an Individual Psychoanalytic Approach". The results of the study are firstly, structural approach is used to analyze the elements of the movie. It consists of characterization, setting, point of view, style and theme. Secondly, the psychoanalytic approach is used for analyzing the depression of Button that influences his daily activity and behavior toward life.

Different with the researcher, here the researcher tries to conduct the research paper on the anxiety that appears in major character, Benjamin Button's personality and the ego defense mechanism, which appears by using psychoanalytic approach. The researcher uses Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory. The researcher employs the descriptive qualitative research as a type of the research. The data sources are divided into two, namely primary data source and secondary data source. The primary data source is the events of the movie and the secondary data source is biography of character. The methods of collecting data are observation and library research. The technique of analyzing data is descriptive. Based on the analysis, the researcher draws two conclusions, first based on the structural analysis. From the structural analysis, it shows that each of the structural elements is interlated to each other. Second, based on the psychoanalytic

analysis, Benjamin Button reflects anxiety is caused by the contradiction of his id, ego and superego which cause the disharmony of hopes and fact in his life.

C. Problem Statement

Considering the phenomenon clarified above, the researcher formulates problems statement as follows:

1. What are factors that cause anxiety in Benjamin's personality?
2. How does he overcome the problem?

D. Limitation of the Study

In this research the author will focus on the main character, Benjamin who has anxiety feeling which influences his personality and his way to reduce it by using some ego defense mechanisms. This study uses Psychoanalytic Approach.

E. Objective of the Study

Based on the problem statement above, the writer scrutinizes the objective of the study as follows:

1. To analyze the movie based on the structural element.
2. To analyze the movie based on Freud's principles of psychoanalytic

F. Benefit of the Study

The benefits expected from this study are as follows:

1. Theoretical Benefit

This study is expected to contribute the development of the knowledge, particularly the literary study on *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* by David Fincher.

2. Practical Benefit

To give a contribution and to give inputs to other literary researchers who intend to analyze the movie of *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* by David Fincher.

G. Research Method

In this research the writer uses the qualitative method and to understand the movie, the writer previously relates one and another to make this easy to analyze. In this study, the writer has some steps as follows:

1. Type of Study

In this study the writer uses descriptive qualitative research, because the writer intends to identify anxiety.

2. Object of the Study

The object of the study is the film *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*.

This film directed by David Fincher.

3. Type of the Data and the Data Sources

In this research the writer classifies the data source into two categories namely primary and second data sources.

a. Primary data

The primary data source is the film *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* by David Fincher.

b. Secondary data

The secondary data are some selected materials and references which relate to the study.

4. Technique of the Data Collection

In this case, the writer uses two techniques of collecting data

a. Observation

This step is used to make the analysis by watching the film repeatedly to get the understanding about this film.

b. Library

There are some procedures in library research, they are:

- 1) Watching the film repeatedly and understanding about this film.
- 2) Finding out the important data and identifying the relevant elements.
- 3) Taking notes.
- 4) Arranging data into several parts based on its classification.
- 5) Developing data to get the last result.

5. Techniques of the Data Analysis

The technique of analyzing data is descriptive. It means that the researcher interprets the script text and content to get the needed data. This data then are used to analyze the character of Benjamin using psychoanalytic perspective.

H. Research Organization

This research consists of five chapters. Chapter I deals with introduction which explains the background of the study, literature review, problem statement, limitation of the study, objective of the study, benefit of the study, theoretical approach, research method and thesis organization. Chapter II deals with review of underlying theory that is psychoanalytic theory. Chapter III is structural analysis, in this chapter the researcher explains the structural element of the study and discussion. Chapter IV is data analysis, which deals with the major character's problems based on psychoanalytic theory. Chapter V is conclusion of the analysis and some suggestions.