

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Cultural clash is “[when] one or more cultures are integrated into one environment, causing disruption and challenging contemporary traditions” (Urban Dictionary). It is common in a multi cultural society, such as The United States of America. Many people from all over the world, such as European and Asian people, come to live in America. The European immigration began in the early 18th century while the Chinese immigration began in the middle of the 19th century. America has become their new home. Since then the immigrants found many hardships during their civilization; one of the examples was hardship to assimilate with the American culture. It became more difficult for Chinese people, because their culture was very different from the American culture. Thus, the immigrants experienced a cultural clash.

The issue of a cultural clash is so significant as to have been brought up into novels by some writers, such as the 20th-century Chinese-American writers Maxine Hong Kingston, Frank Chin, Amy Tan and Jade Snow Wong. However,

there are only two Chinese-American writers whose works are going to be analysed in this thesis. They are Maxine Hong Kingston and Frank Chin.

Maxine Hong Kingston is a 20th-century Chinese-American writer whose works are highly acclaimed as masterpieces. Some of her notable works are The Woman Warrior and Tripmaster Monkey. Though her works are accepted, “she receives a great deal of criticism, especially from the Chinese American community” (“Maxine Hong Kingston”).

Frank Chin is also a 20th-Century Chinese-American writer. Besides, he works as a playwright who is considered to be one of the pioneers in Asian-American theatres. Some of his notable works are Year of the Dragon, Aiiieeeee!, and Donald Duk. He received an American Book Award in 1989 for a collection of short stories entitled The Chinaman Pacific and Frisco R.R. Co., and Lifetime Achievement in 2000 (“Frank Chin”). Since both of the authors are Chinese-American, I find it interesting to analyse their works.

The works of Kingston and Frank Chin which are going to be analysed in my thesis are The Woman Warrior and Donald Duk. The two novels share the idea of a cultural clash. Kingston’s novel, The Woman Warrior, tells about an anonymous Chinese-American protagonist who experiences conflicts as an immigrant in America. As a result of the cultural clash, she finds it difficult to recognize her true identity. The topic of Chin’s novel, Donald Duk, is about the concept of identity which is also related to a cultural clash. The novel tells about a twelve-year-old Chinese boy, named Donald Duk, who is born in America. However, his family tightly holds their Chinese culture. Thus, it hampers his self-searching process.

The conflicts found in both of the novels are significant because it is possible to find them in real life. A conflict means “the opposition between two characters (such as a protagonist and an antagonist), between two large groups of people, or between the protagonist and a larger problem such as forces of nature, ideas, public mores, and so on” (Shaw 91). There are three types of conflicts. They are physical conflicts, inner conflicts, and social conflicts. “Physical conflict is a struggle between man and the physical world, inner conflict is a struggle between desires within a person [and] social conflict is a struggle between man and man” (Shaw 91-92). They can be used as a means to reveal the theme of the novel. Theme is “whatever general idea or insight the entire story reveals” (Kennedy and Gioia 195). Thus, I would like to analyse the theme of the two novels through conflicts, which are the inner and social conflicts experienced by the protagonists.

Considering that the two novels talk about immigrants, cultural clash, and the concept of identity, I believe it would be best to analyse the theme by using the sociological approach for it deals with self and society. A sociological approach “examines literature in the cultural, economic and political context in which it is written or received” (“Critical Approaches to Literature”).

Statement of the Problem

The problems that I will discuss in my thesis are:

1. What is the theme of each novel?
2. How do the conflicts help revealing the theme of each novel?

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of the study are:

1. To reveal the themes of the two novels.
2. To show how the conflicts help revealing the themes.

Method of Research

The method of research that I use in this project is library research. First of all, I read the two novels which are going to be analysed. It is then followed by browsing more information in the Internet to support the analysis. For further understanding, I also read text books and search for literary criticism. Finally, I draw a conclusion of what has been discussed.

Organization of the Thesis

The thesis consists of four chapters. Chapter One is the Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is the analysis of the theme of The Woman Warrior, followed by Chapter Three, which is the analysis of the theme of Donald Duk. The last chapter, Chapter Four, is the conclusion of what has been discussed in the previous two chapters. The Bibliography and the Appendices will be given at the end of the thesis.