

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

A person who is having two or more cultural backgrounds tends to face cultural clash because of the differences between the two cultures. Cultural clash itself is a conflict arising from the interaction of people with different cultural values (“Cultural clash”). This kind of conflict will create a situation called ‘identity crisis’. Identity crisis is a period of uncertainty and confusion in which a person’s sense of identity becomes insecure, typically due to a change in their expected aims or role in society (“Identity crisis”). It is often experienced by American-born-Chinese immigrants or their descendants in the United States due the different cultures: the Chinese culture and the American culture.

There are some differences between the Chinese and American cultures. Chinese people are collectivists; they put higher values on group cooperation, while the Americans are individualists; they put higher values on self-reliance. Another difference is Chinese people tend to avoid direct confrontation, open criticism and controversial topic, in order to maintain their ‘face’. American people, however, are willing to confront directly, criticize and discuss

controversial topic. This is due to their emphasis on personal opinions about what they consider the truth. (“Some General Differences between Chinese and American Cultures”)

One of the American writers who deal with identity crisis of American-born-Chinese immigrants is David Wong Louie. He is a late 20th century Chinese-American writer who wrote *Pangs of Love* (1991), a collection of short stories, *The Barbarians are Coming* (2001) his first novel and *A Contemporary Asian American Anthology* (1991) in collaboration with Marilyn Chin. His books have won some awards and reviews. His *Pangs of Love* received the 1991 First Fiction Award from the Los Angeles Times and the Ploughshares First Fiction book award, while his novel *The Barbarians are Coming* received the Shirley Collier Prize award. Since David Wong Louie deals with the issue about identity crisis in *The Barbarians are Coming*, I choose this novel to be analyzed in my thesis.

The Barbarians are Coming narrates about a second generation Chinese immigrant who encounters conflicts not only between himself and his parents but also with his surroundings regarding his identity. The protagonist of this novel, Sterling Lung, a 26-year-old American-born Chinese immigrant tries to live like the Americans. He becomes attracted to the freedom that America offers, so that he denies his family traditions and his Chinese background. This novel shows how a second generation Chinese immigrant is affected by his parents who still hold their Chinese culture as well as by his surrounding culture. The protagonist faces social conflicts regarding his identity throughout the novel due to those cultural differences.

In my thesis, I choose to analyze the conflicts in the novel since conflict is the most outstanding literary element in the novel. Conflict is “a clash of actions, ideas, desires or will” (Perrine 44). There are three types of conflicts, which are social conflict: man versus society, inner conflict: man versus himself, and physical conflict: man versus nature (44). The most conflicts that can be found in this novel are social conflicts. Thus, I am going to analyze the social conflicts in David Wong Louie’s *The Barbarians are Coming*. As the conflicts deal with clash of cultures, I will use sociological approach in analyzing the novel. Sociological criticism examines literature in the cultural, economic, and political context in which it is written or received. “ (Kennedy and Gioia 2036)

Statement of the Problem

The problems I am going to analyze are:

1. What are the social conflicts of the protagonist?
2. What is the cause of each conflict?
3. What is the resolution of each conflict?

Purpose of the Study

Based on the statements of the problem, the purposes of the study are:

1. To show the social conflicts of the protagonist.
2. To show the cause of each conflict.
3. To show the resolution of the conflict.

Method of Research

I conduct library research in writing my thesis. First, I read the novel. After that I search for a number of references from books and the Internet websites in

order to create an objective and a non-superficial analysis in the process of the research. In the end, I draw some conclusion.

Organization of the Thesis

I divide my thesis into three chapters, preceded by the Table of Contents and the Abstract. Chapter One is the Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is the Analysis of Social Conflicts in David Wong Louie's *The Barbarians are Coming* using sociological approach. Chapter Three is the Conclusion. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, which consist of the Synopsis of *The Barbarians are Coming* and the Biography of David Wong Louie.