CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Since its founding, Australia is considered an empty land and then it is claimed to be a British’s colony. Being a colony of British Commonwealth that practices British values and cultures, Australia has its own dilemma. It is part of the West, yet, it is located in the East. Being geographically isolated from other European countries, Australia has great anxiety of being conquered by the Asians.

The first migrants that come to Australia are mostly from British and Irish nationalities, and most of them are convicts. They were forced to live and develop the land which was considered to be yet untouched by the European civilization. The “terra nullius” status given to the land made it possible for the British to claim it as their colony and to develop it as closely as possible to the condition of the motherland, Britain in particular and Europe in general.’ (www.anu.edu/Au/pdsci/man/interventions/migrants.htm.)

Being a newly-found nation, Australia needs a lot of people to develop the country. Therefore, maintaining its origin, Australia searches for British migrants as the first option, then the ‘assimilable types’ or other Europeans, for
the second options. However, when the number of wanted immigrants is not adequate enough, Australia opens its country for Asian immigrants. Unpredictable, there is a great influx from Asian countries when the Gold Rush Period and after the World War II. With the coming of these “aliens”, conflicts and problems among the immigrants especially between the immigrants and the British settlers, occur because of cultural and language differences. Their conflict becomes unavoidable. The white Australians feel threatened by this great number of non-European immigrants. ‘This irrational hatred or fear of strangers, xenophobia, became an epidemic that inflicted the whole country.’ (www.anu.edu/Au/pdsci/man/interventions/migrants.htm)

As a result, to keep these non-European immigrants out of Australia, the Australian government publishes the White Australia Policy in 1901, which explicitly states that Australia is only for white people. For until 1972, Australia has applied the White Australian Policy and discriminates the colored Australians for not having the same ideological, social and cultural values. Moreover, according to the book entitled Mistaken Identity: Multiculturalism and the Demise of Nationalism Australia, the doctrine of White Australia Policy reinforces the sense of homogeneity and the sense of superiority of the Anglophone population, by which the colored immigrants are seen as potentially dangerous and inferior. (Castles: 1988, 45)

Since both John Romeril’s The Floating World and Alexander Buzo’s Norm and Ahmed deal with the Australia’s society and the social conflicts inside, sociological criticism is considered to be the suitable approach to analyze these two plays. ‘Sociological criticism examines literature in the cultural, economic,
By using sociological criticism, the reason behind the protagonists’ fear and hatred can be revealed. The social theory explains how different cultural backgrounds can be the starting point of the protagonists’ fear and hatred. ‘The key point about difference…is not only a way of marking difference but it is used as a means of asserting superiority.’ (Woodward, 2000:33)

The existence of distinctive cultural or physical traits enables people to classify other human beings into groups and this becomes the origins of people’s ethnocentrism. In other words, seeing the others differently because of their visible cultural differences means judging them as inferior. This is a universal pattern applied in a multietnic society, in which usually the mainstream or the dominant group portrays themselves as the better race than the minority groups. However, their assumption that they are superior to the minority groups turns not to be like what their thought. This is shown in both Romeril’s and Buzo’s plays, which tell how cultural differences have made their protagonists; Les Harding and Norm, possess fear and hatred towards Asians. Both protagonists, who are white-Australians, have been filled by the belief of Asians’ being inferior to Western/white-skinned people. Yet, their beliefs lead them to possess xenophobia towards Asians; they begin feeling fear and hatred when they see the reality that the Asians are in fact not inferior.

Both Romeril and Buzo have boldly revealed the long history of inharmonious social relationship between white Australian people and the colored people through their plays. They uncover Australian’s xenophobia of being conquered by non-European immigrants that has remained since Australia
opened their country for immigrants. This xenophobia is mainly caused by the belief of being a superior race whose position is threatened by the existence of non-Europeans, notably Asians, who have distinctive different cultural background from the Europeans. The isolated position of Australia added by the massive coming of Asian immigrants strengthens Australia’s anxiety of being conquered by the Asians. They think that non-Europeans’ existence will threat their position as well as destructing their former purpose to build a homogenous country based on British values and culture, where the whites/Europeans are supposed to be the leading ethnic group. As a result, any person with different backgrounds from the mainstream culture will be considered outsiders and as a threat for their country.

Australia’s long history of fear and hatred of Asian immigrants has shown what actually always remains between white Australian relationships with the non-European Australians. Therefore, what is revealed by Romeril’s and Buzo’s in their plays makes their works worth analyzing. They, as part of the whites, have shown what most white Australians would shame to admit, for overall, through their plays, they have given admission about their own group’s xenophobia.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

After reading John Romeril’s The Floating World and Alexander Buzo’s Norm and Ahmed, I formulate the statement of the problem as follows:
1. How does each protagonist in John Romeril’s *The Floating World* and Alexander Buzo’s *Norm and Ahmed* deal with their fear and hatred towards Asians?

2. What is the cause of the xenophobia in John Romeril’s *The Floating World* and Alexander Buzo’s *Norm and Ahmed*?

### 1.3. Purpose of the Study

This study is carried out in order:

1. To show how each protagonist in John Romeril’s *The Floating World* and Alexander Buzo’s *Norm and Ahmed* deals with their fear and hatred towards Asians.

2. To show the cause of the xenophobia in John Romeril’s *The Floating World* and Alexander Buzo’s *Norm and Ahmed*.

### 1.4. Methods of Research

In analyzing both plays, I will use the method of library research. I begin the study by reading the two plays that are John Romeril’s *The Floating World* and Alexander Buzo’s *Norm and Ahmed*. Then, to support my study on the two plays, I do a research to get additional information which is done through internet and other reference books. Moreover, to extend my study, especially relating to my topic of the study, I will use the extrinsic approach, to be specific, the sociological approach.
1.5. Organization of the Thesis

The thesis will be presented in four chapters and will be preceded by the Preface, Table of Contents, and Abstract. Chapter One as the Introduction that consists of the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, and the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two contains the discussion of how the protagonist in The Floating World deals with his fear and hatred and its cause. Chapter Three contains the discussion of how the protagonist in Norm and Ahmed deals with his fear and hatred and its cause. Chapter Four provides the conclusion of the study of the protagonists’ dealing with their fear and hatred, the cause of their fear and hatred in the two plays and the comparison between the two works. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendix, which presents the Synopsis of the two plays as well as the Biography of the two playwrights.