

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

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## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

The students of the English Department Teacher Training Faculty at Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya do not only learn how to teach but also study literature. Learning literary work such as reading a novel helps the students face life. Literature reflects and delivers up 'truths' or agreement about life and human condition. Howe, Hollander and Browich (1979:2) state that literature refers to imaginative writing which can be stories, novel, plays, poem which portrays or reflects or deals with human existence. It is the task of literature to render life, experience and emotion in a potential way. A good literature, according to Brown (1978:125), represents the experiences of individuals who are able to control their experiences, compared with the offerings of other people who wonder aimlessly in a world of uncontrolled experience pulp novels, mass advertising, and celebrations of the mediocre.

Basing on the above statement about literature which reflects the human life including experience and emission, the writer decides to choose literature subject to be discussed in her thesis. By analyzing literature, the writer develops her intellectual and emotional skills but also gets an enjoyment, understands the culture, life and values, and gets aware of many things the fiction contains. Literature enriches the

readers' life because it increases their capacities for understanding and communication. It helps the readers to find the meaning of life in their world, expresses and shares it with others. That literature represents culture in human life is supported by Little (1966:3). The literature of the people is the principal element of its culture. It contains the record of the people's values, their thoughts, their problems and conflicts, in their whole life. The main reasons for analyzing literature are that it broadens and stimulates the readers' minds, makes them have wider human sympathy, and enhances their enjoyment of life (Little, 1966:3). However, learning literary works such as poems, novels, plays, and stories are not as easy as people think, it needs a deep comprehension and discussion.

Learning literary work for the writer is interesting and challenging because she wants to prove that learning literary work is not something to worry about like most of the students think. It is interesting because she can improve her reading abilities and sharpen her mind in interpreting, judging and understanding what is read.

Among the forms of imaginative literature, a novel has long been the readers' favorite work. People like to read novels more than to read other literary work such as short stories or dramas. Reading a novel can entertain the readers richly; it not only helps them pass the time but also gives them a picture of real life and manners and helps them behold aspects of other people (and of ourselves) that they have never observed before. Besides, a novel deepens awareness of other people and of

themselves or their life. According to Clara Reeve (1785) novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the time in which it has been written.

In the Oxford English Dictionary (Cowie, 1989:843), a novel is defined as a fictitious prose narrative or tale of considerable length (now usually one long enough to fill one or more volumes) in which characters and actions representing the real life of past or present times are portrayed in a plot of more or less complexity. There are some important points contained in a novel. First, the novel is fictitious – fiction, the story of a novel is usually based on a true story, a picture of real life and also a resemblance of imaginary story. It depicts imaginary characters and situations. Hawthorn (1987:1) states that a novel may include references to real places, people and events, but it cannot contain only such references and remain a novel. However, even though its characters and actors are imaginary, they are in some sense representative of real life. Second, the novel is in prose rather than verse, although novels can well include very “poetic“ elements so far as their language is concerned. It helps to establish the sense of real life of recognizable everyday existence that is reserve of the genre. And finally, the novel is a narrative. In other words, it is in some sense a telling rather than an acting and this distinguishes it in an important sense from drama. In a novel we learn character and event indirectly as in the theater and the cinema. It is mediated through a particular telling, a narrative source. Moreover, a novel contains characters, action and plot; it involves people who do things in a total context ruled over by some sorts of connective logic, chronology, cause and effect.

In Widya Mandala Catholic University, the students are heterogeneous but the majorities are Chinese. Being a Javanese, the writer for the first time thinks of Chinese people in generally terms. Since she started to study, she has a lot of Chinese friends. Unconsciously, she enters their society. She knows how they think, how they feel and recognize their behavior. Furthermore, the writer wants to know about Chinese people and their culture through reading novels. Pearl S. Buck is one of novelists who wrote about Chinese people and their culture. *'Letter from Peking'* is one of Pearl S. Buck's novels. Why she chooses this novel to be analyzed is because the story is interesting. It reveals two cultures - American culture and Chinese culture. This novel talks about Gerald, the main character, who tries to find his ethnic and cultural self-identity. He has two ethnic backgrounds American and Chinese because he has mixed bloods. Gerald moves from America to China to find his ethnic and cultural self-identity, eventhough he has to separate from his wife, but his wife supports him to find his identity. Unfortunately after he realizes his ethnic and cultural self-identity, he shot when he tries to escape.

Without official recognition of the People's Republic of China and its emergence as a world power, it is proven that people's future is in many ways linked to that of the Chinese people. Awareness of the Chinese is reflected in a noticeable upswing of interest in Chinese culture, philosophy, and religion. Pearl S. Buck was truly a pioneer in this appreciation and, through her writings and humanitarian activities, she often made attempts to reduce the cultures of China and the United

States to their lowest common denomination in order to bridge the two worlds in which she lived.

Although Pearl Sydenstricker was born in America on June 26, 1892, her missionary parents took her to China when she was only a few months old. Because of her childhood in China, Pearl S. Buck was very sympathetic with many aspects of Chinese culture. She is a female American novelist. She was considered as a successful novelist and thus she was awarded Nobel prize for literature. Furthermore, she was considered as a successful novelist in revealing a culture of another in this case China, through her novel '*The Good Earth*'. In addition, she was the pioneer of multi-culture literature by introducing two cultures, American culture and Chinese culture that can be seen on her novel '*Letter from Peking*'. Pearl S. Buck is the first novelist in American literature who introduced another culture. The writer is impressed by Pearl S. Buck's opinion about a racial intermarriage between Gerald and Elizabeth and it drove her to conduct a study on the novel. Her opinion arouses the writer's curiosity and then chooses her as the author of the novel, which she will analyze for her thesis.

In this thesis the writer analyzes the search for ethnic and cultural self-identity by the main character in Pearl s. Buck's '*Letter from Peking*'. Pearl S. Buck's novel is suitable as the object for the study because her novel contains a picture of life and it gives more details in the searching of self-identity. Every body wants to discover his or her self-identity. Searching for self-identity is important, because by finding the

identity someone will become himself and he will appreciate himself more than before.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

This study is intended to analyze the main character in '*Letter from Peking*' novel. Since the writer is interested in analyzing the main character, she has some research questions to answer. They are:

- ◆) Why is Gerald trying to find his ethnic and cultural self-identity?
- ◆) How does Gerald find his ethnic and cultural self-identity?

### **1.3. Objective of the Study**

This study is conducted to find the answer of the problem statements. It is expected that the process of finding Gerald's ethnic and cultural self-identity will give the readers a clear picture on how to analyze novel in term of character, plot and setting. This study is expected to find:

- ◆) The reason why Gerald is trying to find his ethnic and cultural self-identity.
- ◆) The way Gerald finds his ethnic and cultural self-identity.

### **1.4. Significance of the Study**

This study hopefully encourages other students of the English Department of Widya Mandala Catholic University to write thesis on literature and gives some contributions to the students in analyzing literary work trough action, setting, and

character in '*Letter from Peking*' novel. Besides, this study shows an example on how to analyze a novel. It is expected that this study gives contribution to the other students who are interested in conducting a study on literature and to the teaching learning of literature.

### **1.5. Scope and Limitation of the Study**

This study focuses on searching for the main character's ethnic and cultural self-identity in this case Gerald, through some elements of fiction: character or the people, plot or the action, and setting or the background. The main character is an important part in a novel and always becomes the center of conflict in every literary work. The characters are the foreground of all fiction (Borrowys, 1991:94). The writer learns about Gerald's character, which is seen from his wife's point of view because in this novel the other characters only gave limited information about Gerald. The writer knows the character through what he does, what he says, what he thinks and also through the other characters who say something and think about him. Rosen and Annas (1931:1406) state that we can learn about the main characters from what other characters say about her/him.

### **1.6. Definition of Key Terms**

Before coming to a further discussion, it is necessary to define some key terms applied in this thesis to avoid misunderstanding:

1. **Character** is a person (or personified, or object, or deity) who acts, appears, or is referred to a work (Brain, Beaty, and Hunter, 1978:500).
2. **Main character** is a person or a character who always makes the story.
3. **Plot** is groundwork of human motivation with the action resulting form believable and realistic human responses (Edgar and Henry, 1987:98).
4. **Setting** refers to the natural and artificial scenery or environment in which characters in literature live in move, together with the things they use (Edgar and Henry, 1987:229).
5. **Novel** is a fictitious prose narrative or tale of considerable length (now usually one long enough to fill one or more volumes) in which characters and actions as the representative of the real life of past or present times are portrayed in a plot of more or less complexity. Novel is a book-length story in prose, whose author tries to create the sense that, while she read, she experiences actual life (Hawthorn, 1985:1).
6. **Self-identity** is the sharpening of self-consciousness as unique unity of a person; which keeps the continuity of the meaning of past experiences to him and to the other people; which integrates all self pictures given and forced by other people with the feeling of who he is and what can he do (Erikson, 1989: 188)
7. **Cultural** refers to culture. Culture is the way of life style of ordinary citizens and the values, beliefs and prejudice they share with their fellows within their linguistic and social groups with due attention to the intragroup difference (Tomasouw, 1986: 1.2)

8. **Ethnic** is a national, racial or tribal group that has a common cultural tradition (Cowie, 1989:410).

### **1.7. Methodology of the Study**

In this study the writer analyzes the main character using literary criticism. There are two types of literary criticism; they are practical criticism and theoretical criticism. In this study practical criticism is applied. Practical criticism concerns with the discussion of particular work. In finding how Gerald searches his ethnic and cultural self-identity, first of all the writer has to know the setting or the background. Then, she analyzes the setting, which concerns with time, location and environment in which the action occurs in the novel. When we talk about action, we also talk about plot because plot and action cannot be separated. Plot has been used to indicate almost any kind of fictions found in the story.

### **1.8. Theoretical Frame Work**

There are some theories underlying this study. They are theories of literature, novel, elements of novel and self-identity. Each of these theories is further discussed in chapter II.

### **1.9. Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter I deals with the introduction including the background of the study, statement of the problem, the objective of the

study, the significance of the study, the limitation of the study, the definition of key terms, the methodology of the study, the theoretical frame work and the organization of the thesis. Chapter II is concerned with the previous related studies and review of the related theory. Chapter III deals with the methodology of the study. Chapter IV deals with analysis. Finally, chapter V presents the conclusion of the study and the suggestions.