

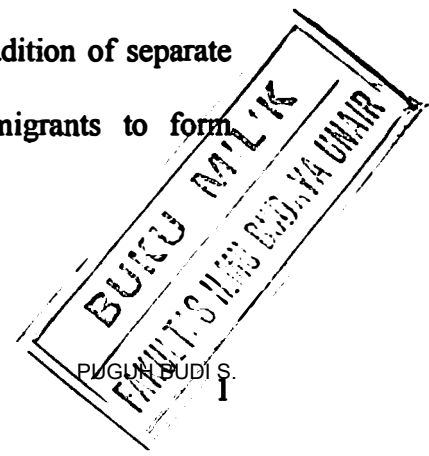
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

The Dance and the Railroad is a drama that raises identity issue, especially Chinese-American. The term Chinese-American itself appears since the second generation of Chinese born in America after their first migration in the middle of the nineteenth century. They are called Chinese-American because their parents are Chinese and genetically they are pure blood Chinese, but they grow up in America that is not their homeland. The effect can be seen from the way they speak, dress, and think. It is possible for them to speak Chinese with their parents or their Chinese friends, but when they meet Americans in school or society they will speak English in order to make good communication. They also have adapted with the condition of their society in the way they dress. Furthermore, the way they think becomes like Americans, that is, having big spirit in reaching their dream, American dream, and try to follow the development of technology to realize it.

The Chinese first came to the United States during the Gold Rush in 1849, some came to stay, but many came as sojourners, intending to return home after a limited work engagement. Moreover according to Vincent N. Parrillo, Chinese consider America as a temporary overseas job opportunity, together with the Whites racism they faced and in the case of the Chinese, a tradition of separate associations wherever they went led the early Asian immigrants to form



subsocieties (240). The first wave of migration (1850-1864) just includes males that leave their wives and children intending to earn some money and then return home. In *The Dance and the Railroad*, the setting took time in 1867 that explain the possibility of the second wave of Chinese migration.

Basically, it is not easy being Chinese-American.. In Chinese community, they are still called as Chinese because genetically their pure is blood Chinese. Additionally, they speak and act that represent their Chinese identity, but they are considered as different Chinese when they go home, to their homeland, because they have adapted the new culture which influences their identity. On the other side, they are not easily accepted in American society although they can speak, dress, or think like other Americans. It is the effect of being diaspora people which make people change in their identity because of their adaptation. Their bicultural identity makes them difficult to be accepted in one community. In addition, they are also discriminated by the native because they are different and are suspected as a dangerous individual or community that can disturb the balance of society.

The Dance and the Railroad is a drama by David Henry Hwang, a Chinese-American, which is written in 1980. The drama tells about two China Men, Lone and Ma, who work as railroad workers in America. In the 18th century, precisely in 1849, there is a big movement of Chinese to America as the effect of Gold Rush in California. They move to the new land, America, to make their life better than in their home land, China. The drama itself took place at a

mountaintop near transcontinental railroad and it happened in June, 1867 (Barnet, et.al 1301).

There are only two characters in the drama: Lone and Tzi Ma. Lone is a twenty years old Chinese railroad worker who works because his parents have forced him to overcome the famine that occurs in his village. Actually, he is a Chinese opera player before moving to America as a railroad worker. This background influenced him while working in the railroad. He uses his spare time to go to the mountaintop to practice his dance. On the other side, Ma is an eighteen year Chinese railroad worker who has big dreams in America. He comes to America to be rich and he will not return to China if he fails. Because of this spirit, he becomes very ambitious and believes the entire story from his compatriot about America. He has been living for a month but he has big ambition to besuccessful in America.

As immigrants, they have problems of discrimination. The discriminations include the inequality of work hours and the standard of wages. The discrimination is made by the Whites who thought that they have more power than the immigrants, including Chinese, because they settled in America before them, therefore they took the main role in America. Chinese workers have ten hour work day but the Whites have eight hours work day. Chinese workers get one dollars each day or twenty six to twenty seven dollars each month. According to Chinese workers, this wage is not proper and they ask fourteen dollar rise to fulfill their need.

Their resistances against the Whites are different. Lone prefers to retain his Chinese culture whereas Ma prefers to join other Chinese workers in strike to demand their rights but still wants to show his Chinese culture by asking Lone to teach Gwan Gung role. Gwan Gung itself, according to Hwang is the warrior god brought to America by Chinese immigrants as primary inspiration in a hostile land (Barnet, et.al 1302). Thus, their demands are not fully reached, they just get equality in work hours but only get eight dollars raise from fourteen dollars, and Lone prefers to accept whereas Ma wants to get the optimal result in order to reach his ambition in America.

The discrimination is the result of stereotype on Chinese known long before their first arrival in the United States. American and Chinese had established trade relations in 1785 and many Protestant missionaries had been sent there after 1785. Because of the reports from newspaper and magazine articles inspired by the Anglo-Chinese War (1839-1842), American people gradually develop unfavorable image of the Chinese. According to Vincent N. Parrillo, a Chinaman is cold, cunning and distrustful, always ready to take advantage of those he has to deal with, extremely covetous and deceitful, quarrelsome, vindictive, but timid and dastardly. A Chinaman in office is a strange compound of insolence and meanness (241).

The history of transcontinental railroad started on January 8, 1863, with a ground-breaking ceremony at Sacramento. Chinese as a nation that has large number of people are included in that situation. There were a lot of Chinese who worked in transcontinental railroad as the effect of gold rush issues. According to

Benjamin B. Ringer, the building of the intercontinental or transcontinental railroad provided the Chinese with a major opportunity for jobs (585). Therefore, they had great expectation when they returned to their homeland.

In addition, in article *Chinese Historical Society of America*, Chinese railroad workers were divided into gangs of about twelve to twenty each. Each group had a cook who not only prepared their meals but was required to have a large boiler of hot water each night so that when the workers came out the grade, they could take a hot sponge bath, and change their clothes before the evening meal (Chinn 7). David Henry Hwang, as Chinese-American, tries to portray their struggle in his drama *The Dance and the Railroad*.

David Henry Hwang was born and raised in the middle-class Los Angeles suburb of San Gabriel. His father, Henry Hwang, is an accountant born in Shanghai. His mother, Dorothy Hwang, is a pianist and teacher born in Amoy, China. She is Christian because her grandparents had been converted by Christian missionaries. Henry, who believes in Confucianism, married her after he is converted to Christian. From this background David Henry Hwang received a heritage uncommon to Chinese-Americans (Barnet, et.al 1298). According to *Stage, Dance, Railroad by David Henry Hwang*, David Henry Hwang is special because he knows America-its vernacular, its social landscape, and its theatrical traditions. He knows the same about China. In his plays, he manages to mix both of these conflicting cultures until he arrives at a style that is wholly his own (Rich 4). Hwang's works have the energy of the well-made American stage comedies and yet, with little warning, they bubble over into the mystical rituals of Asian

stagecraft. It reflects in his other plays such as *M. Butterfly*, *FOB*: "fresh off the boat", *Family Devotions*, *The Sound of a Voice*, *The House of Sleeping Beauties*, *The Voyage*, *Bondage*, and *Trying to Find Chinatown* (Editorial Review 3)

The writer of this study is interested in analyzing the meaning of being Chinese-American in Hwang's drama *The Dance and the Railroad* because, privately, the writer of the study had performed that drama and consider it a comedy drama but consists of identity value that is important to understand. Two characters in the drama, Lone and Ma has different way in determining their identity. Lone refers to Chinese-American who still retains his Chinese identity although he has been living for two years in America whereas Ma refers to Chinese-American who has big ambitions to success although he just arrives and lives for a month. In addition, Chinese-American has a good history which is interesting to analyze since from their first arrival until their struggle to be admitted as the citizen of United States because of their contribution in transcontinental railroad. Chinese is also famous in their strong brotherhood which can be seen in the presence of Chinatown in New York, San Francisco, and Hawai'i (Danico and Franklin 92)

1.2. Statements of the Problems

There are two statements of the problems that will be analyzed in this study after reading the script of the drama. The problems are:

1. How do Lone and Ma determine their identity?
2. What does it mean to be a Chinese-American?

1.3. Objective of the Study

The objectives of the study will be intended to answer the questions, as it has been mentioned in the statement of the problems, by using the chosen theories as the tool to analyze. The objectives of the study are:

1. The portrayal of Chinese-American according to Lone and Ma
2. To know the meaning of being Chinese-American from the two characters of *The Dance and the Railroad*, Lone and Ma.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This research paper gives benefit to the readers in understanding the play by using identity theory. By analyzing the meaning of being Chinese-American in *The Dance and the Railroad*, it is hoped that the readers are able to know more about Chinese-American identity and options of being Chinese-American that are reflected by Lone and Ma as Chinese-American.

Moreover, this research is also hoped to enrich the knowledge about diaspora identity, the discrimination of the Whites toward Chinese railroad workers, the important of Gwan Gung's role in encouraging Chinese workers spirit, and the condition of transcontinental railroad. In addition, this study is also meant to give contribution towards the study of literature, especially for the English Department of Airlangga University.

1.5. Scope and Limitations

There are many issues, problems, events, and conflicts in discussing *The Dance and the Railroad*. The writer would not analyze the whole issues and conflicts because it makes this study unfocused.

Thus, the writer decides to limit this study in searching the meaning of being Chinese-American in the characters of Lone and Ma as China Men who work as railroad workers in America. It focuses on their steps and its development in defining their identity that can be explained from their acts and dialogs in the drama.

1.6. Theoretical Background

In analyzing the drama *The Dance and the Railroad* by David Henry Hwang, the writer of the study would try to elaborate the theory of identities by Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. with the acts of Lone and Ma in order to search the meaning of being Chinese-American. Appiah and Gates, Jr. in their book *Identities* argues that the concepts of group identities have been constructed traditionally in two ways. They are genealogical origin and geographical origin.

The first concept, according to Appiah and Gates, Jr., is genealogical origin that has a strongly pejorative value in current writing because have tainted with the name race thus racism (305). That pejorative value is the effect of the term and the concept of race in the sense of genotype that has been put in Europe since early modern times (306). The pure blood of certain race has big role in

determining someone's identity. Someone could be determined as certain identity from his or her genetic. It has pejorative value because the effect of having pure blood makes certain race become proud of themselves and it raises the issue of racist and racism.

The second concept is geographical origin that brings the issue of diaspora as something important and has big role in determining someone's identity. According to Appiah and Gates, Jr. Diaspora can be interpreted as the later analogue to nomadism in the earlier set of material conditions and thus as a continuation of the sociological experiment (329). Moreover, diaspora people feel of being caught between cultures (Tyson 368). In other words, it is difficult for someone who moves to new land or new area that has different culture because they are still considered as different race in their society although they have adjusted into the new culture.

1.7. Method of the Study

The writer uses the library and online research in the writing process of this study. The writer collects data from books, articles, commentaries, and other printed materials from library and internet. It is used to support the analysis of this study. Those materials include the main source that is the script of the drama itself. The supporting sources include other supporting information about the background of the author, commentaries and articles about the drama, and everything that are related with *The Dance and the Railroad*.

Moreover, the writer also collects data and other printed sources about the theory, identity theory, which are used in this study. This data are included in the supporting materials. Atar Semi in his book *Metode Penelitian Sastra* argues that the researcher has to develop the theoretical as well as to choose appropriate approach and method due to the literary research and analyzed object (47).

After collecting those data, the main and the supporting sources, the writer analyzes and process the data in order to study and use it in this research paper. From this process the writer will have good understanding about the drama and the problems which will be analyzed. In analyzing the data, the writer prefers to use qualitative method by elaborating the theory of identities by Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. with the acts an the dialogues of Lone and Ma in order to search the meaning of being Chinese-American in the drama *The Dance and the Railroad*.

1.8. Definition of Key Terms

- Identity* : something that left and determine human's position in society and it is a part of culture.
- Gwan Gung* : god of warrior brought to America by the Chinese immigrants and considers as the representation of Chinese-American spirit.
- Diaspora* : a group of people that moves to new region that has different culture from their previous culture.

Chinese-American : the second generation of Chinese who live in America, born in America but Chinese, or Chinese who move to America and adapt American culture.

China Men : a term for Chinese (male) who settle in the new land. Chinese prefer to use this term than Chinese Men because China Men is a symbol of resistance and power to show that they are settlers not immigrants.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK