

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Colonialism is an occurrence that has repeatedly happened throughout world history. The origins of colonialism can be traced back to the time of Ancient Greece, even though it has only become a historical phenomenon starting from the time the Spanish began their conquest of America (Kohn & Reddy, 2017). During the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, most of the countries that spread colonization came from Europe, with colonized territories mostly in Asia, Africa, and the South American region (Pratiwi, 2015). These colonizers from Europe arrived and began to ingrain the ideology that they believed in and change the original culture of the colonized territories. The United Kingdom, also known as "The British Empire" during its most powerful period, was one of the most successful colonial conquests of all European countries.

According to the Encyclopædia Britannica (2020, December 2), Great Britain began its effort to establish territories outside of its kingdom in the sixteenth century, which was then accelerated in the seventeenth century due to the competition happening with France. At its most powerful, the British Empire gained 104 territories around the world (Raeside, 2015). Following World Wars I and II, most of these territories gained independence, but because they did not want to lose their association with Great Britain, they still regained that connection under the banner of the Commonwealth of Nations. Right now, there

are fifty-four countries recorded as members of the Commonwealth ("Commonwealth," 2020).

Singapore was one of the countries colonized by Great Britain that also retained its connection to the country through the Commonwealth. As a multi-racial country that was colonized by two different countries (Britain and Japan), the citizens of Singapore were trapped between cultures that were enforced on them through colonization and those that came from their own ethnical origins, forcing them to adapt and thus develop the social identity issue of merged identity due to both the "ambivalence" and "hybridity" that they had experienced. The social identity issues such as "ambivalence" and "hybridity" that arose due to colonialism can be seen and analyzed in modern times through literary works.

Originally derived from the Latin word "littera," which is translated as "a letter of the alphabet," literature is first simply known as humanity's writing in its entirety (Rexroth, 2020). As time goes by, literature also advances alongside the development of the world and its culture, reflecting the human life presented in each era through the medium of language. Human life and everything related to one's life became both the subject and object material of literature, which appeared in its variety of poetry, drama, fiction, and non-fiction through the characters, their behaviors, and even their social relationships with each other. One of the literary works which discusses the social identity issues happening in Singapore is a novel titled "*Crazy Rich Asians*," written by Kevin Kwan.

The *Crazy Rich Asians* novel is the first novel written by Kevin Kwan and was first published in 2013. The novel then gained popularity as a best-selling

book and was adapted into a movie with the same name, which was aired in August 2018. The novel itself tells the story of how the main female character, American-raised Rachel Chu, is brought to her boyfriend, Nicholas Young's, homeland, Singapore, to be introduced to his family. In Singapore, Rachel is surprised to learn that Nick's (short for Nicholas) family life is not at all like she had imagined. And so begins Rachel's surreal summer, where she is introduced to the glamorous, crazy, rich family life, where she is constantly undermined by almost all of Nick's family because of the low prestige status of her own family, never mind that by heritage she was also of Chinese-descent just like the entire Young Clan.

The writer's choice of the novel *Crazy Rich Asians* is because, despite the title of the novel giving a general terming for all ethnicities of Asians, the novel focused only on one region and ethnicity of Asia throughout the story, with most of the characters in the novel undermining not only those of different ethnicity from them but even those who, while of the same ethnicity, came from a different region. The writer then applies Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial theory, specifically the ambivalence and hybridity theories, to find out how they are portrayed in the narrations and dialogues of the novel. As of now, there are several previous studies, such as those with similar subject discussions that used ambivalence theory (Farahbakhsh & Sheykhan, 2018; Peimanfard & Amjad, 2018), hybridity theory (Ghasemi et al., 2018; Omidvar, 2020), using both theories (Daimari & Katharpi, 2016; Zohdi, 2017), using the *Crazy Rich Asians* film that was based on the novel (Arsi & Sobur, 2019; Wong, 2020), or even analyzing the same novel as a corpus but using different theory (Suwastini et al., 2020).

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study, the research questions of this study are:

1. How is ambivalence portrayed in the *Crazy Rich Asians* novel?
2. How is hybridity portrayed in the *Crazy Rich Asians* novel?

1.3 Purpose of the study

Based on research questions of the study, the purposes of this study are:

1. To reveal how ambivalence is portrayed in the *Crazy Rich Asians* novel.
2. To reveal how hybridity is portrayed in the *Crazy Rich Asians* novel.

1.4 Scope of the study

This study analyzed the portrayal of ambivalence and hybridity in the *Crazy Rich Asians* novel using two aspects of Homi K. Bhabha's Postcolonial Theory: ambivalence and hybridity. The study will not cover other details of postcolonial theory, such as mimicry, diaspora, etc. The contents analyzed are taken from narrations and dialogues that imply the ambivalence and hybridity portrayed by the characters throughout the novel.

1.5 Significance of the study

The writer hopes that this study will contribute to improving the understanding of ambivalence and hybridity in one of the countries that was once a part of colonized countries.