

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

So far, the chance to express one's own culture always refers to the superior's culture, the mainstream, while the minority's culture is still hidden. In defining the minority and the superior, the society always meets the East-West notion. The East represents the minority – also called the Other or the Orient – and the West represents the superior. In doing so, the values of every day routine structures are based on the superior's judgement. Consequently, the West has the power to govern the non-superior and limit their actions. On the contrast, the minorities keep trying to reach their rights. They no longer follow the constructed position. It is a time when they perform their own vision instead of living under the superior's vision. '... the bitterness and humiliations of the experience which virtually enslaved them ... delivered ... liberal ideas, national self-consciousness ...' (Said 1993: 18).

Recent years, the minority issue has become one of interesting topics to talk about in many public forums. By revealing the minority issue, the public sphere has a chance to review its existence as one of the society's builders. The society becomes aware of the other cultures. People start to regard the minorities as the diversity creators that have put their roles in the world's competition. The minority has encouraged themselves to actively participate in order to get the world's attention and to gain equality. They have proven that they are no longer

regarded as the backward group. They have widely shown their cultural worth and it impresses the world.

The idea of perpetuating the minority is purposely to introduce the idea of multiculturalism. Multicultural idea is meant to be a time when each culture has its chance to express its own cultural idea without being repressed and underestimated. The minorities have encouraged themselves to actively participate in order to get the world's attention and to gain equality. They have proved that they are no longer regarded as the backward group. They have widely shown their cultural worth and they can impress the world.

Indeed, the significant characteristics of the minority have attracted some writers' attention. As Louis de Bonald said that 'through a careful reading of any nation's literature one could tell what this people had been' (Laurenson 13), some writers have concentrated their visions toward the minority issue. They perpetuate the other sides of the minority's existence. They intend to open the society's superior-minded vision to think critically upon the minority. Furthermore, many books have revealed the struggle of the minority group in which explains the minorities' effort to show their qualifications and their will to be the determiner not to be the determined.

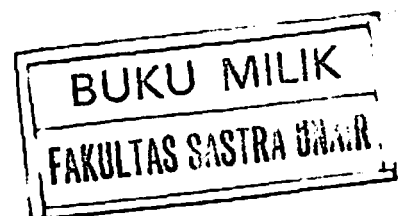
Ishmael Reed is one of the countless writers who elaborate the idea of multiculturalism by depicting the minority's free will to power. He is a controversial African American writer. He often brings his audiences to the different angle to view the global realities. *Japanese by Spring* offers another style of criticizing a social issue. In this novel, he uses other foreign languages – Yoruba and Japanese – to express his artistic freedom. His imaginative characters

are based on the well-known public are to show his own opinions about those parodized public figures. Indeed, his humorous satire over the superior authority draws a relaxed provocation for his audiences to re-shape their set of thoughts. He has done different creativity and imagination as opposing to the writing composition laws. By serving up his own opinions, he wants to make a distance between himself and his novel's 'hero', so that he can be himself aesthetically.

Benjamin 'Chappie' Puttbutt in *Japanese by Spring* is depicting a parody of a black man's struggle. His main intention on his tenure forces him to create a strategic plan. 'Life is war. The use of tactics and strategies in everyday life' (67) is necessarily applied. It tells that the world is like a battleground between the strong and the weak, so that he should be able to defend himself. Although he can get along with the Women Studies, it does not mean that he agrees with Marsha Marx, but instead he mocks her vision, especially her relationship with her lesbian lover. Furthermore, through his Japanese course, he is coincidentally destined to be the second man of the new campus president, Dr. Yamato, as in fact, he was his former Japanese tutor. It shows that Chappie just stands on his side, takes advantage from every fashionable attempt he does. This black man's struggle apparently is not representing his race, but rather to upgrade his individual being. He follows wherever the power goes. For the time being, his tendency to the Japanese authority appears to be his mocking expression to the Western authority. He is against the communal wave. When most people are still at the mercy of the white-run controlling community, he approaches to the Other community. On the long run, in this novel, the Japanese power is the one orientalizing the dominant power. American imperial biases are being subordinated.

The Japanese power is showing that the Other no longer belongs to the backward group. The feminine and weak characteristics of the Oriental men are deconstructed in *Japanese by Spring*. Dr. Yamato shows how he is able to gain the authority and be the master of the white. Thus everything does not have to be based on the Western rules. The Westerners are not always those 'who attained to a higher degree of civilization' (Said 1978: 128). The master-slave discourse can be questioned since it is not an absolut term.

Western eyes do not always reflect what the Other really is in the real life. The Other can be the one who later orientalizes the West. Because basically there is no single ultimate power, the fact is that various cultures are to be studied and appreciated instead of to be defeated and mocked by each other. The journey of those cultures is like a wheel fortune. The situation is changeable. One culture that is seen as the minority can empower the universe at one time. Afterwards, the idea of multiculturalism is to give a chance to the other cultures to build themselves. It is an oppossing idea from the melting pot in which all cultures are in a single authoritative hand. Finally, Reed's point in actualizing the glorification of the Japanese is to open up the white-minded culture to think critically in the name of one's own culture opposed to the white culture. Nevertheless, the impacts of the minority's glorification still have both positive and negative results. Multiculturalism is seen as a threat when its visualization acts too far, neglecting the norms.



B. Statement of the problems

Referring to the background of the study, the writer tries to analyze the depictions of the minority issue in *Japanese by Spring* on behalf of the multicultural idea. Thus the writer formulates the problems as follows:

1. How do Benjamin 'Chappie' Puttbutt and Ishmael Reed elaborate their personas in *Japanese by Spring*?
2. In what way is *Japanese by Spring* trying to orientalize the West?
3. To what extent does *Japanese by Spring* pinpoint the promotion of multicultural idea?

C. Objectives of the Study

This study is carried out majorly to provide a satisfactory and scientific final finding concerning the previously mentioned problems.

The first objective will be broadened within the analysis to open up how to see the Other's cultural idea and life, represented by the minority, within the mainstream world in the stages of their existence.

The objectives are as follow:

1. To detect and to explain the persona of the author and the major character in depicting the minority issue.
2. To briefly describe the orientalizing efforts toward the West in *Japanese by Spring*.
3. To broadly redefine the images of the East as an attempt to promote the multicultural idea.

D. Significance of the Study

The study is significant in elaborating how far the minority issue in a novel has contributed a broader impression toward its public about the existence of the other cultures.

The study might academically be a helpful and additional knowledge for any other writers who have a deep attention in exploring the minority representations in the society today as a community and a culture in a way of understanding multiculturalism. However, the major significance is as a considerable contribution to the faculty of letters in Airlangga University.

Since the study is about the minority issue in the frame of multiculturalism, the writer significantly notes to the number of negative stereotypes without neglecting the positive qualities as the balanced not as the confronted. Moreover, the writer hopes that this study may bring the readers to learn about the minority existence. The readers will open up their mind in response to a changing social context in which individuals involve in the whole part of the universe whether they belong to the superior or to the minority itself.

E. Scope and Limitation

In order to avoid the unnecessary and misleading focus of writing, the writer will be concentrating on firstly, the main character, Benjamin 'Chappie' Puttbutt, as Reed's bridge to reveal the minority issue. Therefore, it is unavoidable to insert the main character interrelationships with other characters that influence him in adapting his belief among his surroundings. Yet the writer will also enclose

Ishmael Reed's persona since the author is trying to create a new character which is different from Chappie in *Japanese by Spring*.

Moreover, thirdly, the attitudes of the author and the main character toward the minority issue and the multiculturalism are elaborated within the framework of Said's orientalism and other approaches such as sociocultural and philosophical approaches. Those are for the balance of the minority's opinion, mainstream's vision and the promotion of multiculturalism as a mean of popularizing the minority, so that there will be no misconception of the minority characteristics and the visualization of multicultural idea in the future.

F. Theoretical Background

The problem of understanding the minority existence in the mainstream society very significant 'when their context of existence are unfamiliar, the literature is likely to be misunderstood and unappreciated' (Kim xv). Consequently, they conduct a negative response in order to weaken the minority. In the process, they categorize themselves as the "in-group" or "we-group" and everyone else as the "out-group" or "other-group" (McLenor 320). The "in-group" refers to a group who has a feeling of superiority and posses the human ways of thinking and living, therefore they are believed to be civilized. On the other hand, "other" is believed to be barbaric. Thus the minority culture is seen morally and ethically opposite to Western culture.

Likewise, Western's definitions of minority are all branded with the mark "Oriental" as they are also defined as the Other. It is used to be the distinctive mark for the Asians from the Western as they are 'non-white'. Edward W. Said

has brought this issue in his *Orientalism*. It is 'a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience' (Said 1). *Orientalism* shows how the Western image of the Orient becomes an entire system of thought. It is based on the Western consciousness which 'includes a battery of desires, repression, investments, and projections' (Said 1993: 90). However, it naturally 'never says what the Orient is really like' (Easthope 134). In the practical scene, the minority issue becomes an integral part of American life on the behalf of living and surviving in the mainstream society.

Furthermore, the minority issue that is conveyed in a novel is intended to draw a new every day routine structures and common sense values within the public sphere. Sociologically, a novel such as *Japanese by Spring* tends to give a different angle to view the minority existence in the mainstream idea. The minorities are not always under the mainstream's judgement when the minorities have chanced to gain their power. The character in the novel may represent the character in the actual life. So that, when it offers differently then the public's visions can even turn against the actual correctness.

Since the main character in *Japanese by Spring* respectfully depicts the effort of the minority's member in approaching the highest level of living, the sociocultural and philosophical approaches are needed. Nietzsche's philosophical notion upon 'will to power' notices how an individual or a group tends to empower what has been surrounding his or their existence. It traces the self's existence that later generates to their self-constructed attitudes toward the global realities.



G. Method of the Study

The writer intends to perform a thorough analysis by compiling and studying the related data towards the previously formulated problems. The writer conducts the technique of data analysing through a descriptive analysis. The writer has interpreted some information concerning the topic in order to have a clear examination and analysis. Thus, it is unavoidable to have a qualitative research toward the sources.

The writer has also conducted some technique of data collecting such as library researches, mostly done in Airlangga University library, and additionally continued in Petra University and Gajah Mada University libraries. There are many books concerning the minority issue and the multicultural idea. The writer has also collected the novel's reviews from several internet sites to support the analysis and a close reading of the novel.

As far as the internet browsing and the library researches, the writer has also collected the data from some related books of theory and approaches as the previously mentioned theoretical background. And the other sources include the current news about the minority issue in magazines to enable the study's exploration.

H. Definitions of Key Terms

- The minority : A group of people which is referred to the non white community such as Blacks, Yellows, Indians, and other colored people.

- **Multiculturalism** : An idea that holds individual's identity and personal worth to gain a chance to rule the social life, mostly determined by the cultural life of a certain social group.
- **The Other/the Orient/the East** : An opposed groups to the West that is defined as the minority and has lower values than the West. A group that experiences the West's suppression and unfairly treatment.
- **Orientalism** : An exploration of the historically imbalance relationship between the world of Islam, the Middle East, Japan, China, India on the one hand, and that of European and American imperialism on the other.
- **Tenure** : The right to remain permanently in one's job, especially as a university teacher.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND