



CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

As an effort to gain deeper analysis about the implementation of Australian government's policy of assimilation toward Aborigines in Eva Johnson's *Murras*, this thesis can not be completed without applying an appropriate theory and considering some related studies as supported sources for the analysis. Since the play depicts Aboriginal survival under the Whites' repression, the writer argues that postcolonial criticism will be adequate to apply in analyzing it. About the application of postcolonial criticism that emerged as a powerful force in literary studies in the early 1990s, Louis Tyson in her book *Literary Criticism Today* says that it can be seen as both a subject matter and a theoretical framework.

As a subject matter, postcolonial criticism analyzes literature produced by cultures that developed in response to colonial domination, from the first point of colonial contact to the present. While as a theoretical framework, postcolonial criticism seeks to understand the operations – politically, socially, culturally, and psychologically – of colonialist and anti colonialist ideologies. (365).

Thus the application of postcolonial criticism in this thesis could be considered as both subject matter and theoretical framework. As a subject matter, *Murras* is a play which is produced by an Aboriginal playwright. On the other hand, it also portrays the Aborigines' critic as the colonized toward the Whites' repression in the implementation of assimilation policy.

In analyzing the implementation of Australian government's policy of assimilation toward the Aborigines in this play, some postcolonial terms will be applied in the analysis. First of all, it deals with the term of colonized and colonizer. According to Tyson, the colonized is defined as "any population that has been subjected to the political domination of another population" (364). Vice versa, colonizer is a population that practices the subjection to political domination of another population. Based on this concept, the Aborigines in *Murras* can be considered as the colonized whereas the Australian government or the White Australian can be considered as the colonizer.

Later on, the colonized have to experience some bad treatments from the colonizer. They have to face 'othering' activities, which is defined as "a practice of judging all who are different as inferior" (Tyson 366). Tyson mentions that the colonizer place themselves at the center of the world while the colonized are placed at the margin. Being the center of the world, the colonizer consider themselves as the embodiment of what human being should be. They look at the colonized as 'other' people who are different and therefore become inferior (366). Moreover, Homi K. Bhabha points out that this thought also comes to the emergence of stereotypes about the colonized that lead to kinds of otherness (68). As a result, the colonized as the subject of colonial discourse has to experience some discrimination from the colonizer (Bhabha 78).

Facing the depression under the colonizer's repression, prejudice toward the colonizer also appears in the colonized's mind. It provokes the colonized to look at the colonizer in its own point of view. The colonized turns over the

colonizer's point of view and places itself as the center of the world. Occidentalism is practiced then, where the colonized as the Occident looks at the colonized at the *margin* of its world. "They are constituted by their difference from the metropolitan and it is in this relationship that identity both as a distancing from the center and as a means of self-assertion comes into being." (Ashcroft 167). With this thought, the colonized is more motivated to struggle against the colonizer. It is done not only to survive, but it is also done to defend the colonized's dignity and rights.

The terms above will be combined with a certain postcolonial theory that has close relation with the topic of the analysis. Since there are many postcolonial critics who write their theory for analyzing postcolonial problems from many different points of view, the writer thinks that certain theory should be chosen to make an adequate analysis. In this case, the theory that will be applied is Homi K. Bhabha's theory dealing with unhomeliness. In the writer's opinion, this topic is chosen since it is the Aborigines' most dominant feeling that can be captured throughout the play in dealing with the implementation of assimilation policy they experienced. About *unhomeliness* itself, Bhabha states that unhomeliness is :

the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations experienced by the subordinate peoples in asserting their indigenous cultural traditions and retrieving their repressed history. Furthermore, to be unhomely is not to be homeless, nor can the 'unhomely' be easily accommodated in familiar division of social life into private and public spheres. (9)

It can be assumed that unhomeliness is experienced by the colonized under the repression of colonization. Those people, who are the subordinate in the colonial society, have to face the difficulties in asserting their hereditary traditions under

the colonizer's repression that does not give any chance to them for maintaining their cultural traditions that have been held for generations. Having no authority to keep their cultural heritage in their own place, the colonized becomes unhomed psychologically. They live at their home but they do not feel to have a home. There is no freedom in their own home because everything is done and dictated under the colonizer's control.

There is a displacement through unhomeliness, "where the borders between home and world become confused, and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting." (Bhabha 9). Through unhomeliness, someone will be confused by cross-cultural initiations they experienced. His indigenous culture and new culture that is forced upon his life will lead to the displacement. Nevertheless, Bhabha points out that unhomeliness "has a resonance that can be heard distinctly, if erratically in fictions that negotiate their powers of cultural difference in a range of transhistorical sites" (9).

The emergence of unhomeliness feeling can not be separated from the historical events that are transformed through the signifying process and represented in a discourse that is beyond control. In this case, the colonizer takes an important role in using its authority to repress the colonized and control the colonized's life. Later, the depression because of this control will create a repressed history for the colonized. It is experienced through an intimacy that questions binary divisions through which such spheres of social experience are often spatially opposed. Bhabha proposes that

these spheres of life are linked through an ‘in-between’ temporality that takes the measure of dwelling at home, while producing an image of the world of history. This is the moment of aesthetic distance that provides a double edge, a subject that inhabits the rim of an ‘in-between’ reality. (Bhabha 13)

The life seems to be confusing for the colonized, since they have to face ‘in-between’ reality. They can not live in their own way of life wholly because they are repressed to live in fulfilling the repression’s demands, which are extremely different from their way of life. Facing this condition, the colonized often get depressed since they can not live totally both in their own way or in the colonizer’s way.

From postcolonial perspective, ‘in-between’ reality that is experienced through unhomeliness feeling has a close relationship with the *hybridity* concept forced by the colonizer as Gandhi notes, “despite postcolonial attempts to foreground the mutual transculturation of colonizer and colonized, celebrations of *hybridity* generally refer to the destabilishing of colonized culture” (136). In the condition of ‘in-between’ reality, it seems to be difficult for the colonized for asserting their culture. Being torn between their own culture and the colonizer’s culture, the colonized culture is often being intimidated for maintaining the colonizer culture. Here, the notion of ‘in-between-ness’ is further elaborated through the accompanying concept of ‘diaspora’ like Paul Gilroy points out, “the value of *diaspora* is in the elucidation of those processes of ‘cultural mutation and restless (dis)continuity that exceed racial discourse and avoid capture by its agents’ “ (qtd. in Gandhi 131).

Furthermore, the term assimilation is often found in the celebration of hybridity or *diaspora* concept in a colonial society. It is usually used as the colonizer's legal oppression toward the colonized to maintain certain colonial culture by denying the minority's differences. Through the assimilation, a culture is forced to adapt with other cultures and create a new ideally one without confrontation. In fact, in colonial society, the colonizer forces this process without considering the colonized culture. The colonized are forced to leave their heritage and live in a new way, which sometimes is extremely different from their previous ways. Facing the desperation in throwing away their own culture for surviving and denying their cultural identity, the colonized will experience psychological confrontations that one of it appears in unhomeliness feeling. They do not feel comfortable in their own land, since their cultural identity is yanked out from their lives.

Beside applying Bhabha's theory, the writer will also consider some related studies for supporting the analysis of this thesis. Some articles about general Aboriginal plays especially in its survival themes will be considered as the supporting materials in understanding about the Aborigines' effort to express their own interest against the Whites. On the other hand, other sources dealing with the Aborigines' condition in Australian society and the Australian government's policy of assimilation will be considered in analyzing how far this policy reaches its goals toward the Aborigines.

Analyzing the policy of assimilation experienced by the Aborigines that is pursued so intensively across Australia between the late 1930s and the mid 1960s,

in her article *Beyond Assimilation: Aboriginality, Media History and Public Memory*, Meaghan Morris conveys,

It is important for non-Aboriginal Australians to remember that assimilation *was* a policy in this period (and thus part of our own distinct historical and cultural inheritance as Australians), and not simply, to borrow Fred Chiu's phrase, a 'generic' effect of any colonizing process – an ideology that was vaguely always around. 'Assimilation' in this context was understood in the bodily sense of the term: it did not mean (as it could have) working for social and economic equality and mutual enrichment between Aboriginal and European peoples, but the swallowing up, the absorption, of the former by the latter. (Morris online).

Morris argues that the Aboriginal literary works deal with one of three broad categories of intercultural relations, which is identified as ways of *creating* 'Aboriginality' by Langton. She argues,

Aboriginality is 'a field of intersubjectivity in that it is remade over and over again in a process of *dialogue*, of imagination, of representation and interpretation. Is not a fixed thing, it 'arises' from the subjective experience of both Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people who engage in any intercultural dialogue, whether in actual lived experience or through a mediated experience such as a white person watching a program about Aboriginal people on television or reading a book. (qtd. in Morris online).

Similar to Morris, Adam Shoemaker in *Black Words White Page: Aboriginal Literature 1929–1988* notes that Aboriginal writing has its most distinctive aspects through the era when arbitrary dates have been selected to delimit, for example, in the assimilation era (Shoemaker online). The repression they experienced from the Whites creates a

respond to the themes which they considered to be of importance, they presented a long delayed reply to the dominant White Australian culture. When they write, Black Australians are not solely responding to the surrounding white society. Although a treatment of the relations between blacks and whites is definitely an important element in their works, perhaps even more significant is the exploration of the nature of

'Aboriginality' itself: what it means to be black in Australia. (Shoemaker online).

Katharine Brisbane in her article *The Future in Black, Aboriginality in Recent Australian Drama* also points out that Aboriginal literary works express both defiance of their situation as the colonized; and an ironic self-accusation for accepting it. Especially for *Murras*, Brisbane states,

It is a highly politicised work which spells out the significance of the Aboriginal homeland and the pleasure and pride invested in traditional skills. Following the 1967 referendum new housing began to be provided to assimilate the black population, in *Murras* the deprivation is not material; its focus is upon loss of a well-recognized identity and connections with the dreaming. The play shows the forced removal of a family from the country to the town, the powerlessness imposed by the new community and the growing movement of protest which the young son joins. (Brisbane online)

Those previous articles have the same perspective in looking at the Aboriginal literary work as the Aborigines' tool to express their condition as the colonized in Australian society. Focusing deeper on the assimilation issue, those authors also argue that assimilation era and the Aborigines' difficulties within have given a great contribution in creating many Aboriginal literary works, which try to portray their Aboriginality more. Having the same awareness of it, the writer decides to analyze deeper the relation between assimilation policy and the Aborigines' life that is captured in an Aboriginal play, Eva Johnson's *Murras*. Later on, the analysis will be done by giving more attention on the psychological and sociological aspects of assimilation toward the Aborigines. Moreover, this thesis will not stop at the analysis of assimilation policy's implementation and effects toward the Aborigines, but it will be continued by analyzing how far the process of assimilation in Australian society reaches its goals.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS