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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

A society that consists of both individuals and groups can not be separated from social processes which maintain the society's existence. Those processes are experienced through interactions between the members of the society. In this case, an individual practices her/his role as the social creature who must interact with other people in order to survive in his life. She/he can not live without other people's help so she/he has to do some efforts to be accepted by his surroundings.

Since there are individuals and groups from many different backgrounds that build a heterogeneous society, it is not easy to accept and respect other individuals as just the way they are. Here, social processes are gradually needed to keep the society's harmony based on the same awareness of its members. However, this awareness can not be gained instantly without a series of social processes. Robert Park in his theory called *Race Relation Cycle* mentions that a group's social processes is built in sequence, which is begun with contact, competition, accommodation, and ended with the process of assimilation (Manger 122). Therefore, assimilation becomes an advanced level of social process, which is defined by J. Milton Yinger as "a process of boundary reduction that can occur when members of two or more societies or of smaller cultural groups meet" (Manger 116). This process is characterized by some efforts to reduce differences

and increase the wholly behavior and mental process by considering the collective interest and purposes (Soekanto 88).

As the social process that involves all of the groups in a society to assimilate each other, assimilation can not be considered as a simple matter. The term of major and minor groups will not be avoided there, where minority groups member, who wants to conform into the standards of the dominant group, are those who generally practice the assimilation (Schaefer 248). Due to this tension, William Newman said, "Assimilation can be described as an ideology in which $A+B+C=A$. The majority A dominates in such a way that members of minorities B and C imitate and attempt to become indistinguishable from the dominant group." (qtd. in Schaefer 248). Furthermore, the minority groups are often being forced to assimilate by the dominant or majority groups in the society. In this case, the assimilation process through the colonization can be seen as a distinct embodiment of the dominant groups' repression toward the minority groups.

It can not be denied that the colonization carried out by the European domination from Spain, France, England, Portugal, to the Netherlands since the fifteenth century until the emergence of Britain as the largest imperial power in the nineteenth up to the turn of twentieth century has a great contribution to the practice of assimilation repression toward the colonized societies, including the indigenous groups that had already been living in a certain area long before it were found as *terra nullius*.¹ Here, the Native Americans or Aboriginal Australia can be considered as the indigenous populations that are subjugated by the White

¹ Uninhabited land that is subjugated and claimed as its own by the colonizer

settlers and governed by the majority culture surrounds them or defined as the member of *Fourth World*² (Tyson 367). Those groups and other indigenous groups, such as Maori people in New Zealand or non-white minority populations like African American, experience the same problems dealing with the discrimination as the implementation of repressive assimilation forced by the colonizer.

Especially for the Aborigines, the repressive assimilation experienced is interesting to be discussed since this process includes many groups that come from both inside and outside the continent. Regarding the heterogeneous background of its citizen, Australia is one of the biggest heterogeneous countries in the world. Since the British' expansion started in 1788, not only British people but also many Europeans have been immigrating to this continent country, even many people from other continents. Consequently, social processes have to be done for maintaining the same consciousness as a nation, in which the assimilation process is viewed as an attempt to reach that consciousness. Unfortunately, the Aborigines are not treated equally to other White groups in Australian assimilation although this indigenous people had already been living in Australia long before the British arrived.

When the British settlement was started in the sixteenth century, Eleanor Bourke in *Aboriginal Australia* stated that there were 300,000 to over a million Aborigines inhabiting the continent (35). For more than two hundred years, these

² Through the Eurocentric language applied by Eurocentrism, there are terms of *First World* that refers to Britain, Europe, and the United States; *Second World* that refers to the White populations of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and southern Africa; *Third World* that refers to the developing nations; and *Fourth World* that refers to the indigenous populations subjugated by white settlers and governed by the majority culture surrounds them (Tyson 367).

indigenous Australian people have to adapt to European life and suffer from the discrimination in their daily lives. Northern Territory anthropologist Dick Kimber even stated in 1983, "Every Aboriginal in this part of the country can state, quite correctly, that at least one of his relatives has been shot by a white man." (qtd. in Knightley 111). Moreover, Phillip Knightley notes that for more than 150 years the Aboriginal population has declined from an estimated 300,000 to about 75,000; in which many of them were murdered by the White settlers and the others died from the smallpox, tuberculosis, and malnutrition (108). Another form of repression that has to be faced by the Aborigines is the *stolen generation* affair, in which 'half-caste' children were seized and kidnapped from their mother by the government then placed in institution where they suffered physical mistreatment and sexual abuse (Knightley 112). Until the 1960s, the Aborigines were also segregated in many activities, where hospitals had separate verandah for the Aborigines or schools could refuse Aboriginal children (Stafford 305).

In addition, the process of assimilation becomes harder for the Aborigines since they have different perspective in looking at their lives and environment. For example, culturally they considered land as a sacred place, and Bourke points out that "the whole of the landscape is conceived as having been formed through the activities of the Spirit Beings" (36). It influences the Aborigines' values and way of life, like living nomadically and celebrating cultural or sacred traits in their land. Unfortunately, the Whites or Australian new comers do not have the same perspective and it leads them to look at the Aborigines as uncivilized people that have to be "civilized".

This thought gives some impacts in threatening the Aborigines in Australian society. There were some policies based on the thought that discriminate the Aborigines, like *Aborigines Protection Act* 1869, 1905, 1909, or 1939, which all of them reduce the Aborigines' right as human beings. *The Commonwealth Constitution Act* of 1901 even specifically excluded the Aborigines from Australian citizens and some entitlements. It made them ineligible for some services like the age pension and unemployment benefits (Bourke 41).

As a result of discrimination experienced, the Aborigines are forced to struggle so that they can survive under the White's repression. What happened with the Aborigines is interesting to be analyzed deeper since they do not seem to expose an ideal assimilation in the process of building Australian society. After the White Australians celebrated their bicentenary, the gap between them and the Aborigines is remarkably large. "In areas such as health, employment, education and general quality of life, the Aborigines are far from equal." (Stafford 307). The Aborigines' problems in identifying themselves, trying to increase their social condition, and facing social problems dealing with crime, alcoholism, discrimination, prejudice, or the deaths in custody are interested to be discussed as the assimilation policy's impacts, which ideally can reach Australian integration and better condition for both majority and minority groups in Australian society.

The issues of Aborigines' survival under the White's repression can be found not only in Australian daily life but also in Australian literary works, especially in Aboriginal works. Justine Saunders's introduction in *Plays from*

Black Australia gives examples that the early Aboriginal plays for were written in prison and theatre was used as a forum to express their protest (vii). Recent plays are used to explore the Aborigines' own interest in maintaining the resistance against the Whites as the oppressor, by describing the suffering of the colonized people and the bad effect of "othering" practice that they have to experience. It can be analyzed also as a new wave that colors Australian literature with the indigenous' suffering theme. Here, the plays from black Australia can enrich the previous themes like homogeneous Australian society in 1940s and 1950s, the White suburban population in 1960s, or the diversity of Australian ethos in 1970s, that are dominated by the White playwrights (Hochman 229-231).

Murras, which was performed in 1988, is one of those black Australian plays that depict the Aboriginal survival themes. It was written by Eva Johnson, one of the Aboriginal woman playwrights. She is an Aboriginal Artist of the Year in 1984, who is also a feminist, political activist, traveling performer and speaker (Saunders 232). The Aborigines' survival theme is portrayed clearly in this play through the description of the assimilation policy experienced by the Aborigines and how it affects their life. The writer is interested to analyze deeper the implementation of Australian government' policy of assimilation since the events in the play raises a question whether this policy is applied to gain integration naturally or it is applied politically to practice the activity of 'othering' the Aborigines in their own land. Later on, this thesis will try to answer that curiosity by exploring the implementation, the impact, and how far the Australian government's policy of assimilation reaches its goals toward the Aborigines.

B. Statement of the Problems

The analysis to describe about the implementation of Australian government's policy of assimilation toward Aborigines in Eva Johnson's *Murras* will be done by answering three formulated questions as follow :

1. How do the Aborigines view the implementation of Australian government's policy of assimilation ?
2. To what extent does Australian government's policy of assimilation affect the Aborigines' life ?
3. How is the Aborigines' condition through the implementation of assimilation policy ?

C. Objective of the Study

Based on the statement of the problems above, the objectives of this thesis are :

1. To explore the Aborigines' view about the implementation of Australian government's policy of assimilation as seen on the play.
2. To observe the impact of Australian government's policy of assimilation toward the Aborigines' life.
3. To notice the Aborigines' condition after they move to the town in obeying the assimilation policy.

D. Significance of the Study

The aim of this thesis is to inform about Eva Johnson's *Murras*, one of the twentieth century Australian plays that is written by an Aboriginal playwright. Moreover, the selected topic of this thesis is aimed to describe and explore more about the Aborigines' struggle as indigenous people in Australia who have to experience the repression from the Whites, especially through the policy of assimilation that is mainly portrayed in the play.

By analyzing Australian government's policy of assimilation toward the Aborigines, the writer hopes that there will be a new readers' awareness in looking at minority groups in society. Learning from the Aborigines' case portrayed in the play, hopefully the reader will have a new perspective in treating the minority groups. They should be treated as human beings who deserve to be respected as the way they are. Thereby these groups will not be treated as the 'other' that do not seem to be equal just because they have different culture, condition, or way of life.

E. Scope and Limitation

In order to make an objective and systematic analysis, the writer will focus the analysis on the topic of Australian government's policy of assimilation only. This main topic will be illuminated by exploring the implementation, the impact, and how far the assimilation policy reaches its goals toward the Aborigines as portrayed in Eva Johnson's *Murras*. The events, dialogues, action, and setting background of the play will be analyzed to gain the purpose of the analysis. In

this case, the policy of assimilation's historical background and the recent Aborigines' condition will be considered as supporting data analyzed.

F. Theoretical Background

In analyzing the implementation of the Australian government's policy of assimilation, its impact, and its success in reaching its goals, postcolonial criticism will be applied for gaining a deeper understanding about the Aborigines' point of view in surviving under the Whites' repression. Looking from its Aboriginal author, *Murras* can be assumed as an effort to explore the Aborigines' own interest. Therefore, the writer will apply Homi K. Bhabha's theory that takes a side on post colonial's problems from the perspective of the colonized.

Through this perspective, the Aborigines can be seen as the oppressed who become the object of the practice of assimilation policy. More specifically, the writer will explore the Aborigines' view and what they feel about the assimilation policy that is psychologically wrapped through unhomeliness feeling. As Leela Gandhi said, "in Bhabha's characteristic interjections, colonialism is read as the perverse instigator of a politics of 'un-homeliness'." (132). From the Aborigines' description throughout the play, it can be assumed that they are being 'unhomed', which Louis Tyson defines as "to feel not at home even in your own home because you are not at home in yourself: your cultural identity crisis has made you a psychological refugee, so to speak." (368).

Moreover, Bhabha's theory gives a great contribution and guidance to explore the Aboriginal life as the impact of assimilation. It is also applied to get

deeper analyzing about how far the policy of assimilation reaches its goals and what makes it happened. Lastly, in order to support the analysis, the writer will also consider some related studies dealing with the play itself, the Aborigines' life, and the Australian government's policy of assimilation.

G. Method of the Study

The analysis of this thesis will be done through descriptive-qualitative method, by collecting and gaining data first from the text itself. The writer will explore the description of dialogues, language, setting, characters' attitude, events, and any symbols dealing with the Aborigines' feeling inside the play. Based on those data, the writer will try to analyze how it represents the Aborigines' feeling in looking at the assimilation policy they have to face and how this feeling, that is defined as unhomeliness feeling by Homi K. Bhabha, affects their life.

The writer will also carry out the library research by collecting the printed materials dealing with *Murras*, Australian government's policy of assimilation, and any topics about Aborigines' social lives, which can be gained from literary books, essays, critics, articles, and from the Internet. Those materials will then be classified and selected to get more focused data. Later, it will be used to support the analysis in exploring the Aborigines' condition before and after obeying the government's command through the implementation of assimilation policy. The writer will take it as a consideration in measuring how far the assimilation policy reaches its goals as it is portrayed in Eva Johnson's *Murras*.

H. Definition of Key Terms

The Whites : the White Australian that consists of the White Australian citizens who was born in Australia or the White immigrants who live in Australia

The Dreaming : the Aborigines' hereditary belief that becomes the pattern of life and influences the Aborigines' thoughts.

assimilation policy : a policy done by the Australian government to unite many groups in Australian society so that a single Australian community can be reached. In doing so, the Aborigines are forced to move from the country to the town so there will be a wider opportunity for the integration between the indigenous people and the Whites as the new comer in Australia.

unhomeliness feeling : a feeling experienced by the colonized people that appears from the depression in being psychological refuge in their homeland. Physically they are still at their homeland, but they do not have any freedom to maintain their own hereditary lives since they are forced to follow the colonizer' demands.

in-between reality : a psychological problem experienced by the colonized people dealing with the difficulty in being torn between their own culture and the colonizer's culture. They can not

maintain their indigenous culture, but at the same time they can not follow the colonizer's culture either.

othering : **the practice of judging all people who are different as 'other', thus become inferior. Since they are inferior, this people are considered lower and treated discriminatively.**

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW