

**DISCRIMINATION AS SEEN IN
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE***

A Thesis

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ABSTRAK

Skripsi ini membahas diskriminasi yang pernah terjadi di Venezia pada abad 16 melalui drama *The Merchant of Venice*. Penulis menggunakan salah satu konsep pendekatan sosiologi dari Alan Swingewood dan Laurenson yaitu menganalisa karya sastra dari sudut pandang kondisi sosial dan sejarah pada saat karya ditulis. Dalam pengumpulan data penulis menggunakan metode kualitatif yang dijabarkan secara deskriptif. Analisa sosiologi digunakan untuk membandingkan fakta diskriminasi yang terjadi pada bangsa Yahudi sepanjang abad 16 di Venezia dengan deskripsi dalam drama.

Dari analisa dapat disimpulkan bahwa dominasi Kristen dalam pemerintahan menjadi kekuatan utama untuk menekan bangsa Yahudi di Venezia disamping melalui perang pemikiran. Dalam kajian ini diskriminasi dibagi kedalam 4 bagian yaitu, agama, hukum, kehidupan sosial dan ekonomi. Seperti yang digambarkan melalui karakter Shylock. Sebagai seorang Yahudi Shylock dibenci oleh Antonio karena dianggap penganut aliran sesat. Shylock juga mendapat perlakuan yang tidak sama dengan Antonio di hadapan hukum. Mulai dari penyambutan di pengadilan, hukum, konspirasi oleh Portia dan Nerissa, dan penyalahgunaan hukum, semuanya untuk menyelamatkan Antonio. Bekerja sebagai kreditur bagi Kristen agar bertahan di Venezia, Shylock hanya mengambil untung dari bunga pinjaman, tapi pemerintah menurunkan bunga bahkan Antonio mempermalukannya di sebuah pertemuan pedagang dengan menuduh Shylock sebagai tengkulak. Dalam drama ini juga digambarkan Jessica yang hidup di Ghetto.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Study

Literary work is a product of human thought, which is created by the author as the result of what he thinks, sees, and feels as emotion and imagination. Literary work as the product of literature, may give us knowledge about everything. A literary work reveals the certain situation and society based on style of the author. The literary work may be revealed by full of imagination, full of facts, and balance each other. There are several types of literary works. They are drama or play, novel, poetry, etc.

One of the forms of literary work is drama. Drama is usually called play. Drama usually describes its character by acting on the stage. The message can be received directly by the audience. The message may contain the value of life that should be applied in our life. As Reaske states in his book *How to Analyze Drama*:

A drama is a work of literature or a composition which delineates life and human activity by means of presenting various actions of – and dialogue – a group of characters. (1996; 5)

Discrimination is a problem of inter-group relations. Each concrete problem of inter-group relations has its own unique historical-cultural context (Rose, 1961: 426). It means the discrimination has different term in each society. The differences are based on contemporary social forces and historical improvement.

William Shakespeare is the famous author in literature. Most of his works are popular. One of his works is *The Merchant of Venice*. This play takes place in a liberty state, Venice. *The Merchant of Venice* reflects the social life in liberty state during the 16th century. This play had been written in 1596 and had been performed firstly between 1596 and 1597. The main inspiration of this play is "The Jew Malta" by Christopher Marlowe. From the main character in "The Jew Malta", Barabas, Shakespeare decides to develop the Shylock character. The story in this play is also inspired from Italian story entitled "Giannetto and the Lady of Belmont" which exists in "Il Pecorone's" masterpiece story corps by Giovanni Florentine (Brown, 1955; xxvi-xxxii).

The writer chooses William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* as the object in his study because this play is related to discrimination. *The Merchant of Venice* tells about Christians discriminate Jews during the 16th century. At that time, there was no tolerance to Jews. The Jews were lower class. By the law, the Jews were forced to live in the old walled foundry called "Ghetto". The gate was locked and guarded by Christians after sundown. In daytime, a Jew had to wear a red hat to mark him as a Jew, and they were also forbidden to own property. On the other side, the Jews survive in Venice by practicing usury, lending money with interest. Shakespeare shows the discrimination in *The Merchant of Venice*:

Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with that same food, hurt with same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed with by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as Christian is? if you prick us do we not bleed? if you tickle us do we not laugh? if you poison us do we not die? and if you wrong us shall we not revenge?—if we are like

you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? revenge! If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example?---revenge?

(Act III. I. 52-60)

Sociological approach talks about society, humanity phenomena, life, etc. Discrimination is a big problem in society. The writer applies sociological approach in his research because sociological approach is more appropriate in analyzing humanity phenomena like discrimination.

Moreover, previous students in English Department, Faculty of Letters Andalas University, have not analyzed discrimination in *The Merchant of Venice*.

Considering these problems above; the messages in the play can be received directly, the play discuss about discrimination in a liberal state, and concept of theory, the writer takes this play for his analysis. Therefore, he entitles his research:

Discrimination as Seen in William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*

1.2 The Statement of the Problem

The discrimination in Venice is one of the problems that writer finds in *The Merchant of Venice*. The writer sees a lot of things happen which indicate discrimination, such as Shylock is called as misbeliever by Antonio, Shylock cannot get his right in law; Antonio's flesh, Antonio does not get punishment from law of Venice while he cannot pay the debt to Shylock, Jessica makes

fast door through window from her house when Lorenzo fetches her at night, and the confiscation of Shylock properties.

The writer focuses his analysis on the discrimination in *The Merchant of Venice* into four aspects; religion, law, social life and economic aspect. The writer believes that those four aspects above can represent the discrimination in Venice in 16th century.

1.3 The Limitation of the Study

The writer emphasizes two major points in this research. They are:

1. Describing about discrimination in Venice during 16th century through library research.
2. Reflecting discrimination in Venice into four aspects; religion, law, social life, and economy as seen in William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*.

1.4 The Objective of the Study

The aim of this study is to describe the discrimination in Venice during the 16th century as seen in William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. The writer analyzes this play to show that this play contains religious, law, social life, and economic issues about the discrimination as reflected in the main character in *The Merchant of Venice*. Then, the writer compares with the historical facts.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

After analyzing *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare, the writer finds that the play consists of Shakespeare's critics on social condition during the 16th century. Through *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare criticizes the society in Venice during the sixteenth century especially on discrimination. The discrimination toward Jews by Christians in Venice during 16th century, hold down, corner mind of the Jews, took the Jews' freedom, and domination Christian to Jews. It is different with discrimination in other countries in Europe which expulse them. The Venetians offer a liberal solution in discrimination; Republic of Venice allows the Jews to build synagogue inside Ghetto, but sequesters them to rebuild the economy. It is better life than the Jews outside Venice. The discrimination in Venice comes into four sides of life such as religion, law, social, and economy.

During the 16th century, Venetians more discriminate the Jews through mind-war and corner mind of Jews such as, making some propaganda about teaching such as call the Jews as misbelievers, decide the Jews as pollutants to their Christianity, and Christianity as the blessed religion by God. Shakespeare describes it with Shylock and Launcelot. Shylock is called misbeliever who polluted Christianity. Launcelot offers his service to Bassanio because he sees Christianity which is graced by God.

There is no justice in law of Venice. The influence and domination of Christianity develops rapidly in Venice law. It is wielded by Christian to

discriminate the Jews. Law of Venice only protects and services the Christians. Shakespeare reveals this situation through Shylock who receives unfair treatment from the law of Venice and cannot get his bond. Furthermore, the law of Venice also makes Shylock lose his wealthy. Christians make the law by the name of Christianity, enact the law which hurts the Jews, manipulate the law, and give different treatment in the judgment. These are the forms of discrimination in law of Venice.

In social life during the 16th century, the Jews couldn't enjoy convenience like Christians because they were separated and limited from community. In *The Merchant of Venice*, it can be seen through Jessica, she must make a fast door wearing boy's clothes to leave Ghetto at night. The Jews live in Ghetto which is locked at night, and they are forced to wear Red Hat if they left the Ghetto.

The Christians wield their leadership to get majority status and dominate to the Jews. The power of economy which is owned by Jews cannot make majority status. The Jews are exploited in economy to improve the Venice's economy after war. Shylock is wielded by Antonio when Antonio wants to borrow his money because Antonio had spat him and disgrace him on usury. Shylock and Tubal, the Jews moneylenders, are the reflection of job limitation toward Jews in Venice as seen in *The Merchant of Venice*. The prudence in economy which gives advantages for Christian only is the form of discrimination in economy in Venice. For example, decreasing the rate of interest and forbidding usury, limiting the job for the Jews, and wielding the Jews wealth.

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