

## Social Discrimination in the Poetry "Der Schwarze In Der Zuckerplantage" by Matthias Claudius

(A Sociology of Literature Analysis)

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**Abstract.** Discrimination is a symptom that is often found in human society everywhere. The causes of discrimination are motivated by socio-cultural and situational developments, as well as the human tendency to discriminate between one another. This study aims to 1) Describe the social aspects contained in the poem Der Schwarze In Der Zuckerplantage by Matthias Claudius which based on the perspective of (a) Literature as a mirror of the writer's social situation and (b) Literature as a manifestation of historical events and social conditions when the poem was created; 2) describes the forms of socially discriminatory behavior found in the poem. This research was conducted using a qualitative approach and produced descriptive data. Based on the results, it can be concluded that the forms of discrimination contained in the poem Der Schwarze In Der Zuckerplantage by Matthias Claudius are racial/ethnic discrimination and social status with direct discrimination actions or treatments. Based on the findings and results of the research, it is concluded that the poem Der Schwarze In Der Zuckerplantage is closely related to the background of Matthias Claudius as an author, in which this poem reflects the ideology of the author against slavery. This poem contains criticism of white people who consider themselves superior, smart and respectable too. Literary research is broad, not limited to poetry and the sociology of literature, It can also be in prose or other literary works. So for further research, it would be possible to expand the study.

**Keywords:** Discrimination · Social Aspects · Sociology of Literature

#### Introduction 1

Discrimination is a symptom that is often found in human society everywhere. According to Theodorson & Theodorson (in Listanti 2016: 10–11) discrimination is unequal treatment of groups based on something, usually categorical, or distinctive attributes, such as based on race, ethnicity, religion, or membership of social classes. The term will usually describe an action of the dominant majority in relation to a weak minority, so that it can be said that their behavior is immoral and undemocratic. In a sense, discrimination

means unequal treatment of a certain group of people or individuals, which is basically the same as a group of people who are the perpetrators of discrimination themselves.

The causes of discrimination are motivated by socio-cultural and situational developments, as well as the human tendency to discriminate between one another. Other factors can also occur due to differences in belief and religion of an individual or group in society as well as differences in race, gender, ethnicity that cause injustice. Thus, it can be concluded that discrimination is a social phenomenon and is a reality of life that occurs in society. The means to express the social situation is through literary works.

Literature is a reflection of the reality of life. This statement is in accordance with what was stated by Sangidu (2004: 38) who said that literary works are strands of feelings and social reality in all aspects of human life that have been well and beautifully arranged in the form of concrete objects in the form of literary works. Literature is also seen as a social phenomenon because literary works written by authors in a certain period of time are generally directly related to the norms and customs of that era.

In connection with the understanding that literary works are a social mirror, and because they contain many social values, literary experts try to explore the social values contained in these works by using various approaches to literary studies. One of the research models is the sociology of literature. Damono (in Sutanto 2016) explains that sociology is an objective and scientific study of humans in society, the study of social institutions and processes.

Sociology and literature are vehicles for human understanding. Between the two, there is a common view of human facts. Sociology tries to study social institutions and all economic, religious, political and other issues. The way humans adapt to their environment, about the mechanism of socialization, the civilizing process that places com munity members in their respective places. Literature will also aim at things that are rarely or may not be understood by sociologists. Literature offers a unique human life that is imaginative. Therefore, by using a sociological study of literature, researchers can describe the background of the author related to the poem he/she created.

The reason why is this poem used as the object of this research is because it talks about social problems in the form of discrimination, conveyed that humans must respect each other and avoid acts of violence, oppression and other discriminatory behavior, how important it is to respect each other even though from different ethnicities, races and social status.

This study aims to examine the poem Der Schwarze In Der Zuckerplantage by Matthias Claudius. This poem tells about the slavery that occurred in Germany at the time as this poem created. In the 17th century, the trade or buying and selling of cheap labor for sugar cane, cotton and tobacco plantations in the Americas, had reached an unprecedented level. The poem Der Schwarze In Der Zuckerplantage was written in Munich in 1773 and was written in the Aufklärung era, where at this time human reason can and will give birth to human progress towards freedom and unstoppable happiness. The word Aufklärung itself is a slogan for struggle, because it means enlightenment of the soul, liberation from pressure, the destruction of all evil, for example torture in justice.

Referring to what has been stated, the problem and focus of this research are related to social aspects and social discrimination in the poem Der Schwarze In Der Zuckerplantage

by Matthias Claudius using the study of sociology of literature. To understand and find out more about the background of the author, as well as the things behind the writing of this poem, an in-depth study is needed to achieve the objectives of this research.

This study aims to describe: the social aspects contained in the poem Der Schwarze In Der Zuckerplantage by Matthias Claudius which consists of perspective; (a) Literature as a mirror of the writer's social situation and (b) Literature as a manifestation of historical events and social conditions at the time. When the poem was created, and c) describes the forms of socially discriminatory behavior found in the poem Der Schwarze In Der Zuckerplantage by Matthias Claudius.

Several similar studies that have previously been studied include:

Fitri et al. (2019: 48–59) researched the Novel Debu-Debu Rakhie by Zhaenal Fanani using a sociological approach to literature. This research will also use a sociological approach to literature and qualitative descriptive methods. While the difference lies in the object of research. The previous researcher researched a novel while the research that will be conducted is a poem by Matthias Claudius.

Saludung et al. (2019) researched a novel entitled Kedai 1001 Dreams by Valiant Budi using a sociological review of literature. The methods and approaches used in this study and the research to be carried out are both using qualitative descriptive methods and literary sociology approaches. The difference lies in the object of research where this study examines novel literary works. This previous research focused on majority discrimination against minorities and used Pettigrew's Discrimination Approach theory.

### 2 Method

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach and produced descriptive data. This study will describe social discrimination in the poem Der Schwarze In Der Zuckerplantage by Matthias Claudius using a sociological study of literature followed by analysis.

The main data source in this study uses written data sources. Written sources can be divided into sources of scientific books and magazines, sources from archives, personal documents and official documents of Maleong (in Tyas 2018: 32). The written source in this research is the poem DerSchwarze In Der Zuckerplantage by Matthias Claudius which was obtained from the bilingual poetry anthology book Blauer Abend In Berli, by the authors Berthold Damshäuser and Ramadhan K. H, published in 1989. Other data sources related to this research were obtained from books, journals and articles on the internet that are relevant to this research.

### 3 Results and Discussions

In this section, the poem Der Schwarze In der Zuckerplantage by Matthias Claudius will be analyzed based on a sociological approach to literature. In principle, there are three perspectives related to the sociology of literature research, namely; 1) Literary works as a mirror of the author's social situation; 2) Literary work as a social document that reflects the social situation at the time the literary work was created; 3) Literary works as a manifestation of historical events and socio-cultural conditions (Laurenson

and Swingewood 1971; Endraswara 2011). Therefore, the analysis of this poem refers to these three perspectives, where the study is conducted to see how the poem Der Schwarze In Der Zuckerplantage is associated with the social background of Matthias Claudius as an author, as well as the socio-cultural and historical situation at the time this poem was created.

### Matthias Claudius and the Poem "Der Schwarze In Der Zuckerplantage"

Matthias Claudius or better known by his pen name "Asmus" is a German poet and journalist. Claudius was the son of a priest. He was born in Reinfeld, near Luebeck on 15 August 1740, and died on 21 January 1815 in Hamburg. Claudius had studied at a Latin school in Plön. Then in 1759–1762 he continued his education at the University of Jena in the fields of theology, law and philosophy before finally becoming a poet and journalist. While studying at university, he began to find his love for literature and tried to write some of his works.

In 1763 he returned to Reinfald until the following year Claudius began working as secretary to Count Holstein in Copenhagen until 1765. Matthias Claudius then decided to go to Hamburg in 1768 and worked there as a journalist and editor for the journal Hamburgische Adreβ-Comptoir-Nachrichten, where he published his poetry and prose. This activity was the beginning of his entry into the world of journalism, which he passionately pursued and developed his own journaling style. Claudius is also known as a faithful and pious Christian and a fighter against the arbitrariness of the higher-ups.

The writer whose full name is Matthias Claudius is one of the German writers who worked in the Aufklärung or Enlightenment period. It is called the Enlightenment because this period is marked by the thoughts of philosophers who are considered to be the liberation of humans from the restraints of old dogmas and traditions, and the emergence of the scientific method and the understanding of individual freedom. The Aufklärung period took place in the 18th century. At this time, European society got enlightenment from the dark ages by starting to be optimistic to advance in thought and science and technology, this period was also inseparable from the influence of the Renaissance as the previous movement and was the bitter result of empiricism and rationalism that arose earlier. The Aufklärung movement swept through almost all of Europe, especially in the UK, France and Germany.

The poem "Der Schwarze in der Zuckerplantage" was written by Matthias Claudius in 1773. It is well known that in those years Matthias Claudius worked as an editor and publisher for Heinrich Carl Schimmelmann's newspaper 'Wandsbecker Bothe'. The years he worked at the newspaper were the time of the German colonial war. Heinrich Carl Schimmelmann (1724–1782) who was the owner of the newspaper 'Wandsbecker Bothe'. Who was a big trader who did triangular trade between continents also took big profits from this colonial war, started a transportation business and traded colonial goods in Dresden, he also traded people who were then made into slaves.

Matthias Claudius found out about slavery, which in his time was considered normal. Because he was a pious person and opposed to tyranny, he felt that slavery was an act of injustice and inhumanity, so he wrote a poem criticizing black slavery, where there was a black slave trade and then they were used as hunters and worked on sugar cane plantations., cotton, etc. In his poem "Der Schwarze in der Zuckerplantage", he shows his compassion for the poor black man.

The content of this poem created by Claudius, describes or reflects his ideology as a devout Christian by writing his views on the tyranny of the black race who were made slaves and the forced labor system. As illustrated in lines 1–3;

Welt von meinem Vaterlande.

Muss ich hier verschmacten und vergehn,

Ohne Trost, in Müh und Schande;

"Far from spilling my blood.

I'm here forced to starve to death and disappear,

Without entertainment, tormented and humiliated;"

In addition, this poem contains Claudius's critique of white people who always think of themselves as smart and honorable, so that they act arbitrarily to black people who are treated as slaves. This is illustrated in lines 4 and 5;

Ohhh die weißen Männer!! Klug und schön!

Und ich hab den Männern ohne Erbarmen

"Ahhh, that Caucasian!! So clever, so capable!

And the bad thing I never do".

Through this poem, Claudius also expresses his spirituality as a Christian who believes in God the ruler of the universe who controls humans. This is clearly illustrated in lines 10 and 11, namely;

Du im Himmel! hilf mir armen

Schwarzen Mann!

"You in the sky! Help me

Poor black man!"

### Historical Background and Socio-cultural Situation

The historical background and socio-cultural situation of Europe at the beginning of the 16th century to the 19th century was colored by various events of colonialism. Starting from European traders who found the largest trading centers outside of Europe, namely in Africa and Latin America which became the source of their profits to the Hanseatic merchants who were an economic alliance of trading cities, establishing many factories on the coast of Africa and Latin America to exchange goods, with raw materials and slaves. These traders carried out triangular trade between continents, namely Africa, Latin America, and Europe with trafficked humans, especially black people who were made slaves, products from plantations, and factories. This is not yet complete: the link between inland Africa and the coast has even been obliterated.

So many import and export businesses were profitable for the big traders at that time, that it changed the urban infrastructure in Hamburg, such as the construction of new districts, port facilities and industrial estates that were built in such a way. The proletariat toiled in the factories producing barter goods for the colonies as well as raw materials coming from abroad. The pioneers of the Hanseatic colonials themselves were large traders who became global traders across continents. They were large landowners, war profiteers, and proponents of the slave trade. They clean the areas, ¬¬¬¬which have been taken by their experts to be used as large monocultures or agricultural land and cultivation, carry out punitive expeditions into the interior of African countries to forcibly move workers to work on their plantations. They also manipulated the government in their own way so that the merchants received military support.

1792 a ban on the slave trade appeared in Denmark. The ban on the Danish slave trade was a wise first step towards stopping the global slave trade. While the emancipation of slaves had long existed in the adjacent British Isles, in the Danish Virginia Islands the slaves had not even attained liberation where there was still forced labor and injustice against them until 1848.

Slaves transported by Atlantic ships were crammed together into a 1.50 m high storage compartment – this caused many of them to die during the crossing. Historians estimate the total number of those who fled Africa between the 16th and 19th centuries was 15 to 20 million. Most of the slaves who were branded with a hot iron on the chest with the initials "S" were slaves owned by Schimmelmann. (http://www.afrika-hamburg.de/plantage.html).

Through this poem Der Schwarze In Der Zuckerplantage, the author tries to describe the colonial situation that happened to black Africans at that time and also wants to describe what the social views of white westerners were like towards black people. This is clearly illustrated in the poem as well as in the history and situation at that time which became the background for the creation of this poem, how white people thought that they were honorable, smart and powerful people so that black Africans were seen as stupid, dirty, even considered animals, deserves to be slaves and does not deserve to be side by side with the white race.

The white race community also assumes that the existence of skin differences indicates social caste and a higher position in society. Meanwhile, people with the black race will forever be marginalized because they are considered incompetent and uncivilized. This has also become a problem of social life for black people, so that they have difficulty finding their own identity as human beings who are actually the same in the eyes of God.

Based on the description above, it can be said that the poem Der Schwarze In Der Zuckerplantge created by Matthias Claudius was strongly influenced by the socio-cultural historical background of Europe, especially Germany in the 18th century. This poem was born in the midst of the hustle and bustle of the colonial war at that time, where the African territories were controlled by colonial traders to be used as monocultures and even black Africans and Latin Americans were traded to become slaves and work in sugarcane, cotton, etc. plantations which then the slavery system became a means for profitable economic progress and enriched themselves. So it can be concluded that it is clear that historical and socio-cultural backgrounds have a big role in the creation of a literary work.

# Forms of Social Discrimination Behavior in the Poem Der Schwarze in Der Zueckerplantage by Matthias Claudius

The treatment of social discrimination depicted in this poem can be described as follows:

### Race Discrimination

The types of discrimination found in the first line to the third line in this poem, namely the racial discrimination depicted in this poem are in the stanzas:

Welt von meinem Vaterlande.

Muss ich hier verschmacten und vergehn,

Ohne Trost, in Müh und Schande;

"Far from spilling my blood.

I'm here forced to starve to death and disappear,

Without entertainment, tormented and humiliated;"

The colonial discourse can be felt in lines 1 to 3 of this poem, which in this line tells that they are sold and made slaves, far from their homeland, in the land of people who are tortured, humiliated and left to starve.

From the quote above, we can see as has been described and explained clearly the cruel treatments that were carried out such as torture, deprivation and even insults that had been carried out against black people at that time. This makes them live under pressure and become weaker.

### **Discrimination Based on Social Status**

The discrimination based on social status depicted in this poem is in the lines;

Ohhh die weißen Männer!! Klug und schön!

Und ich hab den Männern ohne Erbarmen

Nichts getan.

"Ahhh, that Caucasian!! So clever, so capable!

And the bad thing I've never done.

Against the merciless."

As is known in the opposition to racism, the position of black people is generally always on the side of being restrained both physically and psychologically from whites. This difference in skin color also brings a general representation of identity in society where white people are always considered civilized, intelligent and superior in all aspects when compared to black people. Vice versa, black people are always identified with stupid, emotional, rude and even scary. Even this discourse continues to develop from time to time which makes people instill the same concept or thing in their heads. This is what causes the appearance of inferiority in black people which is described in the poem Der Schwarze in Der Zückerplantage clearly visible in lines four, six and seven. "Ohhh die weiβen Männer!! Klug und schön!" and Du im Himmel! hilf mir armen Schwarzen Mann!

Du im Himmel! hilf mir armen

Schwarzen Mann!

"You in the sky! Help me

Poor black man!"

In stanzas six and seven, he describes himself as a black man. His low self-esteem is evident when he describes that he as black has lost his radiance and hope in life. He was even desperate to put hope and help from God.

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that the forms of discrimination contained in the poem Der Schwarze In Der Zuckerplantage by Matthias Claudius are racial/ethnic discrimination and social status with direct discrimination actions or treatments. Direct discrimination is an act of limiting a certain area such as settlements, types of work, public facilities and the like and also occurs when decision makers are directed by prejudices against certain groups. (Pettigrew: Charisma 2020: 14).

The result of this study certainly support the opinions of several experts, including Laurenson & Swingewood (Wahyudi, 2013, p.56), which states, that literature is a mirror of the social situation of the author. Literary work is the inner expression of the author

(Endraswara 2011, p.76). In line with what has been stated, literature is also seen as a social institution that presents life as social realities (Wellek & Warren (2014, p.98).

Sociology of literature research does emphasize the study of how the author is influenced by social class status, ideology, economic conditions and the state of the reader's society (Abrams, 2014, p,98). Research like this provides a complete picture of the interrelationships between authors, literary works and society (Jabrohim 2012, p.218).

### 4 Conclusions

Based on the findings and results of the research, it is concluded that the poem Der Schwarze In Der Zuckerplantage is closely related to the background of Matthias Claudius as an author, in which this poem reflects the ideology of the author against slavery and contains criticism of white people who consider themselves superior, smart and respectable.

The poem Der Schwarze In Der Zuckerplantage also strongly reflects the sociocultural situation at that time in which white people thought that they were honorable and intelligent people while black Africans were looked down upon, stupid, dirty, and deserved to be slaves. as a measure of one's social caste and position, so that people with the black race are marginalized because they are considered incompetent and uncivilized.

The form of social discrimination behavior contained in the poem Der Schwarze In Der Zuckerplantage is in the form of racial/ethnic discrimination based on social status.

Research on literary works is broad, not limited to poetry and sociology of literature, but also in prose or other literary works. So for further research, it would be possible to expand the study by re-analyzing using the sociology of literature approach on other research objects such as novels, short stories and other types of recent literary works and for researchers who will carry out studies using the sociology of literature approach, first collect various sources and references in terms of understanding the theory, the background of the literary work and the era in which the poem was created. This research also seems to be able to add reference to the literature for the German Language Education Study Program in literary studies research using a sociology of literature approach and analysis of discrimination in literary works.

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