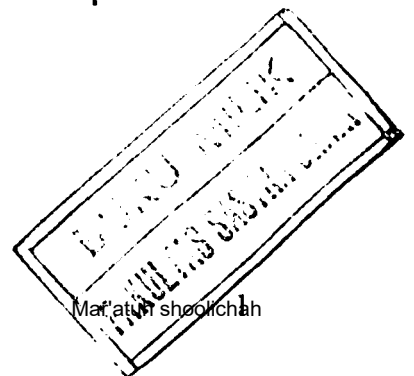


CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

History is something crucial and significant that cannot be separated from human's life. Some people believe that history is indeed very important to be considered in order to get valuable lessons for a better life in future. In contrast, some people believe that history is useless because it is just something in past time which should be forgotten. Some young people even believe that history is old-fashioned. Many historians have attempted to write past events into historical accounts, which they consider important to be known and learned by people from next generation. However, sometimes people find history books too boring. As a result, one may find it difficult to grasp meanings of history which might be different from the meanings told in such books. A clear example can be found in daily schooling when students are required to read historical chapters and remember things such as names and dates of historical events, services rendered by historical figures (such as heroes or heroines), and some other facts without really understanding what might be learned from those activities. Due to these phenomena, new interests have emerged to present and visualize history into some other media, beside history books. In this way, literature and art works play their roles. Movies, novels, poems, short stories, and plays have been produced to invite people to look at history in a different way.



Nowadays, this new way in telling history through art works and literature also emerges in Australia. However, those works usually tend to tell more about the most popular or the most typical historical issues in the country, for instance about history of Aboriginal people and their problems in relation with white settlers. In fact, such popular historical issues, which have been commonly heard, are not the only thing we can learn about Australia. There are still many other historical issues, which might be significant too, but not much exposed through works of literature.

One example of an Australian literary work which looks at the Australian history from another perspective is Alan Seymour's play entitled *The One Day of the Year*. This play talks about one Australian national holiday named Anzac Day with its history and its following ritual traditions, which perhaps, not many of us have heard about. Generally speaking, Anzac Day is known as one of the national holidays in Australia which commemorates the day of the landing of Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) in Gallipoli Peninsula, Turkey, on 25 April 1915.

Some people may probably think that the theme of this play is not interesting, and wonder how it can be interesting. In fact, by looking deeper, it is not impossible to find that actually this play, which was published in 1960, is valuable and interesting to be discussed. The way this play tells the story is not like the way a historically based movie tells a true story about facts happening in past years. In this play the story is not set in a particular time and place in which the real historical event occurred. It is set more than forty years after the event,

while the characters do not represent certain historical figures as exactly the same as they are in reality, but to reflect how such historical figures and events can be reinterpreted. Therefore, it can be said that *The One Day of the Year* is not a documentary work.

In his review article entitled “The One Day of the Year”, Nick Malligan mentions that the Executive Committee of the first Adelaide Arts Festival originally banned the play in 1960’s because its content was deemed too controversial. However, he adds, today the play ‘is heading to Newcastle’s Civic Theatre, following a very successful run of shows in Sidney’ (1). Also, he mentions about Max Cullen’s argument (Cullen was the one performed as Alf in that banned-performance) that ‘initially, people who banned the play hadn’t actually seen it’ (2). Therefore, it can be assured that there is something significant to be learned from this play.

Essentially, there is another thing that makes studying Seymour’s *The One Day of the Year* interesting. The day discussed in the play, Anzac Day, exists in reality and appears to be recorded in many historical accounts of Australia. Viewing from a new historical perspective, it can be found that the presentation of Anzac Day and its history in this play is quite different from what is commonly written as official history in many traditional historical references. The play does not concern merely on facts of past events, but rather on matter of interpretations toward those events. This is totally different from a classic historical account, which tends to tell more facts of events in history and to describe them in a conventional way. In this case, what is reported in such account will be the so-

called more acceptable information. Negative or even embarrassing issues about Anzac Day, which perhaps will not be written in official historical texts, appear in this play.

There are several historical accounts about Anzac Day and its history, which can be considered valid in providing the information in a conventional way. From these sources, which may be commonly said as the more legitimized history version of Australia, it can be seen in general that they share common information in describing Anzac Day. This is shown in the way they do not present descriptions, which may be deemed as improper to be told. It means that they will write those descriptions in such a way so that the readers will not get bad impressions about the day. One example is *The Concise Encyclopedia of Australia* edited by John Shaw, which states:

The Allied attack on the Gallipoli Peninsula during World War I holds a special place in Australian history. The participation of Australian troops, with distinction, in this particularly and highly publicized campaign aroused such admiration in their homeland that the date of their first landing, 25 April, is still celebrated each year as ANZAC DAY (271).

In *The One Day of the Year*, Anzac Day is described in two different ways. The first is described by some of the characters similarly as what is believed in traditional Australian history books. In contrast, other characters perceive the day not as a great day, but a mug's day, which in Australian term means a day of a

stupid person. This day is then believed as nothing to glorify. Moreover, soldiers who took part in the historical event of Anzac Day are also considered stupid soldiers, whereas the ritual traditions during the day are all a waste.

From the description of Anzac Day both according to the official history and to Seymour's *The One Day of the Year*, there are differences in matter of interpretations. The main motivation in this study is to dig more on how these differences emerge and what can be learned from the representation of Anzac Day in the play, particularly based on the perspectives of New Historicism.

B. Statement of the Problems

This study finds three significant problems to be discussed which are formulated into three statements:

1. How does the traditional version of Australian historical accounts see Anzac Day?
2. How does Alan Seymour's *The One Day of the Year* tell about Anzac Day differently from the traditional history version?
3. How will the representation of Anzac Day in the play be seen based on New Historical perspectives?

C. Objectives of the Study

There are three objectives of this study related to the statements of the problem above:

1. To know more about the description of Anzac Day according to some historical documents, particularly written in traditional version.
2. To know how Anzac Day is described differently into a play, with comparison to the traditional history version. In this case, the play is *The One Day of the Year*.
3. To discuss what might be said about the representation of Anzac Day, which appears in *The One Day of the Year*, based on the perspectives of New Historicism.

D. Limitation of the Study

This study would involve more discussions on the different representations of Anzac Day including its history and ritual traditions, which are portrayed in Seymour's *The One Day of the Year*. In this case, these Anzac Day representations are compared to what is written in some historical accounts, which usually provide the so-called official history. This limitation is found to be the most significant and the most relevant.

E. Significance of the Study

First of all, this study is based on the significance of developing a new historical perspective within insights into history. This is basically important since life at present as well as in the future is inevitably influenced by past life. By broadening worldview with a new historical outlook, especially through analyzing Seymour's work *The One Day of the Year*, ones are expected to be more open-

minded in regarding something in life as positive or negative. In this way, this study also expects people to be more aware of respecting others' interpretations about any facts, rather than only debating the accuracy of those facts.

The next expectation for this study is to share a valuable experience to other students, especially the students of English Department Airlangga University, who are also interested in new historicism reading. This study is also aimed to add a contribution to the Faculty of Letters, specifically in terms of studying history with a new historical outlook. One of the reasons is because readings in new historicism are not as many to be found as any other readings in other literary theories.

F. Theory of the Study

A relevant theory is certainly necessary to fulfill the objectives of the study. Here, the theory of New Historicism is determined to be the most relevant theory since different outlooks in interpreting a historical fact is one of the concerns of New Historicism. In this case, the play is a new historical work, which interprets history of Anzac Day in a new historical way.

According to Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory*, new historical critics, particularly Louis Montrose, give 'equal weight' on literary and non-literary materials (172). It means both literary and non-literary texts can be analyzed together since they can inform and interrogate each other. Conversely, Barry suggests, old historical criticism will separate literary and non-literary texts into two considerations: 'the object of value' and the 'lesser worth' (174). In

accordance to the relationship of literary and non-literary texts, this study also takes into account several historical texts beside the play itself.

Moreover, Barry mentions, new historicism implicitly supports 'liberal ideals of personal freedom' and celebrates 'all forms of difference,' and even, the so-called 'deviance' (175). In this play itself, the forms of difference, especially on interpretations, are presented seriously.

Lois Tyson in *Critical Theory Today* suggests, new historicists believe that traditional historians may know about some events of history, but their 'understanding of what such facts mean,' is 'a matter of interpretation, not fact'. This implies, what kind of story that will be told is determined by how historians select and deem which ones are important to report and which ones are not. Thus, new historicism believes that it seems impossible to make an objective analysis (279). In giving any definition and interpretation to any historical fact, Tyson proposes that new historicists always involve in what so-called as 'thick description,' not as a search for facts, but a search for meanings (285).

In relation to the new historical views about the impossibility of objective analysis toward historical events, Michel Foucault proposes that 'all definitions are social constructs by means of which ruling powers maintain their control' (qtd. in Tyson, 282). These can be definitions of right or wrong, for instance. In addition, Foucault gives reason that 'power circulates in all directions, to and from all social levels, at all times' (qtd. in Tyson, 281). One of the ways in which power circulates is through the exchanges of the various discourses. Tyson explains that a discourse is 'a social language created by particular cultural

conditions at a particular time and place, and it expresses a particular way of understanding human experience' (281).

G. Method of the Study

Basically, this study is conducted as a qualitative study. There are several steps that fundamentally must be taken. The most important here is how to apply a technique of collecting data. In applying this technique, the first step is doing library research. This can be in the form of activities to trace data from encyclopedias, books, articles, and the like, as well as browsing the Internet to obtain information related to the study, especially about Seymour's *The One Day of the Year*. At the same time, this step is also done to obtain materials on related literary approaches especially concerning about New Historicism. The second step is doing close reading to the materials which have been collected. Of course, not all of the materials can be used as proper data for the analysis. Therefore, classification on these materials, which then becomes the third step, is absolutely necessary to get the most relevant data.

Regarding the subject of this study, which involves analysis on the issue of history, there are two kinds of historical sources to be considered. These include the sources dealing with history of Anzac Day, which can be considered canon text in Australian history. The first kind is the more traditional historical accounts, and the other is the more critical and new-historical ones.

Further, to make a proper analysis, this study works with descriptive analysis method in discussing the problems. This is supported by the analysis on

the data sources which are gained from dialogues, events, and actions presented in the work. In addition, this descriptive analysis is also applied to explain the problem in relation with the historical sources used in this study, supported by related criticism about the work.

H. Definition of Key Terms

- Anzac Day : one of Australian national holidays which commemorates the landing of the Anzac soldiers in Gallipoli, Turkey on 25 April 1915
- official history : history which is generally regarded by historians as the truth or the real version
- traditional historical accounts : any historical texts, usually written in conventional way, whose main purpose is to report history as 'appropriate' as possible
- new historical accounts : historical texts which avoid the traditional way of representing history and more focus on how facts are interpreted

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW