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A Depiction of Poverty in Fiersa Besari's Novel Tapak Jejak Using Ian Watt's Sociological Approach

Gambaran Kemiskinan dalam Novel Tapak Jejak Karya Fiersa Besari Menggunakan Pendekatan Sosiologi Ian Watt

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ABSTRAK

This study aims to describe the author's social context in Fiersa Besari's novel *Tapak Jejak*. It also aims to describe literature as a reflection of society in Fiersa Besari's novel *Tapak Jejak*, as well as to describe the social function of literature in Fiersa Besari's novel *Tapak Jejak*. This study was conducted by identifying, describing, and analyzing the author's social context, literature as a mirror of society, and the social function of literature in the novel *MA YAN*, based on Ian Wat's sociological approach to literature. This novel depicts the poverty experienced by the character Fiersa Besari and the people of Eastern Indonesia. The research method used in this study is qualitative descriptive. The data in this study consist of excerpts depicting poverty from the novel *Tapak Jejak* by Fiersa Besari. The data collection methods used in this study were reading and note-taking.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan konteks sosial pengarang dalam novel Tapak jejak karya Fiersa Besari. Mendeskripsikan sastra sebagai cerminan masyarakat dalam Novel Tapak Jejak Karya Fiersa Besari. Serta mendesripsikan fungsi sosial sastra dalam novel Tapak Jejak karya Fiersa Besari. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan mengidentifikasi, mendeskripsikan, dan menganalisis konteks sosial pengarang, sastra sebagai cermin masyarakat dan fungsi social sastra dalam Novel MA YAN berdasarkan pendekatan sosiologi sastra Ian Wat. Novel ini menunjukkan gambaran kemiskinan yang terjadi pada sang tokoh Fiersa Besari dan Masyarakat Indonesia timur. Metode dalam penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kualitatif. Data dalam penelitian ini adalah kutipan-kutipan yang menggambarkan kemiskinan yang terdapat dalam Novel Tapak Jejak karya Fiersa Besari Teknik pengumpulan data dalam penelitian adalah teknik baca, dan teknik pencatatan.

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1. Introduction

A literary work is something that emerges from the author's imaginative process, which is influenced by the author's own environment. Since authors are

part of society, a literary work cannot be separated from the elements of life, social realities, social issues, and other supporting elements that the author also experiences. Faruk (2010:77) states that literary works are human objects, facts of humanity, or cultural facts, because they are the products of human creation.

Literary works, as both the form and result of a creative process, are essentially a medium that uses language to express human life. A literary work generally deals with issues surrounding human life. Literary works emerge from the fundamental human urge to express one's existence (Sarjidu, 2004: 2). Literary works in the form of novels can serve as documents that capture the realities of a society's life (Wellek dan Warren, 1995: 122). This reality refers to the reality of life in the form of history and social issues faced by a social group from one era to the next. Luxemburg et al. (1989:23) argue that literature can be viewed as a social phenomenon.

In *The Sociology of Literature*, René Wellek and Austin Warren (1956) divide the sociology of literature into three categories. First, the sociology of the author, which examines the author's social status, political ideology, and other aspects related to the author. Second, the sociology of the literary work, which examines the literary work itself. This classification is not significantly different from the one developed by Ian Watt, which examines the reciprocal relationship between writers, literature, and society. According to Ian Watt, an analysis of a literary work encompasses three elements: the author's social context, literature as a mirror of society, and the social function of literature (Muslimin, 2011: 130). In literature, literature and social reality are inseparable because literature is produced and structured in response to various changes in that reality. The study developed by Ian Watt covers several areas of focus (Susanto, 2016: 24–25). Ian Watt's sociological study of literature examines the reciprocal relationship between writers, literature, and society, as well as the social function of literature (Muslimin, 2011: 130).

Several previous studies were cited as references in this research, including a study by Sulityana (2013) titled "The Representation of Poverty in Ramadya Akmal's Novel *Jatisaba*" (A Sociological Study of Literature). A study by Atma Sri Wahyuni (2020) titled "A Depiction of Poverty in Kirana Kejora's Novel *Yorick* (An Ian Watt Literary Sociology Approach)," and a study by Andri Kharisma Nur (2013) titled "A Depiction of Poverty in Andrea Hinata's Novel *Padang Bulan* (A Literary Sociology Review)." And Wiwiek Pratiwi Hasbullah's (2018) study titled "A Depiction of Poverty in Sanie B. Kuncoro's Novel *MA YAN* (A Literary Sociological Review Based on Ian Watt's Approach)."

The author examined the novel *Tapak Jejak* by Fiersa Besari. This novel was chosen because the author observed that its content is not merely a collection of travel notes by a young man exploring the natural beauty, culture, and people of this country through text and photographs, but it also offers another perspective on the state of the country and poverty among writers and communities in Eastern Indonesia—a reality that is not as idyllic as what we see and are shown on social media or television. Whether from a social, economic, or developmental perspective, the depictions of reality regarding social issues in

society—particularly the issue of poverty—prompted the author to analyze this novel by Fiersa Besari.

2. Methode

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach. The focus of this study is to provide an overview of poverty as depicted in the novel *Tapak Jejak* using Ian Watt's sociological approach to literature. The data were collected from the novel *Tapak Jejak* by Fiersa Besari. Data collection techniques included reading and note-taking. All data collected by the author were subsequently analyzed in this study.

3. Result and Discussion

The Author's Social Context

The author's social context refers to the relationship between the author's social position and that of the readership, along with the social factors that may influence the author as an individual as well as the content of their literary work. Literature as a mirror of society examines the extent to which literature is considered a reflection of societal conditions.

In this regard, researchers need to consider: (a) how authors earn a living, (b) how authors view their work as a profession, and (c) the audience the authors are targeting. Authors create literary works based on the realities of their surroundings.

Fiersa Besari, born in Bandung on March 3, 1984, is an Indonesian writer and musician. After graduating from STBA Yapari ABA Bandung, Fiersa worked for a few months at an office. However, he felt uncomfortable with his job and eventually decided to switch gears and pursue a career in Indonesian literature and music. It all began with his love for Indonesian music and literature. He was also one of the founders of the Komunitas Pecandu. In 2009, Fiersa began creating his own works in the form of songs and albums, releasing an album titled 11:11. The album sold very well and was a hit on the market. In 2013, he began working on another album and embarked on a journey across Indonesia in search of his creative identity. Writing makes him feel freer to express his feelings. Unlike when writing song lyrics, Fiersa also has to consider the melody and harmonies of the musical instruments used. Fiersa Besari once had a band called Hellfairies, which was emo to the core. Eat Well Earl, or E.W.W. for short, was a band formed by Fiersa and his friends, known for their song "Standing Next To You." After a long period of reflection, Fiersa Besari decided to overcome his shyness and seriously pursue a solo career. The song "Melangkah Tanpamu" was the starting point for his body of work. As an author, Fiersa has written six novels. The novel *Tapak Jejak* is one of Fiersa Besari's six compelling novels. As the following excerpt shows.

> *(Data 1)*
> *"Tak hanya menjadi pemilik, aku juga merangkap perekam dan penyunting suara. Meski awalnya studio rekaman sepi, lama-lama hasil dan pelayananku berbicara. Para musisi mulai berdatangan untuk merekam materi lagu mereka.*

Lambat laun, peralatan di studio makin bertambah. Meski aku belum kaya raya, namun usaha studio bisa dibilang lancar jaya"(Besari,2018: 285)

This quote illustrates just how resilient the character Bung (Fiersa Besari) is. The character Bung (Fiersa Besari) represents the lower class, who always dream of a decent life free from poverty. As in the following quote:

(*Data 2)*
"Hidup akan menjadi normal-normal saja jika seberes kuliah aku memilih untuk bekerja sebagai sales marketing di sebuah perusahaan les" (Besari, 2018: 285)

The quote explains that the character Bung (Fiersa Besari) has to go on with his life even though things aren't going well for him; if he had started working right after college, his life might have turned out just fine and he would have had a job. That was the course of Bung's (Fiersa Besari) life at that time. Fiersa Besari examines the challenges frequently faced by many young people or college graduates. Through the character of Bung (Fiersa Besari), he highlights the fact that economic difficulties are a reality faced by nearly every nation. Fiersa Besari also observes that even after completing their higher education, many college graduates do not immediately enter the workforce; instead, they remain in their comfort zones and choose to remain unemployed.

A Reflection of Society's Social Life

Literature serves as a reflection of society and is the product of the author's imagination as well as a response to social phenomena in the surrounding environment. As an individual, the author seeks to convey his or her worldview to the collective audience. The integration of the individual's perspective with the social reality around him or her demonstrates that a literary work is rooted in the culture of a specific society.

Novel writing is not merely a spontaneous creation; it is also ideological in nature. When creating a novel, an author naturally draws upon the expressive or impressionistic aspects of aesthetic experience, and then presents the issues of human life—both external and internal—within their work or novel. The structural elements that shape the text of a novel include theme, characters, and message.

Based on the title of the novel *Tapak Jejak*, which draws on the social realities of the author and the people of Eastern Indonesia—who face many struggles in navigating life and pursuing an education—this novel depicts the circumstances of the author and the people of Eastern Indonesia. When this novel was written, the author strove to make it fact-based and consistent with the circumstances in 2013. It was written from the idealistic perspective of the characters portrayed and emphasizes their unyielding spirit.

(Data 3)
"Ibu Jualan nasi tim karena penghasilan dari kerjaan ibu dan Om Toy tidak stabil. Ibu harus punya penghasilan tambahan. "(Besari, 2018 :52)

"Supaya kita bisa makan. Supaya kamu sama satriya bisa sekolah, supaya, nanti, kalau adik kalian lahir, ibu dan om toy sudah enggak kebingungan buat beli susu." (Besari, 2018: 52)

This quote illustrates the poverty experienced by Fiersa Besari's mother. It explains the poverty they face, which is why Fiersa Besari's parents must work just to survive.

(Data 4)
"Begini Banyak sekali anak-anak di papua ini yang punya kemampuan untuk menjadi dokter, pilot, polisi, ahli hukum, dan sebagainya. Tapi karena kurangnya biaya dan akses, ujungnya memilih apa yang ada didepan mata. Sayang toh?" (Besari, 2018: 121)
"Atas dasar itulah saya ingin membuat sebuah yayasan yang bukan hanya mengumpulkan dana untuk pendidikan anak-anak papua, tapi juga bisa turun ke lapangan dan melihat sendiri keadaan anak-anak ini, jika keluarganya memang benar-benar tidak mampu, anaknya kita bantu agar bisa mendapat pendidikan." (Besari: 2018: 122)

The quote above explains that the state must be responsible for the education of its citizens. However, in reality, the government has yet to provide adequate support for the people of Papua, and as a result, many people—especially children—are still unable to access an education.

(Data 5)
"Aku tak tahu lagi, pergi dari satu markas pecinta alam ke markas pecinta alam lainnya sudah terlalu sering kulakukan, hingga aku kehilangan hitungan. Lebih parah lagi aku mulai merasa kehilangan hitungan." (Besari, 2018: 179)

That quote illustrates Fiersa Besari's determination to travel across Indonesia, relying solely on connections he made on social media or online, since he lacked the funds to travel.

Fiersa Besari's storytelling style is characterized by his choice of settings in regions of eastern Indonesia, such as Papua and Maluku. Indonesia is a vast country, rich in culture and natural resources. However, the author portrays characters who still face hardships in eastern Indonesia, and through this novel, we also learn that there are still many people living in poverty—in terms of education, development, and the economy.

The Social Function of Literature

The social function of literature refers to the relationship between literary values and social values. In this context, there are three points to consider: (1) the extreme viewpoint of the Romantics, who regard literature as being on the same level as the works of priests or prophets. Therefore, literature must serve as a force for renewal and transformation; (2) literature as mere entertainment; and (3) literature must teach something in an entertaining way.

Criticism can be directed at those in power through letters, demonstrations, speeches, interviews, text messages, social media, email, and other media. In today's era of openness, everyone is free to voice their criticism and concerns to the government.

This novel by Fiersa Besari was written in 2018. Information and communication technology had certainly advanced rapidly by this time. In fact, the novel *Tapak Jejak* is a sequel to Fiersa Besari's novel *Arah Langkah*. Both novels depict Fiersa Besari's journey with several friends across Indonesia in 2013, but they are not merely accounts of his travels; they also showcase the cultural diversity and ways of thinking in each region he visited. Apart from all that, this novel also offers social criticism. This social criticism stems from society in Eastern Indonesia. Social criticism in literary works refers to social phenomena or issues experienced by or occurring within society.

The following is an excerpt that contains social criticism.

(Data 6)

"Menarik Ojek?" Aku bingung, Bukankah ada dana dari pemerintah untuk pemeliharaan situs bersejarah? Untuk apa lagi seseorang penjaga rumah bersejarah harus menarik ojek?" (Besari, 2018: 192)

From this excerpt, it is clear that the author is criticizing the government's failure to provide funding to the caretakers of historic homes. The government should provide adequate funding to improve the economic well-being and quality of life of its citizens.

The discussion of these research findings elaborates on the analysis presented in the previous section. The study has presented data and analyzed the social context of the author as depicted in Fiersa Besari's novel *Tapak Jejak*, and has described the reflection of social life and the social function of literature as defined by Ian Watt. Therefore, the results and findings will be outlined as follows: Ian Watt is a literary critic, literary historian, and professor of English at Stanford University. His book *The Rise of the Novel: A Study of Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (1957) is regarded by many contemporary literary scholars as marking the emergence of the modern novel in its philosophical, economic, and social dimensions in the early 18th century.

Ian Watt explains the reciprocal relationship between writers, literature, and society as follows: 1) The author's social context, which relates the writer's social position in society to the reading public. This includes social factors that can influence the author as an individual as well as influence literary works. 2) Literature as a reflection of society, which can be analyzed to determine the extent to which a literary work reflects the state of society at the time it was written, the extent to which the author's personal perspective influences the portrayal of society or the social realities the author seeks to convey, and the extent to which the literary work the author employs can be considered representative of society. 3) "the social function of literature, to determine to what extent literary works serve as agents of change, to what extent they succeed as a source of entertainment, and to what extent literary values are related to social values" (Damono, 1978:3).

Ian Waat's philosophical concepts are explored in Fiersa Besari's novel *Tapak Jejak*. Fiersa Besari's other novels also deal with social life. Fiersa Besari's literary work, the novel *Tapak Jejak*, is an engaging and distinctive work of fiction that stands out from other novels.

This novel tells the story of a young man who travels across Indonesia, making the most of social media during his journey because he lacks funds and relies solely on help from online friends as a way to keep costs down. That journey not only tells the story of the beauty that Bung (Fiersa Besari) witnessed, but also of the social issues encountered in the communities of every region that Bung and his friends visited. There are so many people facing economic hardship, underdevelopment, and even a lack of access to education.

The author, as an individual, attempts to create a world for his or her collective subject. The integration of individual subjects into the surrounding social reality demonstrates that a literary work is rooted in culture. The existence of such literature allows it to be regarded as a document.

Taken as a whole, and in light of its explicit and implicit social critiques, it can be said that this novel is an extraordinary work of literature. The author has successfully captured existing social realities with precision and responded to them through the satirical commentary woven throughout the novel. The theme of this novel is actually about an adventure traveling through Indonesia, but the author doesn't just focus on the adventure aspect; he also depicts the conditions of society in eastern Indonesia.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the data analysis, the following conclusions can be drawn. This novel conveys the social conditions that Fiersa Besari seeks to highlight, as well as the social functions present in Fiersa Besari's novel within society. Literary works can be interpreted as a depiction of society's life. The social context of the author in Fiersa Besari's novel also sheds light on significant social issues facing society, including social factors that may influence the content of his work. Furthermore, as a social commentary, this novel depicts the social conditions and atmosphere of the lower-middle class, whose lives are still marked by suffering and poverty. It is not only the author who offers social criticism; the characters in the novel also criticize the media—particularly television—for prioritizing what is sensational and commercial. The government is also criticized for the difficulties in development in the Papua region.

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