



SOCIAL CRITISM IN THE NOVEL “SELAMAT TINGGAL” BY TERE LIYE

Rahmawati¹, Sri Suryana Dinar², Sulfiah³

¹ Universitas Halu Oleo

² Universitas Halu Oleo

³ Universitas Halu Oleo

Correspondence: Rahmamay000@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 2 January 2026

Revised: 10 January 2026

Published: 11 January 2026

Page: 60-66

Keyword:

social criticism; objective; novel

ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the social criticism in the novel *Selamat Tinggal* by Tere Liye. This study uses a library research method and this type of research is qualitative. The data used in this study are written data in the form of words and sentences containing social criticism in the novel *Selamat Tinggal* by Tere Liye in 2020 published by Gramedia Pustaka Utama in Jakarta, Jl. Palmerah Barat 29-37 with ISBN number 9786020647821. The number of pages is 360 pages. This study shows that the social criticism in the novel *Selamat Tinggal* by Tere Liye is 1) social criticism of poverty issues, 2) social criticism of crime issues, which include piracy, forgery and fraud. 3) social criticism of family disorganization issues, namely divorce. 4) social criticism of environmental issues, and 5) social criticism of population issues. Based on the results of the research and discussion, this study can be concluded that there are five (5) main social problems criticized in the novel *Selamat Tinggal* by Tere Liye. The five main issues include social criticism of poverty, social criticism of crime, social criticism of family disorganization, social criticism of environmental problems, and social criticism of population problems. In this study, social criticism of poverty problems amounted to three data (3 data), social criticism of crime problems amounted to twenty-two data (22 data), social criticism of family disorganization problems amounted to five data (5 data), social criticism of environmental problems amounted to one data (1 data), and social criticism of population problems amounted to four data (4 data).



© 2026 The Authors. Published by Sastra Cendekia. This is an open access article under the CC BY license <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

INTRODUCTION

Literary works are products of an author's creativity, emerging from a dialectical process between individual experience and the social reality of a community. Through aesthetic and imaginative language, literature functions not only as a means of entertainment but also as a medium for reflection, criticism, and the evaluation of various social phenomena in human life. Damono (in Wiyatmi, 2013) asserts that literary works essentially represent social life because authors are members of society who are inseparable from the values, norms, and social issues of their time. Consequently, literature is often utilized as a vehicle to voice social criticism against inequality, injustice, and social deviations occurring within society.

As a prose genre, the novel possesses a strong narrative capacity to record social realities in depth through characters, plot, and setting. Novels can present concrete depictions of social problems such as poverty, criminality, family disorganization, violations of norms, and demographic issues experienced by the community. Research by Sya'baan and Tike (2022) indicates that Tere Liye's novels frequently contain social

criticism related to structural crime, morality, and legal inequality, making his works highly relevant for study using a sociology of literature approach.

One of Tere Liye's novels of particular interest is *Selamat Tinggal*. This novel presents various portraits of social life closely related to Indonesian reality, ranging from poverty and criminal practices—such as piracy and fraud—to family disorganization, environmental issues, and population concerns. These realities are not merely presented as backdrops; they serve as the author's critique of unequal and unjust social conditions. Social criticism in literature, as explained by Hasanah et al. (2025), is an author's response to social imbalances conveyed symbolically and persuasively through character dialogue and narration.

Studies on social criticism in novels have been widely conducted by previous researchers. Febriana et al. (2025), for instance, examined social criticism in Sefryana Khairil's *Tanah Air Beta* and identified critiques of the education system, environment, public morality, and culture using a sociology of literature approach. Another study by Dona, Dinar, and Sya'baan (2023) revealed social realities in Achmad Munif's *Merpati Biru*, including poverty, crime, family disorganization, and the violation of social norms. Meanwhile, Safriyanti et al. (2024) emphasized that social criticism in novels can represent collective public anxiety regarding shifting cultural values and the weakening function of social institutions.

Nevertheless, these previous studies generally focus on different novels or utilize specific sociological approaches such as Ian Watt's theory or genetic structuralism. Research specifically examining social criticism in Tere Liye's *Selamat Tinggal* with an emphasis on the categorization of social problems remains relatively limited. Thus, there is a research gap regarding the need for a more specific and systematic study of the forms of social criticism represented in *Selamat Tinggal* and their relevance to contemporary social realities.

Based on this background, this study aims to describe and analyze the forms of social criticism found in Tere Liye's novel *Selamat Tinggal*. This research is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of the sociology of literature—particularly regarding the analysis of social criticism in modern Indonesian novels—as well as a practical contribution as a literary teaching resource that fosters readers' social sensitivity toward various societal issues.

METHODS

This research is qualitative. The method used is library research. The data in this study are written words and sentences containing social criticism in the novel *Selamat Tinggal* by Tere Liye. The data source for this study is Tere Liye's novel *Selamat Tinggal*, published in 2020 by Gramedia Pustaka Utama, with 360 pages. The data collection techniques used in this study are intensive reading and analytical reading. Intensive reading involves carefully and thoroughly reading the novel's text. Analytical reading involves reading with thorough understanding and analyzing the data obtained from the reading. Data analysis involves categorizing and organizing data related to social criticism. The analysis of social criticism in Tere Liye's novel *Selamat Tinggal* uses an objective approach. Based on structural theory, the steps are as follows:

1. Identifying data, namely data that is coded or marked according to the research problem of social criticism.
2. Classifying data, namely grouping data related to social criticism.

3. Describing the data, namely presenting the data that has been studied, in this case, quotations that are classified as depictions of social criticism that will be explained in detail to support the problem.
4. Analyzing the data, namely interpreting the data that has been identified in relation or connection to the social criticism in the novel *Selamat Tinggal* by Tere Liye in linguistic form.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Social Criticism of Poverty

One of the dominant forms of social criticism in Tere Liye's novel *Selamat Tinggal* is the critique of poverty. Poverty is depicted as a structural condition that impacts not only economic aspects but also access to healthcare and education. This is evident in the following excerpt:

“G.H. Subagja passed away fifteen years ago at his home in Cipanas. He was an author with millions of copies sold, yet most of them were pirated. He died in poverty, unable even to afford hospital treatment. His children also live in poverty and have not received a single rupiah from the royalties of the pirated books.” (Liye, 2020: 315)

This passage reveals a sharp social irony. The character G.H. Subagja is a productive author with best-selling works, yet he lived and died in poverty due to piracy. This condition represents a critique of the economic system and weak legal protection, particularly regarding the rights of creative workers. Sociologically, the poverty experienced by the character is not caused by individual laziness but by an unjust social structure.

In line with this, Dona, Dinar, and Sya'baan (2023) explain that poverty in novels is often presented as a result of social inequality and a weak protection system for vulnerable groups, causing individuals to lose their basic right to a decent life. In this context, Tere Liye does not merely depict poverty as a personal condition but as a critique of a social system that allows injustice to persist.

Furthermore, the impact of poverty is visible in the educational access of the next generation, as illustrated in the following quote:

“Ratu never received a formal education. Since childhood, she had to accompany her parents to sell books at the peak of Mount Gede.” (Liye, 2020: 315)

This excerpt emphasizes that poverty is hereditary and directly results in the loss of a child's right to education. Such conditions reflect a broader social problem: the failure of the state and society to guarantee equitable education. This aligns with the view of Soekanto (2012), who states that poverty is a social problem closely related to unequal access to social resources, including education and health. Thus, the social criticism of poverty in *Selamat Tinggal* is not only descriptive but also evaluative, highlighting structural injustices that trap poor individuals in a difficult-to-break cycle of suffering.

2. Social Criticism of Crime (Piracy, Forgery, and Fraud)

The next prominent form of social criticism in the novel is the critique of crime, specifically the piracy of intellectual works. This crime is depicted as a systematic practice that harms creators and exacerbates their socio-economic conditions.

“G.H. Subagja’s books circulated widely in the market in pirated form, while he himself gained nothing from his work.” (Liye, 2020)

This quote demonstrates that piracy is not merely a legal violation but a form of social crime with real impacts on individual lives. Such crimes highlight weak law enforcement and low moral awareness regarding intellectual property rights. Research by Sya’baan and Tike (2022) also found that Tere Liye's novels frequently contain critiques of structural crimes, such as white-collar crime, which are carried out systematically and often escape legal consequences. In *Selamat Tinggal*, piracy is portrayed as a "normalized" crime in society, where perpetrators feel no guilt while victims bear heavy social and economic burdens. Consequently, the critique of crime in this novel is directed not only at individual perpetrators but also at the social and legal systems that fail to provide protection and justice.

3. Social Criticism of Family Disorganization

Selamat Tinggal also presents social criticism regarding family disorganization, characterized by the family’s failure to perform its social functions optimally. Poor economic conditions and social pressures place families in vulnerable situations, making children the primary victims.

The family disorganization in this novel is consistent with the findings of Dona et al. (2023), who state that family conflicts in novels are often triggered by economic pressure and lack of social support, causing the family to lose its role as a protective institution for its members. Through this portrayal, Tere Liye criticizes a social reality that leaves families to struggle alone without an adequate social support system.

4. Comprehensive Social Criticism

Overall, the social criticism in *Selamat Tinggal* encompasses issues of poverty, crime, family disorganization, the environment, and demographics. This pattern aligns with the research of Rahmawati, Dinar, and Sulfiah (2026), which concludes that *Selamat Tinggal* contains various forms of social criticism representing the problems of modern society.

The novel functions not only as a literary work but also as a medium for social reflection that invites readers to recognize and criticize the social realities around them. Using an objective approach, Tere Liye’s social criticism appears through the story's structure, characters, and conflicts without being overly didactic or preachy.

Summary of Discussion

Based on the analysis, it can be affirmed that Tere Liye's *Selamat Tinggal* represents strong and relevant social criticism of Indonesian society. This criticism is structural, targeting unequal social, economic, and legal systems, and positions literature as a means of social awareness and education in human values.

Previous studies on social criticism in Indonesian novels have been conducted using various objects and approaches. Febriana Kewa Sili et al. (2025) examined *Tanah Air Beta* by Sefryana Khairil, finding critiques of the education system, environment, morality, and culture. Dona, Dinar, and Sya'baan (2023) revealed social realities in *Merpati Biru* by Achmad Munif, including poverty, crime, and violations of social norms. Safriyanti, Yazid, and Qadriani (2024) emphasized criticism in Ahmad Fuadi's *Anak Rantau* regarding shifting cultural values, while Sya'baan and Tike (2022) focused on structural crime and legal mafias in Tere Liye's earlier works using Ian Watt's approach. Based on this mapping, the state of the art in social criticism studies of Indonesian novels generally focuses on: (1) mapping types of social criticism, (2) the relationship between literature and social reality, and (3) the use of specific sociological approaches like Ian Watt or genetic structuralism. However, most of these studies have not specifically reviewed *Selamat Tinggal* with an emphasis on categorizing social criticism based on contemporary social problems.

Thus, the research gap in this study lies in the absence of a comprehensive and systematic analysis of social criticism in *Selamat Tinggal* using an objective approach focused on text structure and the categorization of social issues. This research fills that gap by presenting an analysis that not only describes the forms of criticism but also interprets the social meaning behind the narrative structure and conflicts. Therefore, this study offers novelty in its object of study and analytical perspective, presenting *Selamat Tinggal* as a representation of contemporary Indonesian social issues.

Relevance of Research Findings to School Learning

The social criticism in Tere Liye's novel *Selamat Tinggal* is one example of research on literary works rich with social values. These social values are highly beneficial for improving human resources in education, particularly in producing teachers and students who are not only intellectually intelligent but also emotionally intelligent, which is manifested in their daily behavior patterns.

The results of this research on "*Social Criticism in Tere Liye's Novel Selamat Tinggal*" can be used as literature learning materials in schools, with the aim of enabling students to identify social criticisms within a novel. The objectives of learning Indonesian literature, particularly novels, certainly have positive educational values. The Indonesian Language syllabus developed for the 2013 curriculum for grade VIII of Junior High School (SMP) includes the basic competency of analyzing/considering the elements of fiction and non-fiction books read. Meanwhile, for grade XI, semester II of Senior High School (SMA), the basic competency is analyzing the messages of two fiction books (a novel and a collection of poetry) read. Before exploring the forms of social criticism, students are first guided to read and understand the contents of the novel *Selamat Tinggal*. Then, they are guided to analyze the novel's intrinsic elements, which will automatically reveal its social critiques. By understanding the novel's social critiques, students can discern the positive aspects and avoid the negative aspects. Therefore, *Selamat Tinggal* is a worthy reading reference for literature instruction in schools.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the novel *Selamat Tinggal* by Tere Liye presents social criticism as an integral narrative element that reflects various social problems within contemporary Indonesian society. The forms of social criticism identified in this study include criticism of

poverty, crime, family disorganization, environmental issues, and population-related problems. These social problems are not portrayed as isolated individual experiences, but rather as consequences of broader structural inequalities and weak social systems.

The analysis shows that social criticism in *Selamat Tinggal* is constructed through the development of characters, conflicts, and narrative events that reveal injustice, marginalization, and social vulnerability. Poverty is depicted as a structural condition that limits access to basic rights such as education and healthcare, while crime—particularly intellectual property piracy—is presented as a systemic issue resulting from weak legal protection and moral awareness. Furthermore, family disorganization is portrayed as a social impact of economic pressure and the absence of adequate social support, positioning the family as a vulnerable institution within an unequal social structure.

By employing an objective approach, this study demonstrates that social criticism in the novel emerges from the internal structure of the text rather than from external authorial intentions. This approach allows the novel to be interpreted as a reflection of social reality through its narrative construction. In this regard, *Selamat Tinggal* functions not only as a literary work, but also as a medium of social reflection that invites readers to critically engage with social issues embedded in everyday life.

Overall, this research contributes to the field of literary sociology by enriching discussions on social criticism in Indonesian novels, particularly in relation to contemporary social problems. The findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference for further research on social criticism in literary works and to support the use of novels as educational media for fostering social awareness and critical thinking.

REFERENCES

- Dona, M. R., Dinar, S. S., & Sya'baan, A. M. R. (2023). Realitas sosial dalam novel *Merpati Biru* karya Achmad Munif. *Bastra: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia*, 8(3), 307–313.
- Febriana Kewa Sili, Pilipus Wai Lawet, & Sirilus Karolus Keroponama Keban. (2025). Analisis kritik sosial dalam novel *Tanah Air Beta* karya Sefryana Khairil. *Jurnal Education and Development*, 13(3), 304–311. <https://doi.org/10.37081/ed.v13i3.7482>
- Hadijah. 2011. *Kritik Sosial dalam Novel Orang Miskin Dilarang Sekolah Karya Wiwit Prasetyo*: Universitas Halu Oleo.
- Hasanah, U., Nama, I. K., & Waluyo, I. (2025). Analisis kritik sosial dalam novel *Sapa Bilang Pelaut Mata Keranjang* karya Safar Nurhan. *Suara Bahasa: Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 3(2), 108–115. Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada.
- Liye, Tere. 2020. *Selamat Tinggal*. Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Moleong, Lexi J. 2007. *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: Rosdakarya.
- Safriyanti, Yazid, H. M., & Qadriani, N. (2024). Kritik sosial dalam novel *Anak Rantau* karya Ahmad Fuadi (tinjauan sosiologi sastra). *Cakrawala Listra: Jurnal Kajian Sastra, Bahasa, dan Budaya Indonesia*, 7(1), 59–76. <https://doi.org/10.33772/cakrawalalistra.v7i1.2756>
- Sarina, S. 2022. *Kritik Sosial dalam Novel Kami (Bukan) Jongos Berdasi Karya J.S. Khairan* *Jurnal Bahasa (Bahasa dan Sastra)*, 7(3), 356–364.
- Soekanto, Soerjono dan Budi Sulistyowati. 2015. *Sosiologi Suatu Pengantar*,

Sya'baan, A. M. R., & Tike, L. (2022). Masalah-masalah sosial dalam novel *Negeri Para Bedebah* dan *Negeri di Ujung Tanduk* karya Tere Liye: Sosiologi sastra Ian Watt. *Bastra: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia*, 7(3), 484–490.