

## Social Critique in the Monologue 'Balada Sumarah' by Tentrem Lestari

Anjelina Septiana Harianja<sup>1</sup>, Nurhayati Harahap<sup>2\*</sup>, Ade Triana

<sup>1,2</sup>University of North Sumatra

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### Abstract

This research explores social criticism within Tentrem Lestari's monologue drama, "Baladah Sumarah," employing a qualitative descriptive research approach. Qualitative description, as defined by Moleong (cited in Achmad, 2023: 3), involves the generation of descriptive data in the form of words and images rather than numerical figures. The Qualitative Descriptive Method is employed to analyze the structural and aesthetic values embedded in the monologue. The findings of the study reveal three prominent social criticisms within the monologue, addressing issues related to poverty, criminal activities, and family dynamics. The research concludes that social criticism in literary works serves as a reflection of societal phenomena. In the context of "Baladah Sumarah," the monologue offers social criticism directed at leaders and individuals in positions of power who exhibit tendencies of arrogance toward the lower strata of society. This research contributes to the understanding of social criticism in literature, emphasizing its role as a mirror reflecting prevalent issues within the community. Furthermore, it highlights the effectiveness of qualitative descriptive methods in uncovering and analyzing the intricate layers of social critique present in dramatic literary works.

**Keywords:** Balada Sumara, Social Critical, Monologue

(\*) Corresponding Author: [nurhayati1@usu.ac.id](mailto:nurhayati1@usu.ac.id)

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## INTRODUCTION

Literary works are creations communicated with communicative intentions about the author's aesthetic goals. These works often tell a story from either a third-person or first-person perspective, with a plot and through the use of various literary devices relevant to their time. Literary criticism arises from the emergence of social issues in a specific environment and seeks to address or provide solutions to these problems. Based on this foundation, literary criticism benefits from using a literary sociology approach, supporting researchers in studying literary criticism using a literary approach.

The study of literary criticism aims to assess and comment on literary works. One intriguing drama script worthy of analysis and containing social criticism is the monologue drama script "Balada Sumarah." A female worker (migrant worker) becomes the subject of criticism in this monologue drama script, where she receives things she shouldn't have received as a student when she was in school, among children in the community, and even while working. The monologue "Balada Sumarah" by Tentrem Lestari tells the story of the misery of a family forced to lose its head, apprehended by authorities as part of overseas Indonesian workers (TKI).



The monologue depicts Sumarah being tortured, beaten, abused, and subjected to sexual harassment by her employer. The script is highly critical of issues or conditions involving Indonesian people, including culture and art. This research utilizes a sociological approach, connecting social issues contained in the scientific work with the truth happening in society and assessing how much literary works reflect the truth in society (Hastuti, 2018:67). The sociological literary theory used in this research adopts Swingewood's sociological literary theory. Swingewood states that literary works show social stratification related to social, family, and cultural disparities.

The theories of Alan Swingewood and Diana Laurensen are related to the study of social criticism. Diana Laurensen and Alan Swingewood agree that there should be three sociological literary approaches. First, literary works are viewed as records. Second, the methodology reveals that literary works reflect the author's social conditions. Third, researchers track the level of public acceptance of literary works at a specific point in time. From these three important aspects, sociological literature can be used as speculation to observe the social conditions of society that align with literary works (Ariani, 2018). Based on the working steps grounded in Swingewood's theory, it can be said that literary works reflect the times. Therefore, reading literary works carefully will reveal what is happening in society. In this regard, literary works are positioned as the linguistic center focused on the internal study of the text, associated with phenomena occurring in relation to the creation of the work (Putri & Rengganis, 2022). Not only does it depict the general state of society, but literary works also typically contain prevailing social phenomena. Therefore, the task of literary critics in literary sociology is to link literary experiences in the form of works to the historical context from which the author originates (Alamsyah et al., 2022).

Many researchers have studied literary criticism of works in the form of drama scripts. Devy Alamsyah et al. (2022) conducted social criticism research on the drama script "West Side Story" by Arthur Laurents, using a literary sociology approach. Afrilla (2021) also conducted similar research on drama scripts but with a different object of study. The difference lies in Ridana's research, which focuses on examining the social and political conditions in Indonesia in the drama script "Anak Wayang" by MJ Widjaya, using a literary sociology approach. The similarity with previous research is the examination of social criticism using a literary sociology approach. However, on the other hand, there is a difference: previous research used drama scripts as the object of study, while this research uses a monologue, which is part of a drama.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research falls under the category of qualitative descriptive research. Qualitative description is a type of research that produces descriptive data in the form of words, images, and not numerical figures (Moleong in Achmad, 2023: 3). Qualitative Descriptive Method is a research method employed to analyze the structure and aesthetic values in the monologue "Balada Sumarah." This method can be utilized to identify and analyze the structural and aesthetic values present in the monologue "Balada Sumarah."

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Social Criticism of Poverty Problems**

Poverty is an inevitable reality faced by many countries, creating a social gap that widens the disparity between high and low-income groups (Pratiwi et al., 2020). A monologue drama script titled "Help" presents a critical portrayal of the issue of poverty, aligning with findings from previous research that analyzed the short story "They Spell the Prohibition of Begging" (Hieu, 2021).

Various factors of poverty drive individuals to undertake any available work to meet their daily needs. One impactful consequence highlighted in the monologue is the phenomenon of labor migration abroad. Many are compelled to work in foreign countries to provide for their families. However, paradoxically, such employment often brings negative repercussions, such as the longing and suffering experienced by migrant workers.

The monologue excerpt emphasizes the irony in the life of a woman named Sumarah binti Suliman, a high school graduate with the highest academic achievement. Despite having outstanding academic credentials, Sumarah is forced to become a female migrant worker (TKW) overseas. Her proficiency in subjects like mathematics and other sciences is interpreted only as skills for becoming a "washing machine" and "theory of ironing clothes."

The social critique embedded in this monologue highlights the paradox where high educational achievements do not guarantee equal job opportunities. Sumarah, representing many individuals facing poverty, illustrates how an unequal social system can hinder one's progress, even with high qualifications.

Overall, this monologue provides a critical perspective on the reality of poverty and invites the audience to reflect on the role of the social system in shaping individual destinies, especially in the context of globalization and labor migration.

### **Social Criticism of Crime**

Crime, according to criminology experts, generally refers to human behavior that violates legal norms (criminal law/crime/criminallaw), causing harm, annoyance, and resulting in victims, making it intolerable. Information about the suffering of migrant laborers who become domestic helpers in foreign countries is one of the distressing revelations. Witnessing fellow citizens being treated in ways that surpass humanity is always painful. Sexual harassment leads to unwanted pregnancies, physical abuse results in permanent disabilities, unpaid wages, and the looming fear of harsh punishment, creating an unending shadow of terror. Domestic helper jobs come with high risks, one of which is the inability to become a survivor of inappropriate behavior (Rahmawati & Hastuti, 2018).

There are several social critiques related to crime in the monologue drama "Baladah Sumarah" by Tentrem Lestari, including crimes related to lying, torture, and sexual harassment. This is evident in the quote:

"Behind my employer's robes, behind my employer's black veils, all my fate shattered! I was tortured, my year's salary vanished for the nonsense of sought-after administration reasons, and the disaster, I was raped!!! Like a wretched slave rightfully subjected to brutality.

The quote "I was tortured, my year's salary vanished for the nonsense of sought-after administration reasons, and the disaster, I was raped!!! Like a wretched slave rightfully subjected to brutality" clearly indicates a scathing criticism of the employer, where the protagonist did not receive proper rights as a worker. It is already an injustice, and more painfully, as a woman, she was subjected to rape, a clear degradation of her dignity. The character Sumarah in the monologue text provides social criticism of the crime committed against her.

In the drama monologue "Baladah Sumarah," Tentrem Lestari presents a powerful critique of injustice, highlighting the harsh realities faced by domestic workers. Through this dramatic portrayal, the author aims to raise awareness about the prevalent crimes, especially the mistreatment and sexual abuse faced by domestic workers. The monologue serves as a poignant reminder of the urgent need to address these issues and actively engage in the fight against crime and injustice.

### **Social Criticism of Family Problems**

The state of disharmony in a family arises when there are members who may struggle to fulfill their responsibilities according to their social roles. This is evident in the excerpt from the monologue drama "Tolong." Similar to previous research analyzing social critiques in the novel "Orang-Oetimu," a study, including one critiquing families, aligns with the social criticism found in the monologue drama "Tolong." It sheds light on family disorganization, revealing prevalent cultural norms or practices in society where a wife is forced to become a female laborer to meet the family's needs (Felix, 2021). This criticism is highlighted in the quote:

"Sum, are you going to work in Arabia? Look at Konah there. After returning from Arabia, her house turns into a mansion, can buy a motorcycle, can buy a buffalo. Also, look at Sunarti, Lek Mariyem's daughter. Two years working in Arabia, she can come home and open a small shop."

I remained silent. However, Simbok's words disturbed my thoughts.

"Simbok, if I want to go to Arabia, how do I do it? And where do I get the funds?"

In the above quote, it is clear that Sumarah is already critiquing the idea of going to Arabia, questioning the feasibility and the source of funds. The social critique of the issue arises when Simbok compares her granddaughter with Konah and Sunarti, who have become overseas domestic workers. Eventually, Sumarah has to yield to the pressure and embark on a journey abroad.

This social critique reflects the challenges faced by families dealing with the impact of globalization, where individuals are compelled to seek employment abroad to sustain their families. The drama monologue "Tolong" provides a poignant portrayal of the struggles within families, shedding light on the complexities of societal expectations and economic pressures that contribute to familial disorganization.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the research conducted on social criticism in the monologue drama "Baladah Sumarah" by Tentrem Lestari, the results of this study indicate that there are three social criticisms in the monologue drama, namely criticism of social

issues related to poverty, criminal activities, and family matters. It can be concluded that social criticism in literary works reflects the phenomena present in society. Particularly in the monologue drama "Baladah Sumarah" by Tentrem Lestari, it shows social criticism directed towards leaders and those in power who are often arrogant towards the lower class.

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