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# SOCIAL VALUES IN AGNES DAVONAR'S SURAT KECIL UNTUK TUHAN: A STUDY OF LITERARY SOCIOLOGY

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Abstract	Article Information
This research reveals social values using the study of literary sociology in the novel Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan by Agnes Davonar. The study of literary sociology in this study focuses on the literary sociology approach of Rene Wellek and Austin Warren. This research is a Literature Study. The data were analyzed using descriptive techniques in the form of the author's speech in the novel Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan by Agnes Davonar. Data collection techniques from books and journals, obtained in accordance with the problems and objectives of literary studies related to social values and literary sociology studies with data sources of Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan novels by Agnes Davonar. The results of research on social values depicted in the novel Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan by Agnes Davonar in literary analysis, namely compassion, are realized in the form of caring, devotion, kinship, please help. Responsibility, is presented in the form of a sense of belonging, discipline, and empathy.  Keywords: Social Values, Surat Kecil Untuk Tuhan, Sociology of Literature	Received: 23/02/2024 Revised: 01/03/2024 Accepted: 02/03/2024/

## **INTRODUCTION**

Literary works are media that express the thoughts of their authors. Literary works are imaginative, aesthetic and delight their readers. This is in line with the opinion of Rene Wellek and Austin Warren that literary works are a creative activity in a work of art. Literary works have the power of fiction and imagination in order to directly capture social life (Rene Wellek, 2016). As in Ridwan's research in articles that literary works are the result of human imagination in what writers or others think and do and write (Ritonga & Hrp, 2023).

Wellek and Warren viewed literature as everything printed and only as prima donna. They define literary scholarship as something that transcends the personal and contrasts with literary art because of its more scientific approach. (Rene Wellek, 1949) a literary work is a picture of everything that happens in the world and is transformed by the author into a literary work. (Hartanto et al., 2021) Literary works as a reflection of social reality are certainly not only dead works of art, but have an existence that can invite, prohibit, or influence humans. The existence of literary works can invite, prohibit, or influence humans can be seen from various aspects contained in them such as social aspects, value aspects, moral aspects, customary aspects, ethical aspects, and so on. These aspects are matters related to social problems contained in literary works.

Literary sociology is inseparable from humans and society with its focus in literary works to be the object discussed. Sociology is an approach in literary works by considering social aspects and literary works. The purpose of creating literary works is to be able to enjoy, understand and use them in social life. Literati are part of society that has a relationship with a social status. Literature and the value of life are both social issues whose nature complements each other. Literature is a product in a life that has religious, philosophical, social, cultural, moral and other values (Mukhanifah Amin, 2023).

In this study, sociological studies with a focus on social values in the novel "Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan". Since in sociology human life is studied in social reality, the subject is society, and the object is human life in society. Literary sociology, on the contrary, deals with human life in the fictional world as a result of imagination (Sujarwa, 2019). Meanwhile, researchers are looking for sociological studies on the literature of social values based on the novel "Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan".

A novel is a literary work that summarizes ideas and thoughts in the form of words or sentences. The content of the novel is a picture of life in the area (Wimayasari et al., 2017). Nurgiyanto also explained that novels are literary works that reveal deeper aspects of humanity and are expressed subtly. A novel is a work that systematically records the events experienced by its characters, revealing the most complete elements of the story (Burhan Nurgianto, 2013).

In line with Effi Vikria's research in the Journal of Language and Literature, novels are a type of fictional story that reveals the conflicts of the characters' lives more deeply, besides that the characters and a series of events are displayed in an arranged manner until the form is longer than other imaginary prose. Novels present like other literary works are not without meaning, novels presented in the midst of society have a central function and role by providing inner satisfaction for readers through the educational values contained in them (Vikria et al., 2021). In the novel, of course, there are various kinds of characters that the author presents in each story. These characters have their respective roles in every event, conflict, and story (Rahma et al., 2021).

The novel Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan depicts the life of a teenage girl in Indonesia who was first diagnosed with soft tissue cancer. The story in this novel represents the problems of life and many moral values that benefit the reader. The selection of the novel "Surat Kecil

untuk Tuhan" as a material object is an appropriate way to convey information about social values to the reader.

Here are some previous studies related to this research: first, an article written by Ratna, Kasnadi and Heru entitled "Social Values in the Novel Perempuan Bersampur Merah by Intan Andaru", 2022 (Dewi & Setiawan, 2022). The study found that social values are expressed in the following ways: Manifested in the form of affection, devotion, kinship, mutual assistance, and loyalty. Responsibility, expressed in the form of a sense of belonging and empathy. The harmony of life is explained in terms of justice, cooperation, tolerance and democracy. Collectively, these social values serve as guidelines and unity, bulwarks of protection, and encouragement.

Second, an article written by Dresya, Panji, and Yunita entitled "Religiosity of the Main Character in the Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan Novel by Agnes Davonar", 2017 (Wimayasari et al., 2017). The results of the study, the novel "Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan" by Agnes Davonar contains various forms of religiosity, including the dimension of faith, the dimension of religious practice and worship, the dimension of emotion and gratitude, and the dimension of religious knowledge and its influence and practice.

Third, in an article entitled "Social and Cultural Conflicts in Sekeping Cinta untuk Yola by Abas as Literature Teaching Material in High School", written by Ika Herliana, 2022 (Herliana, 2022). The results showed that there were social conflicts, cultural conflicts, and implications of teaching Indonesian Literature. First, the social conflict in the novel "A Piece of Love for Yola" by Abas has 15 findings, namely compassion 5 findings, responsibility 5 findings, and harmony in life 5 findings. Second, cultural conflicts in the novel "A Piece of Love for Yola" by Abas there are 41 findings, namely economic conflicts 6 findings, customs conflicts 5 findings, religious conflicts 10 findings, social status conflicts 5 findings, cultural conflicts 2 findings, science conflicts 4 findings, and art conflicts 9 findings.

From some of the studies mentioned above, it shows some differences with this study. This research focuses on the study of literary sociology using the theoretical approach of Rene Wellek and Austin Warren in the novel "Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan" by Agnes Davonar. This research is expected to help readers understand social values, especially in novels from the point of view of literary sociology.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

The sociology of literature has been classified by Rene Wellek and Austin Warren as follows: the first being the Sociology of Authors, the Profession of Writers, and the Institute of Literature. The second aspect concerns the content of a literary work, its purpose and attention implicit in the literary work itself and related to social issues. The last point concerns social influence on literary works. (Rene Wellek, 2016)

The social life of society becomes the object of research in sociology (Lestari, 2020). Soekanto suggested that sociology is a social science whose categories are pure, abstract, trying to find general, rational and empirical understandings, and are general. Sociology examines various areas of life such as, religion, economics, kinship, love, morality, politics,

others. Sociology not only studies the field of life in general, but also the object of study specifically, namely the lives of fellow humans. Human life is not only in reality, but also in literary works in the form of story characters. To study aspects of human life or characters in stories, research is carried out using literary sociology (Sarjono Soekanto, 2006).

According to Damono, literary sociology is the study of humans in society, even the study of social institutions and social processes. Therefore, there are social problems such as economic, religious, cultural, and political. Novels cannot be separated from the social reality that occurs in society (S.D. Damono, 2020). In line with Elin Kristinawati's research in the journal Baradha: Journal of Javanese Language Development, Literature, and Culture that literary sociology is to connect the experiences of imaginary and religious figures of authors with the history of their origins. The themes and styles that exist in literary works that are so personal must be transformed into social things (Elin Kristinawati, 2022).

Social values are something that is valued by society and can be said to be part of the truth. Therefore, social values are very important because they represent public relations, as well as relationships between groups and organizations. Reaching mutual agreement without discussion in public life. This idea is in line with Hidayati's opinion Social values in social life are closely related to attitudes and actions that are considered good and bad, or right and wrong, in social life, therefore they must be applied in practice (Hidayati et al., 2022).

According to Zubaedi, social values can be divided into several values. (1) love (devotion, mutual assistance, kinship, loyalty, affection), (2) responsibility (sense of belonging, discipline, empathy), (3) harmony of life (justice, tolerance, cooperation and democracy) (Zubaedi, 2012).

Social aspects can be studied more deeply by using a literary sociology approach to reveal social aspects as a whole. According to Mahsun, Aspect is a way of looking at the internal temporal structure or situation. Situations are circumstances, events, and processes (Mahsun, 2015). So, the social aspect can be interpreted as an interpretation of the situation or consideration based on the community's point of view. The social aspect is something that takes into account the important value between literature and society, so that to understand the problems in a literary work, it will be related to the social reality contained in society.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is a descriptive research using a qualitative approach. Qualitative research according to Moleong is research that aims to understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects holistically, and by means of descriptions in the form of words and language in certain natural contexts by utilizing various natural methods. Qualitative research is a scientific method commonly used by a group of researchers in the fields of social sciences and education (Moleong, 2005).

The type of research used in this study is a type of qualitative research. According to Endraswara, qualitative research is research that does not prioritize the framework but focuses more on the essential with empirically studied concepts. Descriptive research does not aim to fill in a specific hypothesis, but only describes the existence of phenomena or events (Endraswara, 2013). The object of research is a study that becomes a social value in the novel

"Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan" by Agnes Davonar. The data sources used in this study are primary and secondary data sources in the form of literature such as books, articles, magazines, and novels.

Data collection techniques in this study used library, reading, data analysis, and note-taking techniques. Literature techniques, namely the use of written and online materials, are studied in accordance with the problems and objectives of literary research, namely problems and objectives related to social values and literary sociology research. The method used to analyze the data is qualitative descriptive analysis.

This research uses flow analysis techniques or called text summarizing techniques, namely analysis in 3 components, namely first, data reduction; Second, Presentation of data; Third, draw conclusions.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This novel retells the sad story of a girl named Keke or Gita Sesa Wanda Cantika. He was affected by a fairly rare disease called Rabdosmiosarcoma or in layman's language known as soft tissue cancer. Keke himself is the first patient in Indonesia to be detected with the disease. This is what makes his story very evocative. Keke was diagnosed with the disease at the age of 13 and in just 5 days! The soft tissue cancer slowly changes the face of the young keke. He became someone who was no longer known because his face became something that was not beautiful to the eye. For children, maybe the keke's face will be called the appearance of a monster.

The novel is based on a true story. The author packs Keke's fight against cancer well. Although in some parts he pushes too much moral message into the dialogue of some characters so that it messes up the setting. However, after all, this book still gives its main spirit to the younger generation that no matter how difficult the trial, we must dare to stand up and face it.

Keke's struggle had borne sweet fruit, because the team of doctors managed to cure the disease. This became an achievement for the world of medicine in Indonesia at that time and became a byword in other countries. Many ask how such a malignant disease was conquered. The polemic finally got an answer, because keke was only "temporarily healed". Moments after he underwent treatment, the malignant cancer returned and once again attacked his body and spirit. Keke also realized, his time to live could no longer be stretched out with drugs and others. Sure enough, he died on December 26 in 2006. Before he died, he had written a letter. It was this letter that later inspired the selection of the title "Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan".

If examined, this novel is indeed interesting. Not only does it talk about one's suffering, but it also shows a struggle as well as submission to the Creator. The author of this novel manages to convey the story of keke well. Besides Keke, other characters in this story include Keke's own father, Keke's friends Fadha, Maya, Shifa, Ida and Andhini, there are also Dr. Adhi, Dr. Mukhlis, Andi, Pak Iyus. Because this is based on a true story, the

characters are all real. Perhaps this is what makes the character of the characters clearly depicted.

Researchers will discuss the results of the analysis of novel new data obtained during the study. Social values depicted in the novel *Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan* by Agnes Davonar. This novel tells the story of an Indonesian teenage girl named Gita Sesa Wanda Cantika or keke, a beautiful, smart girl and a 13-year-old former child singing artist, who became the first soft tissue cancer sufferer in Indonesia. The cancer attacked her beautiful face and made her look like a monster, even doctors said that her life would not be long. Not wanting to give up easily, the father continued to fight so that Keke could escape the death sentence. The father's struggle to save his daughter was so moving, Keke, who realized her life was coming to an end, wrote a small letter to God. God gave grace in her life, Keke was able to survive with the cancer for three years even though in the end she gave up.

In the novel, there is a social value of the characters in the novel that are depicted through the storyline. Based on the results of the study, the function of social values in the novel "Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan" includes functions as Social values in this novel such as the affection that parents give to children, this parental affection is so sincere. The following is a discussion of the social values contained in the novel:

## Compassion

The relationship between man and God is a special one. Man as a creature will not be separated from the creator. Whether consciously or unconsciously, all human needs will practically always be directed to the creator. In conscience, man's relationship with God always has a greater portion when compared to other creatures, although sometimes man's relationship with the creator is shown in various ways. Good or bad human behavior will affect the strength of faith in God. In the novel Little Epistle to God finds two variant forms regarding man's relationship with God, namely faith and man's responsibility to God. The data found in this novel about believers are as follows:

"My tears flowed and a deep sense of sadness permeated my whole body. I had long suspected that I didn't have a tumor and now the saddest answer I knew. I don't have a tumor, but cancer." (Davonar, 2015)

From the above data quotation, it can be concluded that keke accepted the destiny God had given her, such as accepting parental separation which made her choose to live with her father and leave her mother. The next quote also concludes that Keke accepts the reality of life even though she is stricken with Tumor disease. But Keke seemed sincere in accepting this reality. We should too. Because behind the calamity we experience, God will give wisdom and goodness behind it all.

"I should be thankful because the second and third chemotrapi processes are not like the first process which was so painful."

"I'm thankful that all my friends in class never bothered me by my situation." (Davonar, 2015)

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From the excerpt of the data above, it can be concluded that Keke is always grateful to God for the blessings that have been bestowed on her. Even though God was giving him trials, he still did not forget to thank God. To be thankful is not only about the happiness God gives us. When we are being given trials or calamities, we should always be grateful.

"At first we felt uncomfortable also going to school in a new place. But after discussion and after repeatedly persuading us to go to school, we finally melted down. Giving thanks while praying 'a bismillahi tawakkaltu 'Alallah, we decided to go back to school. Our prayers were answered."

"I just smiled a little at them and hugged my friends. The reason I chose Alkamal where I studied was because I wanted to explore the teachings of Islam and I wanted to read the Qur'an fluently. Because my father always reminded me of the advice: "there is no pride of parents in the Hereafter except the child who can read the Qur'an".

"In the teachings of Islam, my teacher said this, "It is mentioned in a proposition that there will not be a paradise of people who have the slightest character or sense of arrogance." (Davonar, 2015)

In addition, the researcher describes it as follows, first in the family is taught in addition to fardu prayers, also sunnah prayers, which are meant sunnah prayers in the novel, namely tahajjud prayers:

"I saw my father in the room, sobbing during tahajjud prayers at night, praying to Allah for guidance."

#### Husnudzon attitude:

"My suspicions of cancer started but I dismissed everything and tried to be husnudzon or prejudiced. I can only pray to Allah that what I was worried about would not happen."

#### Patience:

"Dad is looking for the best doctor for you. I hope you will be patient.". "Dad Keke has been patient enough. But Keke can't stand it anymore Keke wants to give up and it's better for Keke to die!". Masya allah Keke God hates such words the most... Don't talk about it anymore". (Davonar, 2015)

The effort made by the father named Joddy Tri Aprianto, for the sake of his son treatment in any way he took even though he reached the end of the world, he still took it to treat his sick daughter, named Keke. Also an attitude of having gratitude when his daughter was cured of cancer.

Another phenomenon of religious reality is accepting freely (qonaah) the destiny of Allah given to his family. They believe that whatever happens there must be wisdom in it. The fourth is to always say istighfar when the ordeal comes back, keke after three years of recovering from his illness, in the 4th year his illness again comes to the temple of his right eye. The fifth reality is illustrated by, the way in which trials are taken, the characters in the

novel in addition to making efforts, they also pray as a second medium, asking God for anything alone.

# **Sense of Responsibility**

The struggle of life against destiny intended in this study is an effort made by Keke in treating his malignant cancer. The effort began with a treatment of herbal medicine:

"me, my father and Mr. Yus. We walked towards the old grandfather's house, I didn't know because he didn't say anything to me. When he arrived at the old grandfather's house, he gave me herbal medicine."

Continuing to Chinese medicine:

"A week after the herbal medicine, because it didn't produce results, my father took me to Chinese medicine." (Davonar, 2015)

The effort was not successful so the treatment continued to be carried out, through traditional medicine by consuming onions, of course it tasted very bad, this action was still not successful, then Keke and his family consulted a cancer expert named Prof. dr. H. Mulkis Ramli, the doctor suggested chemotherapy, after six months of chemotherapy God gave him healing.

Unexpectedly after three years Keke was free of cancer, now the cancer came again, but this time with a different location, on the temple of the right eye. This time, his father tried the first method, hoping to kill the rogue cancer. Chemotherapy was done again, all of Keke's hair fell out without remaining. But it looks like the cancer is starting to become immune to the chemicals. the cancer remained sitting sweetly on Keke's right temple.

Finally his father tried treatment to Singapore, where the doctor suggested surgery. Because of desperdo, they returned to Indonesia with Keke's condition getting worse, Kenker began to spread throughout the body, to the lungs, heart and other organs. One thing that moved me, with such a severe condition, Keke's enthusiasm for learning was very high, she remained strong for school, even when her hands and feet were no longer able to move.

Time passed and Keke's condition did not improve until finally she had to be hospitalized again and fell into a coma for three days. In the hospitalization there was very proud news for both Keke and his family that God did give trials according to His servant's ability. Keke proves all that." Keke took third place in her class in the school's final exam.

Then, the doctor succumbed to his cancer, in his last breath he wrote a small letter to God. A letter full of the magnanimity of an Indonesian teenager who hopes that no more tears in this world will happen to him, happened to anyone. His life had ended on December 25, 2006 right after he observed his last fast and Eid al-Fitr with his family and friends, but his story became eternal.

The reality of education in novels certainly exists. The positives that researchers found hold some educational value. Keke as a character in the novel can be used as a figure, his enthusiasm in gaining knowledge is illustrated through his actions, including being active in various aspects of science, critical of the development of science in the world, and enthusiasm in school. Here's what the researchers found:

"During the History lesson, my teacher explained some things, and what I responded to was 'history introduces to a generation of great people of its time. Aristotle, a Greek philosopher who influenced western thought, was a student of Plato and teacher of A. the Great. Einstin, a genius physicist". (Davonar, 2015)

He never stopped to be excited about school, in a state of illness, he still forced himself to enter school, until the last seconds of his breath, when he was in third grade, while at that time UN was about to take place, in a state of paralyzed legs next to each other, he still asked to be sent to school to take exams, while limping he did all the UN questions, until finally in his last breath he proved that he won 3rd place. The following are data whose educational value is in the form of moral education:

"My body hurts all the way, my next leg can't be moved. While my hair is not left in the slightest. I must not be discouraged, I must join the UN. I called Mr. Yus who was the driver in my family. Mr. Yus didn't want to take me before, but I forced him, finally Mr. Yus also wanted to take me. And the place of sitting in the school is arranged by the supervisor. I was placed near the doors and windows, so that Mr. Yus could monitor me always. In the middle of working on the UN questions, I had a severe nosebleed, I still insisted on solving all the questions. Thank God I was able to finish everything, out of class I was accompanied by my friends". (Davonar, 2015)

We can learn the attitude taken by Keke that even sick people can have such high spirits, especially healthy ones, should have more than that. Getting a good rating, especially those who are in good health, should be able to achieve more achievements than sick people. Moral education can certainly be used as a reference. Wise in facing any event or destiny. Do not blame others when he himself gets a disaster. Able to face various problems with a broad heart.

## **CONCLUSION**

After conducting an analysis and obtaining the results of the discussion, it can be concluded as follows: first, social values are a set of individual attitudes that are valued as a truth and used as standards of behavior in order to obtain a democratic and harmonious community life. The social values contained in the novel *Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan* are: the value of affection consists of devotion, help, kinship, loyalty, and care and the value of responsibility consists of a sense of belonging, discipline, and empathy. Second, the function of social values which is a direction for society in thinking and behaving in fulfilling social roles. So that researchers found three functions of social value, namely; (i) function as a guide and unifier in which it explains the way of thinking and acting that can gather many people or groups, (ii) function as a fortress of protection explaining as a refuge for society, and (iii) function as a booster namely as a means of encouragement and also guiding humans to do good.

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