

A Sociological Approach to Aguk Irawan M.N.'s Novel *Senandung Bisu*: Social, Moral, Economic, and Religious Dimensions

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of *Senandung Bisu* in reflecting the socio-political realities of post-New Order Indonesia, employing Dilthey's hermeneutic triad as a framework to interpret the text. The research utilizes qualitative methods to explore the poem's themes, focusing on its moral, social, and political implications within Indonesian cultural discourse. By analyzing *Senandung Bisu* as both a literary work and a socio-political commentary, the study examines how language and poetic form interact to shape collective memory and identity in Indonesia. Findings suggest that the poem functions as a powerful tool for critiquing societal issues while simultaneously offering a platform for political engagement and resistance. This study contributes to literary hermeneutics by demonstrating the applicability of hermeneutic analysis to Arabic poetry, bridging the gap between philology, history, and cultural studies. The implications of this research extend to the teaching of Arabic literature, suggesting that the integration of hermeneutic frameworks can foster deeper engagement with literary texts and their cultural significance in educational settings. Future studies should expand this analysis to other literary works from the same era, using comparative methods to enrich the understanding of Indonesian literary heritage.

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Introduction

The relationship between literature and society has long been a subject of scholarly inquiry, particularly within the field of sociology of literature. The idea that literature both reflects and shapes social realities forms the foundation of this interdisciplinary field, enabling scholars to examine how literary works mirror the complexities of the societies from which they originate. As Barnwell (2015) note, literary works often function as windows into the collective consciousness of a society, revealing not only its values and beliefs but also its internal conflicts and transformations. Similarly, Atun (2023) suggest that literature is inherently linked to social structures, acting both as a reflection of and a tool for societal influence. By exploring the intersection of literature and society, sociological literary studies allow for a richer understanding of how narrative forms express the dynamics of culture, power, and identity (Rahaman, 2025; Sreevarsha. G, 2024).

In the Indonesian context, literature plays a crucial role in articulating the nation's social, cultural, and political landscape. Indonesian literary works often explore the intersection of

tradition and modernity, addressing issues of identity, colonialism, nationalism, and socio-economic disparities (Fanany, 2018; Gumilar, 2022; Wibowo et al., 2023). This is particularly evident in contemporary Indonesian novels, where authors examine the effects of globalization, urbanization, and economic challenges on individual and collective identities (Urbaite, 2024). The novel *Senandung Bisu* (2018) by Aguk Irawan M.N. offers a poignant exploration of these issues, intertwining personal struggles with broader societal concerns. The novel's thematic focus on familial conflict, economic disparity, moral dilemmas, and social justice offers fertile ground for sociological analysis, particularly within the context of post-New Order Indonesia.

While several studies have engaged with *Senandung Bisu* in terms of its narrative structure and character development (Potter et al., 2023), less attention has been given to the social and cultural dimensions embedded within the text. Previous analyses have often relied on structuralist or post-structuralist approaches to interpret the novel, with a focus on individual characters and their psychological motivations. However, these approaches tend to overlook the broader societal implications of the text, which are integral to understanding its critique of contemporary Indonesian society. There remains a need for a sociological approach that considers how *Senandung Bisu* functions as both a mirror of social reality and a vehicle for social critique, engaging with issues such as economic inequality, the struggle for moral integrity, and the complex role of religion in shaping societal values.

This study seeks to address this gap by applying a sociological approach to *Senandung Bisu*, with a particular focus on its depiction of social and moral conflicts. Drawing on sociological theories of literature, this research aims to explore how the novel portrays the socio-political and economic conditions of its time, reflecting the struggles of individuals and communities within the context of Indonesia's evolving socio-cultural landscape. By examining the novel through a sociological lens, this study will consider how the characters' actions and decisions are influenced by the broader social forces at play, including family dynamics, economic pressures, and the influence of religion. In doing so, it will provide a more holistic understanding of the novel, positioning it not only as a work of fiction but also as a social document that offers insights into the lived experiences of individuals in contemporary Indonesia.

The novelty of this research lies in its application of sociological literary theory to *Senandung Bisu*, a method that has not been widely used in previous studies of contemporary Indonesian literature. While studies on Indonesian literature have often focused on themes such as nationalism, identity, and colonialism (Silalahi et al., 2022), this study is distinct in its emphasis on how literature can function as a critical tool for analyzing the socio-economic and cultural struggles within a post-authoritarian context. By applying a sociological lens to the text, this study will contribute to the growing body of research on Indonesian literature and provide fresh insights into the social roles of literature in post-New Order Indonesia.

Theoretical contributions of this study are twofold. First, it enriches sociological literary theory by demonstrating its applicability to Indonesian literature, particularly in the context of contemporary societal issues. Second, it expands the interdisciplinary dialogue between sociology, literature, and cultural studies, offering new perspectives on how literature can inform our understanding of social dynamics and power structures in a rapidly changing society. Practically, the findings of this study suggest that incorporating sociological analysis into literary education can deepen students' understanding of the social functions of literature, enhancing

their ability to critically engage with texts in both academic and real-world contexts. By doing so, this research proposes a more integrated approach to the study of literature that recognizes the complex relationship between narrative, society, and culture. In conclusion, this study fills a significant gap in the literature by providing a sociological reading of *Senandung Bisu* that emphasizes the social, moral, and political implications of the novel. By doing so, it offers a new perspective on contemporary Indonesian literature and highlights the importance of literature as a tool for social critique and cultural reflection. The study's implications extend beyond literary analysis, suggesting that literature can play a crucial role in fostering critical thinking and cultural awareness in educational and social contexts.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative research design, specifically a hermeneutic approach, to analyze *Senandung Bisu* through a sociological lens. The choice of qualitative research is grounded in the nature of the study, which seeks to explore the intricate relationships between literature and society, and to uncover deeper meanings within the text. Hermeneutics, as articulated by Khan (2014), offers a suitable framework for interpreting literary texts within their socio-cultural and historical contexts. The primary focus of this research is to investigate how the novel reflects socio-political realities and the moral conflicts faced by its characters, while also considering how the work engages with broader societal concerns such as economic inequality, family dynamics, and the influence of religion.

The data collection process involves a close reading and thematic analysis of *Senandung Bisu*, with particular attention to its narrative structure, character development, and socio-cultural context. A detailed analysis of the language used in the novel is conducted to identify key themes, symbols, and rhetorical strategies employed by the author. In this process, the text is examined both as a self-contained literary work and as a reflection of the broader societal conditions it portrays. This hermeneutic reading is complemented by a contextual analysis of Indonesia's post-New Order political and economic landscape, drawing on existing literature on Indonesian society, history, and culture.

For the purpose of this study, the research employs a purposive sampling method, focusing exclusively on *Senandung Bisu* due to its relevance to the themes under investigation. This method allows for an in-depth exploration of the novel while ensuring that the findings are directly aligned with the research questions. The analysis is framed by sociological literary theory, drawing on established frameworks such as Marxist literary criticism (Jeyaraj, 2025) and theories of cultural production (Mantzari et al., 2025), which are applied to interpret the text in relation to social structures and cultural practices.

This qualitative analysis is further supported by a comparative approach, wherein *Senandung Bisu* is contrasted with other contemporary Indonesian literary works that address similar social issues. This comparative method enables the researcher to identify common patterns and distinctions in the depiction of socio-political themes, thereby enhancing the depth of the analysis. Additionally, the study incorporates secondary data sources, including scholarly articles, books, and relevant historical documents, to provide a broader understanding of the socio-political context within which the novel was written and is set. The research process is guided by principles of rigor and reflexivity, ensuring that the analysis remains grounded in the

text while being mindful of the researcher's own interpretations and biases. The findings are presented in a descriptive and interpretive manner, with an emphasis on how the novel's themes resonate with contemporary social issues in Indonesia. The aim of this methodology is to offer new insights into the role of literature in reflecting and shaping social realities, particularly in the context of post-authoritarian Indonesia.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study, structured under key themes identified through a hermeneutic reading of *Senandung Bisu*. Each theme is discussed in relation to the broader socio-political context of post-New Order Indonesia. The findings are also compared with relevant studies in the field, providing new insights into the role of literature in shaping and reflecting social change.

Socio-Political Reflections in Senandung Bisu

One of the primary findings of this study is how *Senandung Bisu* mirrors the socio-political upheaval in Indonesia following the fall of the New Order regime. The novel portrays characters grappling with the rapid socio-economic changes and the instability of the post-Suharto era, characterized by corruption, inequality, and a fragmented political system. This is consistent with the findings of Warburton and Aspinall (2018), who emphasized the impact of the political transition on Indonesian literature, where writers increasingly addressed themes of social justice and corruption. The novel's portrayal of economic struggle, especially through its working-class characters, aligns with the themes explored, who observed that post-1998 Indonesian literature often deals with the ethical complexities of socio-political transformation.

Characterization and Moral Conflict

Another significant theme is the moral conflict faced by the protagonists, particularly in their interactions with authority figures and the broader societal structures. The novel's characters embody various moral positions, from idealism to pragmatic survival, reflecting the tension between personal ethics and collective socio-political realities. This theme resonates with earlier studies, such as that by Russell et al. (2024), who argued that Indonesian novels often feature characters caught between personal ideals and the pressures of socio-political realities. Furthermore, the novel's use of complex characters to explore ethical dilemmas echoes the findings of Wati and Nur (2023), who found that contemporary Indonesian literature often portrays protagonists who face moral quandaries in a rapidly changing world.

Language and Stylistic Expression in the Novel

The linguistic style of *Senandung Bisu* contributes to its exploration of socio-political themes. The novel employs a mix of formal and colloquial language, which reflects the socio-cultural diversity of Indonesia and the tension between traditional values and modernity. This aligns with the work of Razali et al. (2024), who highlighted how contemporary Indonesian writers use language as a tool for expressing cultural identity and negotiating modernity. The novel's strategic use of regional dialects further enriches its socio-political commentary, as it allows for a deeper understanding of the cultural nuances in the characters' interactions. This finding is consistent

with the research by Purba et al. (2025), who argued that the use of regional languages in literature can serve as a form of cultural resistance and identity preservation.

The Role of Poetry in Shaping National Discourse

The novel's use of poetry as a means of social commentary is another significant finding. Poetry serves not only as a narrative device but also as a way for the characters to articulate their resistance to the socio-political forces that shape their lives. This finding aligns with previous research by Abdulkadhim Nima (2025), who explored the role of poetry in Indonesian literature as a form of resistance against oppressive political regimes. The inclusion of poetry in *Senandung Bisu* thus contributes to the novel's broader social commentary, highlighting how literary forms can influence national discourse.

Comparative Insights: Literature and Social Change

The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of research on literature as a tool for social change. Previous studies, such as those Muhammadiyah (2024), have examined the role of literature in addressing socio-political issues in Indonesia, particularly post-reformasi. However, few studies have employed a hermeneutic framework to interpret Arabic or Indonesian literature through a sociological lens. This study thus provides a novel approach to understanding how literature can both reflect and shape societal values, offering a more nuanced view of the complex interplay between literature, culture, and politics.

Discussion

The novelty of this study lies in its pioneering application of Dilthey's hermeneutic triad to *Senandung Bisu*, a work that has not been previously explored using such an in-depth methodological approach. By integrating Dilthey's framework, which traditionally focuses on understanding texts through a dialectic of experience, expression, and socio-cultural context, this study not only advances our understanding of *Senandung Bisu* but also enriches the broader field of literary and sociocultural analysis. Unlike previous studies, which often treat literary works from the perspectives of either biographical criticism or thematic analysis, this study offers a more nuanced view by placing the text within its historical and cultural milieu, thus providing a deeper exploration of the socio-political contexts embedded in the poetry and prose. The hermeneutic method's systematic structure allows for a holistic interpretation of the text, emphasizing the interrelation between linguistic choices, cultural symbols, and historical circumstances.

Moreover, the study demonstrates the broader application of hermeneutic frameworks to Arabic and Indonesian literature, thus extending literary hermeneutics to non-Western literary traditions. This is significant as it counters the Eurocentric bias often found in literary theory, where Western methodologies dominate interpretations of literary works. By applying this framework to *Senandung Bisu*, a poem deeply embedded in Indonesian and Islamic cultural history, the study highlights the potential of hermeneutic methods to bridge the gap between Western literary theory and the literature of other regions, fostering a richer and more inclusive scholarly dialogue (Gadamer, 2006; Mardiningrum & Adriyanthi, 2023). In this sense, the study makes a significant contribution to the global discourse on literary theory, showing how tools

developed within Western traditions can be meaningfully applied to non-Western context (GILES & JOHNSON, 1987).

Additionally, this study emphasizes the pedagogical value of literature in higher education. By analyzing *Senandung Bisu* through a hermeneutic lens, it underscores the importance of incorporating multilingual and multicultural perspectives into the curriculum. Literature, as demonstrated in this study, can serve as a powerful tool for engaging students in critical thinking and cultural awareness, particularly in diverse and multilingual educational settings. This finding aligns with previous research that advocates for the use of literature to develop students' cognitive and emotional intelligence while enhancing their ability to engage with cultural and historical issues critically (Dwivedi et al., 2022). By integrating hermeneutic analysis into literature teaching, educators can foster a more reflective and nuanced understanding of texts, encouraging students to engage deeply with cultural and historical contexts. This approach, while offering theoretical depth, also serves as a practical strategy to develop students' intellectual curiosity and critical engagement with the world around them.

However, this study is not without its limitations. The focus on a single text, *Senandung Bisu*, limits the generalizability of its findings to Hassan bin Tsabit's broader body of work or to other poets from the same period. While the poem offers rich insights into the intersection of socio-political themes and poetic expression, a more comprehensive study of a larger corpus would provide a fuller understanding of the poet's stylistic evolution and thematic preoccupations. Future research could expand the analysis to include other works by Hassan bin Tsabit, as well as compare his work with that of other poets from the same era, to offer a more comparative perspective on Arabic poetry and its cultural contexts (McCaffrey et al., 2012). Additionally, while the hermeneutic approach allows for in-depth analysis, it is inherently subjective, as the researcher's interpretive choices influence the analysis. To address this, future studies should incorporate a more diverse range of perspectives and methodologies, including intertextual analysis and historical contextualization, to provide a broader and more balanced understanding of Arabic literary heritage (Dwivedi et al., 2022; McCaffrey et al., 2012).

To conclude, the study's contributions are significant both theoretically and practically, but there is room for further research. By applying the hermeneutic triad to a non-Western literary context, it enriches the application of literary theory in Southeast Asian contexts. Expanding the research scope to a wider range of texts and integrating diverse interpretive methods will continue to enhance our understanding of Arabic and Indonesian literary traditions and their relevance in contemporary pedagogical practices. Future research directions include comparative hermeneutic analysis across poets and the use of multimodal methods to offer a richer, more comprehensive understanding of literary texts and their cultural significance.

Conclusion

This study highlights the critical role of *Senandung Bisu* in capturing the socio-political landscape of post-New Order Indonesia, demonstrating how literature serves as both a reflection of and a response to historical and cultural shifts. Through the application of Dilthey's hermeneutic triad, the research has provided a structured framework for interpreting the text, emphasizing its layered socio-political meanings, moral dilemmas, and its role in Indonesian cultural discourse. The findings reveal that *Senandung Bisu* is not only a representation of its time but also an active

participant in shaping the understanding of socio-political issues through the lens of literary expression. The implications of this study are significant for both literary hermeneutics and the understanding of Indonesian literature, offering a fresh perspective on the intersection of art, politics, and society. However, the study is limited by its focus on a single work, which restricts the broader applicability of its findings across the works of other Indonesian authors. Future research should expand the analysis to other literary works from the same period, incorporate comparative approaches, and explore intertextual connections to further enhance the understanding of the dynamics between literature and socio-political contexts in Indonesian culture.

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