



## Subjectivity of Travelers in Tere Liye's Novel *Janji*: Carl Thompson's Travel Literature Analysis

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**Abstract** *This article uses the material object of Tere Liye's novel Janji and the formal object of Carl Thompson's depiction of the world of travel literature. This research is made to analyze the world depiction, negotiation, and ideology in the novel. Then, descriptive qualitative research is used as the research method. The results of this study are (1) subjective long distance world depiction dominates the novel Janji by Tere Liye; (2) there are three types of negotiation, namely agreement, comparison, and change. There are also three ideologies of the travelers, namely theism, humanism, and racism; and (3) based on the depiction of the world, there are negotiations and ideologies carried by the travelers.*

**Keywords:** *travel literature, negotiation, subjectivity, ideology, and Tere Liye.*

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### 1. Introduction

Nowadays, technology allows individuals to travel from one place to another with ease. This phenomenon is then seen by travel agencies, both domestic and foreign. They established travel agencies to facilitate easier travel for individuals. As a result, the number of travelers has increased. When traveling, a traveler meets and experiences many new things in the places they visit. Thus, travel is defined as a negotiation activity between the self and others that moves from one place to another<sup>1</sup>. Typically, they capture new experiences and present them in various forms, such as photos, videos, or travel writing. The things encountered are called the world on the road. Among the different products that record it, travel writing has occupied an important position. Travel writing can take the form of blog posts, social media posts, personal notes, and literary works (novels, poems, and short stories). They describe enjoyable and memorable events or places in the travel notes. Notes on the trip also include depictions of the world, negotiations, and ideologies.

Travelogues are believed to have existed in Indonesia since the time of settlers who traveled to the archipelago. Indonesia has several characteristics of early travel records, including those written in local languages, using non-Latin scripts, in a non-prose form, a combination of regional myths and epics, published in the precolonial period, and with little Western influence. During the development of technology, travel notes began to evolve, both in terms of distribution and purpose. Today,

travelogues are essential for gathering information about the world. Travel notes not only develop as personal notes but are also written into literary works. Those travel notes are known as travel writing. Each traveler in travel writing has their way of describing the world they encounter. Some show admiration for the new world, but others despise it. This phenomenon also prompts many authors of literary works to write within the subgenre of travel literature, exemplified by Tere Liye. Tere Liye has produced many works since 2005 to the present. Some of his works feature a travel theme, one of which is a novel titled *Janji*. The story was first published in 2021. In the novel *Janji*, the author employs a third person point of view. There are three travelers in this novel, namely Hasan, Baso, and Kahar. The three friends travel as punishment for their mischief at school. Previous encounters with others influence the movement of the journey in this novel.

The journey in this novel takes place in several provinces in Sumatra, artisanal mines in Kalimantan, and Jakarta. This makes this novel different from other travel novels. This is because other travel novels usually describe places abroad. The travelers have a religious school background and are students. They have been taught Islamic values since childhood, but they have to go to a place that contradicts these values. They also come from different family backgrounds. Hasan's father worked as an official and was caught in a corruption case. Baso lost his parents. Kahar's family is busy and has no time for him. The problems of this novel are not only limited to social issues, but also the element of travel. Based on the three reasons for the previous selection, the issue of how the traveler portrays the world and the negotiation between self and other is taken. From there, the ideology carried by the travelers is also found. Therefore, Carl Thompson's Travel Literature serves as the theoretical foundation for addressing the identified problems.

The primary form of travel literature is worldbuilding. According to Thompson, worldbuilding is reporting on the wide world and disseminating information about unfamiliar people and places. The description often tends to be subjective. To avoid misunderstandings, travelers must describe objectively as well. This is because the pedestrian is not allowed to stray too far from factual news. However, no matter how strong the objectivity is, descriptions also contain subjectivity. This is because the walker must use the feelings, emotions, and ideologies they bring. The depiction is also divided into two parts, namely objective and subjective. The two types are separated again by distance. Each has a short and a long distance.

The meeting of self and other involves negotiating their similarities and differences. Negotiation is defined as a form of discussion that culminates in an agreement being reached. However, in the context of travel literature, negotiations can take the form of encounters with varying outcomes, both similar and different. The ideology of travel is also found in the depiction of the world and the negotiation.

Ideology is a group or community's belief system and shared view of the world, which can serve to legitimize their own needs and aspirations. However, each individual in a group has their own ideology. Ideology is not only a representation related to politics, but also a form of signification that justifies social relations. It is seen in a person's views, attitudes and speech. The principle of ideology is not entirely true. This means that ideology cannot be claimed to be true. This analysis aims to identify relations of domination within an environment.

Then, there are previous studies that analyze the same material object or formal object. The five previous studies reviewed are Shiba and Yanti (2022) with a journal article entitled "Social Values in the Novel *Janji Karya Tere Liye Kajian Sosiologi Sastra*." Muhammad Andika Baihaqi (2022) with a thesis entitled "Content Analysis of Akhlak Messages in the Novel *Janji Karya Tere Liye*"; Rahmah (2019) with a thesis entitled "Depiction of the World in the Novel *Garis Batas Perjalanan di Negeri-Negeri Asia Tengah Karya Agustinus Wibowo: An Analysis of Carl Thompson's Travel Literature*"; Prastowo and Wijaya (2020) with a journal article entitled "Representing Others Carl Thompson in the Novel *Traveler's Tale: Right Turn Barcelona*"; Zulikha (2020) with a thesis entitled "Agenda and Ideology in the Novel *Pelukis Gurun Pasir* by Fuad Abdurahman: Carl Thompson's Travel Literature Analysis". These four studies contribute to providing references regarding the application of Carl Thompson's world depiction analysis.

However, this study yields a different result, namely that the subjectivity of the traveler in describing the Other leads to negotiation and ideology. Issues of otherness, agenda, and motivation have been addressed by previous research, whereas there are other products of Carl Thompson's Travel Literature, such as negotiation. This research also offers a depiction of the world, negotiation, and ideology that focuses not on the author of the novel, but on the three travelers of the story. Thus, this travel novel falls under the category of inclusive travel literature.

## 2. Method

This research employs a two stage method, comprising data collection and data analysis. Data collection aims to gather empirical data related to the research problem. This stage involves studying the literature of the research problem. The data comes from the novel *Janji* by Tere Liye as well as theoretical books, journals, and internet media. Then, data analysis aims to find the relationship between the data. Data analysis uses the descriptive analysis method. According to Ratna, descriptive analysis is a method that describes facts, which are then analyzed and interpreted. The data is presented in the form of narratives and character dialogues, which depict the world, negotiations, and ideology.

### 3. Result & Discussion

The depiction of the world is written objectively and subjectively with near and far distances. Then, the negotiations and ideologies brought by the travelers are described.

#### A. Depiction of the World

*The* novel has 40 sections. The first through third chapters contain the motivation for the journey that begins with the mischief of three friends (Hasan, Baso, and Kahar). They are punished by Buya (the school principal) to find someone named Bahar. This analysis, therefore, focuses on the travelers' description of the search for Bahar, who was expelled in the 1980s. Buya told them that this was his promise to his father. They carried out the promise because Buya also promised them freedom from school. As the title of the fourth part suggests, their journey begins there. They didn't have a definite plan, just followed the clues found in each place.

Objectivity is judged by the facts and truth obtained by the three friends. Subjectivity stems from the traveler's ideologies, feelings, predictions, and personal emotions. Then, near and far are based on the distance at which the depiction is made. Near distance is experienced directly by the walkers and is not recalled through memories or backtracking. Long-distance relationships are formed through information about others encountered, seen from a distance, or memories. The three walkers depicted the world in 12 locations.

#### Objective Near

The depiction of the near objective world is found when the three travelers decide to go to the provincial capital by following Bahar's drunken way of thinking. When they arrived at the provincial capital, they described it objectively. The following quote evidences this.

All around them, there are *odong-odong* with decorative lights. Toy sellers are also busy demonstrating their toys, tempting buyers. Little children are running around. Families sitting on mats. (Liye, 2021:44)

This indicates that the self directly represents the event that occurred at that moment. There are no descriptions that contain the traveler's emotions and opinions. This means that they describe the world objectively at close range. Additionally, this type of description occurs during the meeting between the self and Muhib at the Great Mosque. After searching in several places (Three Lapo Tuak, Boss Acong's house, Bahar's rent, the prison, Senior Warden Mansyur's house), they stopped at the mosque to pray.

The man's name is Muhib.... He wore a complete black traditional outfit. He had a deta or head covering wrapped around his head to form a ruffle, a matching

cloth around his waist, and a sling on his shoulder. He still carries a kris at his waist. (Liye, 2021: 264)

The quote above introduces someone who is predicted to know Bahar. Muhib is described as wearing black traditional clothing, a headdress (deta), matching cloth, a sesampiang on his shoulders, and a kris. The man is identified as someone from the Minang tribe. This is because the deta is part of the Minangkabau traditional clothing used for head coverings. The head covering is wrapped around a trapezoid, similar to the roof of a gadang house, with its right and left ends pointing upwards. In addition, sesampiang is also part of the traditional clothing made of red or black silk cloth. Usually, this cloth is wrapped from the waist to above the knee. Because he was praying, Muhib took it off. Clothes are typically worn for specific traditional events. In this story, he used it for an engagement ceremony.

### **Objective Remote**

Meanwhile, there is an excerpt that contains an objective depiction of distance. This appeared when they approached the residents and asked about the existence of lapo tuak in the provincial capital.

"... Lapo tuak is not common in this city, but there are three places that serve it. One in the Chinatown area, another in the Batak neighborhood, and another near the Flores settlement." The resident explained. (Liye, 2021:46)

The quote above comes from the locals (liyan), not from the walkers themselves. The statement is used as a new clue. Lapo tuak is defined as a place of social interaction between Batak communities. The term also indicates their location in Medan, North Sumatra. This type of depiction also appears when they describe the mining track in the People's Mine. The location of the mine was told to them by a wealthy merchant in West Sumatra. They went to the province after receiving instructions from Muhib. The description of the mine was done from a distance, not directly on the spot. The location of the People's Mine is described as a difficult-to-reach place.

They need an all terrain vehicle, as artisanal mining sites are located three to four hours from the provincial capital, traversing hills, muddy roads, dense forests, and remote villages. The driver concentrates entirely on crossing roads that are sometimes covered with shrubs. (Liye, 2021: 372)

### **Subjective Near**

When the three friends were on their way to another province, the location of Muhib's proposal, they were told about Bahar by Muhib's family. They reacted to the story. This indicates that the travelers are engaging their personal feelings and emotions.

Hasan was silent. Baso lost his appetite. Kaharuddin rubbed his face (Liye, 2021: 353).

The quote above illustrates the emotional response of sadness, as conveyed by the reaction to the story. Hasan stopped moving, Baso fell silent, and Kahar wiped his face. The depiction is also done directly by the walker, in close proximity.

A close subjective depiction is rediscovered when a new clue is found at the People's Mine. The stall owner there gave Bahar a letter. The depiction is done with Hasan's personal emotional reaction.

Hasan reached for the envelope that Baso was still holding. On the front, the names of Mr. Budi and Mrs. Surti, as recipients of the letter, are clearly written, along with their addresses at the People's Mine. Hasan's hand trembled slightly as he turned it over. Come on, I hope there's... Yes! Hasan's eyes widened. On the back, it was written: Bahar Safar, with his address. (Liye, 2021:423)

### **Distant Subjective**

Muhib and his family also recounted the process of meeting and marrying Bahar, as well as his wife, until disaster struck again. The story is set against the backdrop of 1998.

Until May 1998. When significant events took place across the country  
What happened? Riots. Political events on Java Island spread everywhere. Markets were set on fire, and shops were burned down. Smoke billowed high, and thousands of people were forced to flee. The atmosphere was tense  
It had been exactly three months since their wedding (Liye, 2021:349).

At two o'clock, it is unclear who started it, but the mob began looting shops. They targeted Chinese owned stores (Liye, 2021:349).

The quote indicates that the Indonesian people have widely recognized the riots as a significant event. According to information from Kompas.com, the events of May 1998 were triggered by the Asian economic crisis. It began with student actions, then spread to every corner of the country. They targeted shops, especially those owned by the Chinese. The shop owned by Bahar's wife, who is of Chinese descent, was also burned down. This was also the reason he fled to the People's Mine.

Much of the subject matter came up when they visited the address on the envelope found at the mining site in Jakarta. One of the neighbors recounted the kindness of a Bahar that left the three travelers in awe.

"That night, his condition seemed to improve. Bahar was fast asleep. But as it turned out, less than twelve hours after he fell ill, early the next morning, he died while praying Fajr in bed." ....

".... It was a tough day for all of us. The whole street was gloomy. Shops were closed. The stalls were closed. Additionally, thousands of employees in high-rise buildings became aware of the news... We were very sad. We lost our prayer imam



who recited melodiously. We lost a neighbor who was always kind to others. We lost a person who always told the truth. We lost someone who always gave alms lightly." (Liye, 2021:478-479)

The quote comes from Mr. Sueb, who tells the story of when Bahar passed away. Bahar is described as someone whom many people loved because of his kindness. When he died, the atmosphere became sad, and many people came. The description involves emotions and is not directly experienced by the traveler.

Based on the depictions that have been done, four types of world depictions were found, namely objective near, objective far, subjective near, and subjective far. However, not all places have all four of these. The subjective depiction of the distant world is the dominant one done by the walkers. Initially, they described the world from both objective and subjective perspectives, encompassing both near and distant views. However, their depictions moved towards the subjective, especially at a distance. This is because the walkers focused on depicting Bahar's life. The depiction is based on information from others that the walkers met. They also failed to meet in person due to Bahar's death.

The subjectivity of the walkers stems from their inability to describe the world without involving personal emotions and feelings. For example, when meeting Muhib. Initially, the walkers describe the events objectively, but when recounting the story of Bahar, they also reveal their feelings. This subjective view also indicates that the walker's encounter with the world occurs at a minimal level. The process is not described much; the other's story dominates.

## B. Negotiation

The encounter between self and other certainly results in world depictions and negotiations. The depiction of the world also shows the similarities and differences encountered. In the novel *Janji* by Tere Liye, three types of negotiation are found, namely agreement, comparison, and change. Agreement means an outcome that is agreed upon by both parties, in this context, the self and the other. Negotiation with an agreed outcome occurs when the walkers meet with Boss Acong at Lapi Tuak Capjiki. They approach the former ruler's table and discover cultural differences.

"Uh, sorry to interrupt. May we sit down?" Baso continued, pointing at three empty seats. As if it were just an ordinary food stall, and he could sit on any empty seat.

"Oh my! Who are these three bastards?" One of the patrons, sitting and playing mahjong, exclaimed fiercely.

"How dare you disrupt the game. Drag them out. Teach them a lesson!"

...

BUK!

Hasan groaned.

Amid the smoke, his face was accidentally hit by a punch. (Liye, 2021: 53-54)

The quote illustrates the distinction between polite and anarchic cultures. The polite culture is carried by the pedestrians, characterized by Hasan's politeness when asking permission before taking a seat. Anarchy is exemplified by Bos Acong and his "spit boy," who hit pedestrians. However, after the fight, Bos Acong allowed them to sit. This agreement is evidenced in the following quote.

"Heh, bring them here!"

The bouncer nodded. Hurrying to seat Baso, Hasan, and Kaharuddin (Liye, 2021: 55).

Negotiated agreements are also found when they are in prison. This occurred between the ideology of the walkers and the ideology of the prison. This is evidenced as follows.

Hasan knocked on the metal door, waited a moment, and the small hole opened. The warden from inside asked. A little dismissive. These three snot-nosed kids seemed to have lost their way, and the warden prepared to send them away. But when Hasan told him about Boss Acong and his recent call to the warden, the warden was like welcoming three noble princes. They rushed to open the gate. That's how it was. They are friendly when there is something to do, but cruel and savage when there is nothing to do. (Liye, 2021:169)

The above negotiation illustrates the distinction between the ideologies of racism and feudalism. Inferior is carried by the walkers for a favorable outcome. This is characterized by their attitude of using the name Boss Acong as an excuse to enter the prison office. Without the name, they are belittled and expelled. This also leads to feudalism, characterized by a prison bureaucracy. The place is concerned with position when serving the community. Both parties agreed on the result; they were allowed in and served well.

Next, negotiation through comparison. The comparison is between two different things, the self and the other. Thompson states that observations made by passersby can be subjective to a certain degree, reflecting personal tastes, interests, and attitudes. Subjectivity always has an ideological aspect to which it is compared. This type of negotiation does not change the self of the walker or the other. This appears when Hasan meets his father in prison.

"There is no need to apologize. I've already forgiven everything. I know it's just a fake apology anyway. Crocodile tears. Look, you're still busy bribing the warden for all the facilities. You're still a corrupt person, a briber, never repenting for a second. Stop lying to me with that crying, I'm a big boy. If you want to repent, be like Bahrin. Every second, really every second, he served his sentence in earnest. Instead of enjoying this prison like a hotel, and the next time you get out, you'll be corrupt again." (Liye, 2021:259)

The above quote proves the difference between the ideologies of humanism and feudalism. Humanism is characterized by Hasan forgiving his father, but trying to



remind him of his fraud. He forgives as a form of humanity, but also opposes his corrupt actions. The feudalism of his father, from his corruption to the time he served his sentence. While in prison, his father still bribed him to enjoy the facilities.

Negotiation through change is obtained from the view of the self that changes after meeting the other. At the meeting between self and other, the walkers decide to change or follow the other. This is shown in the following quote.

He had also misunderstood it all along. He was constantly throwing tantrums at school, always looking for trouble, fighting teachers, even fighting Buya because he felt banished from home. But after hearing Bahar's story of being trapped in the mine tunnel a few hours ago, he understood one thing: we can always choose to be patient or angry gratitude or denial. Even when the situation is painful, there may still be goodness to be found. (Liye, 2021:428)

The quote above shows the difference between the thoughts of the walkers and Bahar. Their thoughts were always evil towards their parents, but after hearing about Bahar's life, their thoughts changed to be more positive.

Based on these three negotiations, negotiation through agreement is the dominant approach in this novel. They produce more agreements. The negotiation of agreement also contains changes, both from the self and the other. These results are caused by the two influencing each other. The negotiation of contracts and change is analyzed separately because an agreement involves the decision of two parties. Meanwhile, change only affects one party.

### C. Ideology

Every work of literature represents the views of its characters, including the subgenre of travel literature. The depiction of the world cannot be separated from the ideology carried by the traveler. Based on the previous analysis, several ideologies were found.

First, the ideology of theism. This ideology believes in the presence of God. Marx stated that religion is a form of ideology. Based on these two definitions, it can be concluded that theism is an ideology that encompasses religion and the concept of God. This is evident from the walkers who talked about the halal food.

"Those cookies, as well as the hot tea, are haram or halal?"

"Halal," Kahar answered quickly.

"But that's the house of the former ruler of Kota Tua, right? The one whose work is illicit," Baso added. (Liye, 2021:85)

The concepts of halal and haram are commonly understood in the context of Islamic religious law. Halal is something that can be done or consumed. On the other hand, haram refers to something forbidden by God. The quote shows that Baso

remembers the commandments of his God. Then, it is also noted by Hasan, who mentions the Holy Qur'an as a guide in making decisions.

".... In the holy book it has been written, ask for help with patience and prayer. Baso, Kahar, we will pray Asr. While praying, earnestly ask with gentleness that the next guidance be given." (Liye, 2021:262)

This proves that the traveler clings to his holy book in search of guidance. Hasan invited his two companions to worship and ask for God's help.

The following ideology is humanism, which, according to Harjito, supports the position of humans and makes humans the measure of all things. Humanism prioritizes human rights in life. This ideology emerged during the debate between Hasan and his father.

"But our blood relationship can't just be severed. Until the end of time, you're still my father, and I'm your son. I'll always recognize that, and I'll always treat you well. But that doesn't change one iota the fact that you're a despicable thief. You're even a thousand times more repugnant than the drunkard who was once imprisoned here. All the positions, all the power you have, are just worthless dust. Our family fell apart because of you. ..." (Liye, 2021:258)

The quote proves Hasan's humanity. He defended the people whose rights had been taken away by his father. As a child, Hasan also expressed his frustration at the breakdown of his family. This shows that he upholds human rights. Then, it is shown through his wise attitude that he forgives his father's mistakes.

Racism is the ideology characterized by the superiority of one group over another. The superior attitude coexists with the inferiority of the group that is considered weak. This ideology is contrary to humanism. This is because the ideology of racism perpetuates the differences between the upper and lower classes. Based on this definition, the walkers exhibit a superior attitude when they compare the view of the school with the waterfall they encountered.

"It's normal, sir." Baso grinned.

"Eh?"

"Our school has two waterfalls nearby. There are also tall mountains. In the afternoon, the sun sinks behind their slopes. Everything looks orange. The roofs of the school buildings. The trees. The floating mist. This is nothing." Baso waved his hand. (Liye, 2021:318)

Baso was proud of the view of his school. Indirectly, he considers the waterfall in that place to be inferior to the view from the school. Baso, as a representative of the group, in this case his religious school, feels superior when looking at other groups.

The three snot-nosed kids seemed to have lost their way, and the warden was ready to send them away. But when Hasan told the warden about Boss Acong and his recent call to the warden, the warden was suddenly like welcoming three great princes. (Liye, 2021:169)

Meanwhile, an inferior attitude is encountered when they negotiate with the prison guards. Racism and inferiority appear implicitly in Hasan's attitude. He uses the name Boss Acong to gain entry to the office. The quote reveals the insecure attitude of his group, without mentioning other groups that may be superior.

Based on the three ideologies carried by the walkers, it can be concluded that the walkers have an ideology that is not fixed or consistent. For example, they have a humanist side, but also show attitudes of superiority and inferiority in some circumstances. These two attitudes contradict humanism. They oppose the benefits of the position, but utilize the privileges granted by Boss Acong. The two ideologies influence each other on the journey. The three walkers try to remain humanist, but still need help from higher positions. Therefore, the superior-inferior attitude is implied.

#### 4. Conclusion

The result of this research, entitled "Pedestrian Subjectivity in Tere Liye's Novel *Janji*", concludes that (1) the depiction of the world is achieved through both objective and subjective perspectives, near and far. Pedestrians dominantly do it subjectively at a distance. This is because travelers always involve personal thoughts, feelings, and emotions in describing the world they encounter. Their subjectivity is distant because their descriptions focus on Bahar. The depiction of Bahar is based on information from other people's stories in various places. It also shows the difference between his rural idealism and urban liberalism. (2) Then, there is a negotiation between the self and the other. There is negotiation through agreement, comparison, and change. Negotiation through agreement dominates the process. However, the outcome of the negotiation also involves change, both in the self and in the other. This is due to their influence on each other.

In addition, the ideologies carried by the walkers were also found. Their subjectivity shows the ideologies of theism, humanism, and racism. Based on these results, it is concluded that the ideology of the walkers is inconsistent. This is because they exhibit both humanist and non-humanist attitudes. The two views contradict each other and influence their journey. This strengthens the evidence that the subjectivity of the three still dominates and influences their attitudes. (3) It is also evident through the analysis of the world depiction that the travelers carry negotiation and ideology. These three things have a mutually influencing relationship.

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