

Cultural identity in local literary narratives: A semiotic analysis of the novel *Entrok* and *Laut Bercerita*

Identitas budaya dalam narasi sastra lokal: Analisis semiotik pada novel Entrok dan Laut Bercerita

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Abstract

This research examines the ways in which Indonesian local literary narratives formulate and perpetuate cultural identity amid globalizations. It specifically examines the symbolic representations in *Entrok* by Okky Madasari and *Laut Bercerita* by Leila S. Chudori through Roland Barthes' semiotic framework, focusing on denotation, connotation, and myth. The study utilizes a qualitative text analysis approach, relying on comprehensive readings of the novels and supplemented by secondary literature. Symbols like the *Entrok* (a traditional Javanese brassiere) and the sea are identified and coded using a deductive method based on Barthes' categories. The results show that *Entrok* criticizes patriarchal control and class-based oppression by changing the meaning of everyday objects. "Laut Bercerita," on the other hand, shows the sea as a sacred place of ecological awareness and collective resistance. These symbols function on various semiotic levels, demonstrating literature's role as a medium for cultural negotiation and ideological critique. The research finds that Indonesian local literature is essential for maintaining cultural resilience and identity development, providing educators and policymakers with effective methods to enhance cultural awareness through storytelling.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana narasi sastra lokal Indonesia merumuskan dan melestarikan identitas budaya di tengah globalisasi. Secara khusus, penelitian ini mengkaji representasi simbolis dalam *Entrok* karya Okky Madasari dan *Laut Bercerita* karya Leila S. Chudori melalui kerangka semiotik Roland Barthes, dengan fokus pada denotasi, konotasi, dan mitos. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan analisis teks kualitatif, yang mengandalkan pembacaan komprehensif novel-novel tersebut dan dilengkapi dengan literatur sekunder. Simbol-simbol seperti *Entrok* (benda tradisional Jawa) dan laut diidentifikasi dan dikodekan menggunakan metode deduktif berdasarkan kategori-kategori Barthes. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa *Entrok* mengkritik kontrol patriarki dan penindasan berbasis kelas dengan mengubah makna benda-benda sehari-hari. Di sisi lain, *Laut Bercerita* menunjukkan laut sebagai tempat suci kesadaran ekologis dan perlawanan kolektif. Simbol-simbol ini berfungsi pada berbagai tingkat semiotik, menunjukkan peran sastra sebagai media negosiasi budaya dan kritik ideologis. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa sastra lokal Indonesia sangat penting untuk menjaga ketahanan budaya dan pengembangan identitas, menyediakan metode yang efektif bagi para pendidik dan pembuat kebijakan untuk meningkatkan kesadaran budaya melalui penceritaan.

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A. Introduction

Literature, which includes prose, poetry, and drama, is an important cultural artifact that not only shows but also shapes the identity of a society. It functions as a repository of collective memory, values, and traditions, providing communities with a means to express their unique cultural heritage (Endraswara et al., 2022; Ratna, 2007). In Indonesia, a country with a lot of different ethnic groups and languages and regional customs, literature is very important for keeping and negotiating cultural identity. The stories found in local literature are deeply connected to the experiences, social structures, and symbolic systems of the people who live there. This makes literature a powerful way to express and protect culture (Wibowo et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, in the current epoch characterized by swift globalization, the authenticity of local cultural expressions confronts unparalleled challenges. The growth of global media, digital platforms, and economic integration has sped up the process of cultural homogenization, which promotes dominant global values while pushing aside indigenous knowledge systems and traditional ways of life (Amin, 2024; Anand, 2024; Karmini, 2017; Syamsuri, 2023). This phenomenon jeopardizes the preservation of diverse cultural identities, especially in developing countries such as Indonesia, where local traditions are frequently eclipsed by national narratives or global cultural trends (Balogun & Aruoture, 2024; Bouymaj & Pereira, 2022). In reaction to these pressures, literature becomes not only a passive reflection of culture but also an active arena of resistance and negotiation. It provides a platform for communities to express their distinctiveness, challenge prevailing ideologies, and participate in cultural discourse (Sahertian et al., 2024).

Even though people agree that local literature is important for preserving culture, most research on the subject is limited in scope. Numerous studies examine literature as a pedagogical instrument or a vehicle for conveying cultural values, frequently regarding cultural identity as fixed and immutable (Al-Zadjali, 2024; Saputri & Setyowati, 2022; Wibowo et al., 2023). This approach neglects the fluid and contentious essence of identity, which is perpetually influenced by historical, social, and political forces. Hall (1990) posits that cultural identity is not a static essence but a dynamic construct that develops through interaction and negotiation. It includes shared practices, language, beliefs, and customs that are passed down from one generation to the next. However, it is still open to new interpretations and changes, especially in multicultural and globalized settings (Barker, 2000; Bhabha, 2012).

Local literature must be comprehended not merely as a medium for cultural transmission but also as a performative arena where identity is constructed, contested, and reimagined. It gives communities the symbolic tools they need to deal with cultural change, fight against homogenization, and show that they are unique. In this context, semiotics provides a significant analytical framework for investigating how literature encodes and conveys cultural significations. Roland Barthes, a seminal figure in semiotic theory, introduced a stratified framework of meaning that includes denotation (literal meaning), connotation (cultural and ideological significance), and myth (naturalized cultural narratives) (Eco, 1976; Barthes, 1967, 1972, 1977). These semiotic elements allow scholars to reveal the deeper cultural codes present in literary texts and to examine the functioning of symbols within particular socio-historical contexts.

In Indonesian literature, semiotic analysis serves to explain the role of cultural symbols, including traditional clothing, rituals, landscapes, and language, as markers of identity and forms of resistance. For example, in the context Moluccan language and words like “*sasi*” and “*pela gandong*” to keep linguistic identity and show that each region is different (Karepesina et al., 2013; Renjaan et al., 2013; Rumlus, 2023). Local literature frequently depicts quotidian activities such as agriculture, fishing, and communal rituals, illustrating the profound relationship between communities and their natural surroundings (Puspasari et al., 2020; Suyatno, 2014; Zulkarnaen & Mahfuz, 2025). Such representations function not only as descriptions but also as symbolic acts that affirm cultural values and challenge dominant narratives.

Nonetheless, a substantial gap persists in the literature concerning the semiotic aspects of local narratives. Some studies recognize cultural symbols, yet they frequently neglect to examine their

complex meanings or their function in identity formation. For instance, while Mariane Katoppo's incorporation of Dayak language in *Raumanen* is acknowledged, the underlying symbolic resistance inherent in these decisions is seldom examined comprehensively. Furthermore, the performative dimensions of literature, particularly its role in enacting identity through symbolic interaction, are often neglected. This disparity is notably pronounced in Indonesian literary studies, where the abundance of local traditions provides a robust foundation for semiotic exploration yet frequently gets overshadowed by more expansive national or cultural paradigms (Apriyanto et al., 2024; Hermanto & Adawiyah, 2020).

To fill this gap, this study uses Barthes' semiotic theory to look at two modern Indonesian novels: *Entrok* by Okky Madasari and *Laut Bercerita* by Leila S. Chudori. These works were chosen because they have deep themes, are well-reviewed, and have a lot of symbolic meaning. *Entrok* looks at Javanese cultural identity through the lens of gender and socioeconomic class, while *Laut Bercerita* looks at maritime identity, ecological awareness, and collective resistance (Sahertian et al., 2024). Both novels utilize cultural symbols that possess multifaceted meanings and function as instruments for identity negotiation and social critique.

The objective of this research is to analyze the semiotic functions of cultural symbols in *Entrok* and *Laut Bercerita* in representing and constructing cultural identity within the framework of globalization. The study aims to address the following inquiries: (1) in what ways do the chosen novels use denotation, connotation, and myth to encode cultural meanings? (2) how do these symbols show that people don't want cultural homogenization, patriarchal oppression, and environmental degradation? (3) in what ways do the stories help people in Indonesian communities affirm and change their own and their group's identity?

By addressing these questions, the study contributes to various domains of inquiry. In literary theory, it illustrates the relevance of Barthes' semiotic framework to non-Western texts, providing insights into the construction of meaning through cultural symbols. In cultural studies and anthropology, it elucidates the relationship between literature and identity, especially in diverse and swiftly evolving societies such as Indonesia. In educational and policy settings, the findings offer actionable strategies for leveraging literature to foster cultural resilience, critical awareness, and identity development among students and communities.

The study also talks about globalization and cultural homogenization in a broader sense. It provides empirical evidence from Indonesia to demonstrate how local literature can function as a counter-narrative to prevailing global ideologies. Literature serves as a site of resistance, allowing communities to assert their voice, reclaim their heritage, and negotiate their position in the world through its symbolic richness and performative power. Investing in local literary production and dissemination is not only an artistic pursuit but also a strategic measure for cultural preservation and empowerment.

In summary, this study characterizes local literature as a vibrant and complex arena for cultural expression, identity negotiation, and social critique. Utilizing Barthes' semiotic theory in the analysis of *Entrok* and *Laut Bercerita* elucidates the role of cultural symbols as instruments for resisting homogenization and asserting individuality. It emphasizes the significance of literary narratives in preserving cultural diversity and presents a framework for future research that amalgamates semiotic analysis with cultural theory, literary criticism, and educational practice. In a world that is becoming more globalized and where cultural identities are becoming more vulnerable, literature is still an important place for meaning, memory, and resistance.

B. Method

This research utilizes a qualitative text analysis methodology to examine the construction, negotiation, and symbolic expression of cultural identity in Indonesian local literature. The analysis is based on Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, which gives us a structured way to understand signs on three levels: denotation (literal meaning), connotation (cultural meaning), and myth

(naturalized ideological meaning) (Eco, 1976; Barthes, 1967, 1972, 1977). This framework is especially appropriate for literary texts that incorporate cultural symbols within intricate socio-political contexts, facilitating a nuanced interpretation of meaning. The semiotic categories of denotation, connotation, and myth were derived deductively from Barthes' theoretical framework. These predetermined categories directed the coding and interpretation process. The study concentrated on identifying recurring cultural symbols within the selected texts and analyzing their multifaceted meanings to reveal their role in the construction of cultural identity and resistance.

The primary data comprised the complete textual narratives of two Indonesian novels: *Entrok* by Okky Madasari, published by Gramedia Pustaka Utama in 2010 (Madasari, 2010). *Laut Bercerita* by Leila S. Chudori was published by Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia on October 19, 2017 (Chudori, 2017). These novels were chosen through purposive sampling because they are thematically relevant, critically acclaimed, and full of rich symbols. Secondary data encompassed academic articles, books, and reviews that offered theoretical foundations and contextual assistance for the analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Patton, 2014; Saputri & Setyowati, 2022).

The analytical process adhered to a systematic order: (1) text immersion: reading the novels closely to find symbols that are important to the culture; (2) sign identification: marking signs that come up often, like the sea, boats, rituals, and traditional objects; (3) coding: putting each symbol into one of Barthes' three semiotic levels: denotative, connotative, or mythological; (4) layered interpretation: analyzing how each symbol represents cultural identity, resistance, and ideological critique; and (5) synthesis: the amalgamation of findings to elucidate overarching patterns of significance and cultural negotiation.

To guarantee interpretive validity, the study utilized triangulation of sources and theories. Interpretations were validated through cross-referencing with Barthesian semiotics and corroborated by pertinent secondary literature. Direct member checking with authors or communities was impractical due to the study's text-based nature; however, an adapted version of member checking was implemented. This entailed corroborating interpretations via academic discourse, critical evaluations, and cultural examinations of the novels and their contexts. In literary research, this type of intertextual and theoretical engagement is seen as a legitimate way to make sure that interpretations are credible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

During the analysis, uniform terminology was upheld. To follow academic rules, the term "ideological research" has been changed to "ideological analysis." To keep the theory clear, the stages of analysis, denotation, connotation, and myth are always called by Barthes' original names. This methodological framework facilitates a thorough and clear analysis of the role of literature in the construction of cultural identity and acts of resistance. The study employs Barthes' semiotic theory to Indonesian local narratives, elucidating the symbolic mechanisms by which communities express their values, contest prevailing ideologies, and affirm their cultural uniqueness.

C. Results and Discussion

This study elucidates how *Entrok* by Okky Madasari and *Laut Bercerita* by Leila S. Chudori construct and negotiate cultural identity through complex semiotic processes. Employing Roland Barthes' framework of denotation, connotation, and myth, the analysis reveals how particular cultural symbols in both novels serve not only as narrative devices but also as ideological instruments that both reflect and challenge socio-political realities in Indonesia. The semiotic analysis of these texts illustrates that literature functions as a dynamic arena for cultural expression, critique, and resilience, particularly within the framework of globalization (Table 1 and Figure 1).

In *Entrok*, the titular symbol, a traditional Javanese brassiere, functions on various semiotic levels. It literally means a piece of clothing that women wear. Connotatively, it denotes the gendered restrictions enforced by Javanese patriarchal norms, symbolizing women's constrained autonomy and societal expectations. At the mythological level, the *Entrok* becomes a naturalized symbol of domesticity and submission, reinforcing the cultural narrative that women belong in the

private sphere. The novel, on the other hand, goes against this myth by showing female characters like Rahayu and Asih as fighters. Their daily acts of defiance, whether by achieving economic independence or resisting conformity, contest the prevailing ideology and reclaim the *Entrok* as a symbol of empowerment (Mandela & Gitawati, 2024; Rizkia & Nurfaidah, 2022).

Laut Bercerita, on the other hand, builds its semiotic structure around the sea. The sea is a physical place that is connected to work and geography. In a connotative sense, it stands for spiritual depth, awareness of the environment, and memories of ancestors. Mythologically, the sea is depicted as a conscious being that “tells stories,” representing the shared trauma and resistance of coastal communities against political oppression and environmental degradation. Rituals like *sesaji laut* and *tolak bala* are not just cultural things; they are also symbolic acts of defiance and continuity. These rituals encode ecological ethics and communal solidarity, resisting the homogenizing forces of industrialization and global capitalism (Gumati, 2024; Nawir et al., 2024; Sidik, 2023).

Both novels use cultural symbols to criticize the power structures that are in charge and support the identities of people who are not in charge. *Entrok* focuses on individual resistance in the home and in the economy, while *Laut Bercerita* focuses on collective resistance based on awareness of the environment and history. The *Entrok* and the sea, while differing in form and context, serve as semiotic vehicles for expressing identity and contesting dominant narratives. This comparative perspective illustrates the adaptability of Barthes’ semiotic theory in examining various cultural expressions and emphasizes the common thematic focus on opposing cultural homogenization.

The ideological examination of both texts elucidates how literature interacts with Indonesia’s socio-political context amidst globalizations (Sahertian et al., 2024). *Entrok* criticizes the legacy of authoritarianism and gender inequality, which shows how hard it is for lower-middle-class women in Indonesia after the New Order. The novel’s depiction of evolving lifestyles and intergenerational conflicts exemplifies the influence of consumerism and modernity on traditional values (Hikmasari & Sahayu, 2019; Prawoto, 2022). At the same time, *Laut Bercerita* deals with the historical trauma of political violence and environmental exploitation by putting its story in the larger context of ecological justice and cultural preservation. The sea serves as a metaphor for memory, resistance, and identity, reflecting the experiences of communities marginalized by state and corporate interests (Kamelia et al., 2023; Rahayu et al., 2022).

Recent academic work backs up the idea that these themes are still important in Indonesian literature today. Wasono et al., (2021) underscore the fluid construction of cultural identity in the context of digital globalization, highlighting the growing integration of social critique and humanistic values within local narratives. Fauzan (2025) posits that traditional communities actively negotiate their identities by incorporating global elements into local frameworks, a phenomenon observable in both *Entrok* and *Laut Bercerita*. These findings correspond with Barthes’ concept of myth as a cultural construct that can be deconstructed and re-signified through narrative, enabling literature to function as a venue for ideological contestation and cultural renewal.

The semiotic analysis also shows how both books are part of a bigger trend in Indonesian literature of cultural resistance. The authors contest prevailing ideologies and present alternative conceptions of identity by integrating cultural symbols into emotionally impactful narratives. This performative aspect of literature, its capacity to enact and transform cultural meaning, highlights its importance in preserving cultural diversity in the face of global pressures. The results confirm that local literature is not only a repository of tradition but also a dynamic medium through which communities express their values, critique injustice, and envision futures.

Future research directions arising from this study are both essential and promising. Comparative analyses across genres, including poetry, drama, and oral traditions, may enhance comprehension of how various literary forms navigate identity. Incorporating supplementary theoretical frameworks, such as intersectionality or ecocriticism, would enhance the examination of cultural symbols and their socio-political ramifications. Furthermore, empirical investigations into reader reception may elucidate the ways in which audiences interpret and interact with literary

symbols, providing insights into the experiential influence of narrative on identity construction. These guidelines would broaden the interdisciplinary dimensions of literary studies and foster more inclusive and contextually aware methodologies in cultural analysis.

In conclusion, the results of this study show that *Entrok* and *Laut Bercerita* are great examples of Indonesian literature that use semiotic strategies to build, negotiate, and affirm cultural identity. Utilizing Barthes' theory, the analysis demonstrates how symbols like the *Entrok* and the sea function on various levels of meaning, allowing literature to serve as a medium of resistance and rejuvenation. The comparative approach bolsters the assertion that local literature is essential in resisting cultural homogenization and preserving identity in a globalized context. These insights enhance ongoing academic discussions regarding literature, identity, and globalization, underscoring the significance of narrative as a mechanism for cultural resilience and transformation (figure 1).

Table 1. Semiotic Analysis of *Entrok* and *Laut Bercerita*

Analytical Category	<i>Entrok</i> (Okky Madasari)	<i>Laut Bercerita</i> (Leila S. Chudori)
Denotative Level	The term <i>Entrok</i> refers literally to a traditional Javanese brassiere, representing a personal object in women's everyday life.	The sea, fishing nets, and boats are portrayed as physical components of the coastal community's livelihood.
Connotative & Mythological Meaning	The <i>Entrok</i> becomes a symbol of patriarchal control, gendered restrictions, and the silence imposed on women. It reflects the myth of women's roles as confined to the domestic sphere.	The sea is connoted as a sacred space, embodying spiritual meaning and mythological narratives of nature's power and ancestral presence. Rituals such as sea offerings and <i>tolak bala</i> ceremonies reinforce cultural continuity.
Ideological Structures	The novel critiques state authoritarianism, class disparity, and patriarchal oppression. It positions women as agents of resistance who navigate socio-political constraints.	The novel embeds maritime ideology, ecological consciousness, and anti-hegemonic resistance. It emphasizes community solidarity, indigenous wisdom, and environmental stewardship in the face of globalization.
Cultural Symbols	<i>Entrok</i> , money, school uniforms, religious institutions, and traditional markets serve as recurring semiotic elements encoding social hierarchies and struggles.	Sea-related objects (boats, nets, ocean), traditional rituals, and local terms (e.g., <i>sesaji</i> , <i>tolak bala</i>) signify the interconnectedness of people, culture, and environment.
Sociocultural Values Represented	The concept encompasses emancipation, economic agency, resistance to social stigmatization, and critique of institutionalized gender norms.	The concept encompasses collective identity, ancestral reverence, ecological ethics, and the defense of indigenous knowledge systems.

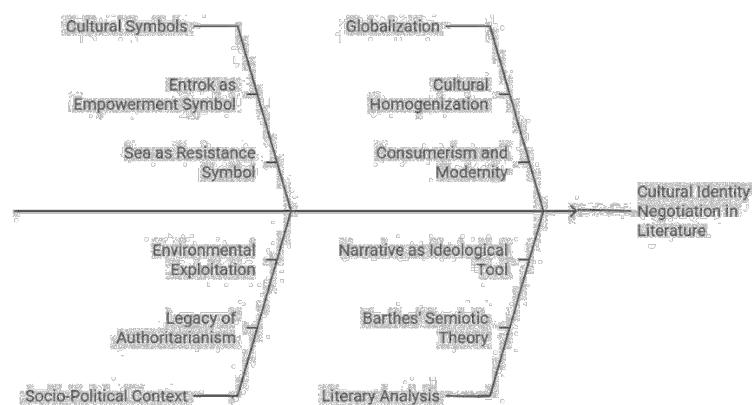


Figure 1. Cultural Identity Negotiation in Indonesian Literature

This study has shown that cultural identity is not just shown in the stories of *Entrok* by Okky Madasari and *Laut Bercerita* by Leila S. Chudori but is also actively made and challenged. Utilizing Roland Barthes' semiotic framework of denotation, connotation, and myth, the analysis elucidates how cultural symbols within these novels serve as instruments for ideological critique and identity

affirmation. The results highlight the performative function of literature in influencing cultural consciousness, especially regarding Indonesia's socio-political transformation amid globalizations.

The traditional brassiere in *Entrok* serves as a multi-layered sign. It is a garment on the denotative level; on the connotative level, it represents gendered restrictions and socio-economic marginalization; and on the mythological level, it normalizes patriarchal control over women's bodies and roles. The story, on the other hand, breaks this myth by showing female characters who fight against these limits, which changes the meaning of the symbol to one of power and agency. In the same way, *Laut Bercerita* uses the sea as a central symbol that changes from a physical space to a place of ecological and ancestral memory, and then to a mythological being that represents collective trauma and resistance. Rituals like *sesaji laut* and *tolak bala* are not just cultural practices; they are also symbolic acts that fight against industrial exploitation and strengthen community identity.

The comparative analysis of the two novels uncovers a common thematic preoccupation with resistance to hegemonic structures, albeit approached from distinct perspectives. *Entrok* emphasizes individual resistance in domestic and socio-economic contexts, whereas *Laut Bercerita* highlights collective resistance grounded in ecological ethics and historical consciousness. Both texts use cultural symbols to criticize dominant ideologies and to express different ideas about identity. This dual focus on the personal and the communal demonstrates the adaptability of Barthes' semiotic theory in encapsulating the intricacies of cultural expression in literature.

These results are profoundly connected to the socio-political landscape of Indonesia. *Entrok* shows how the New Order regime still affects things today, especially how it changed gender roles and class relationships. The novel's portrayal of generational transitions and lifestyle transformations underscores the conflict between tradition and modernity, a conflict intensified by consumerism and globalization. *Laut Bercerita*, conversely, addresses the ramifications of political violence and environmental degradation, positioning its narrative within the extensive dialogue of ecological justice and cultural preservation. The sea serves as a symbol and metaphor for memory, resistance, and identity, reflecting the experiences of communities marginalized by state and corporate interests.

Recent academic work backs up the idea that these themes are still important in Indonesian literature today. Wasono et al. (2021) underscore the significance of literature in navigating identity within the digital era, highlighting the growing integration of social critique and humanistic values in local narratives. Fauzan (2025) contends that traditional communities actively integrate global influences into local contexts, a phenomenon evident in both novels. These viewpoints correspond with Barthes' notion of myth as a cultural construct that can be deconstructed and redefined through narrative, enabling literature to function as a venue for ideological conflict and cultural rejuvenation.

The conversation also brings up the bigger effects that literary semiotics can have on cultural studies. By deciphering the multifaceted meanings of symbols, researchers can elucidate how narratives both mirror and influence societal values. For *Entrok* and *Laut Bercerita*, the semiotic analysis shows how literature works as a counter-narrative to dominant cultural discourses, giving marginalized voices a place to assert their identity. This performative aspect of literature, its capacity to enact and transform cultural meaning highlights its importance in preserving cultural diversity in the face of global pressures.

The future research directions that have come up as a result of this study are both necessary and promising. Comparative analyses across genres, including poetry, drama, and oral traditions, may enhance comprehension of how various literary forms navigate identity. Incorporating supplementary theoretical frameworks, such as intersectionality or ecocriticism, would enhance the examination of cultural symbols and their socio-political ramifications. Furthermore, empirical investigations into reader reception may elucidate how audiences interpret and interact with literary symbols, providing insights into the influence of narrative on identity formation. These recommendations would broaden the interdisciplinary framework of literary studies and foster more inclusive and contextually aware methodologies in cultural analysis.

In conclusion, the discourse confirms that *Entrok* and *Laut Bercerita* serve as both artistic expressions and significant interventions in the dialogue concerning cultural identity and resistance. Utilizing Barthes' semiotic theory, the study elucidates the multifaceted meanings of symbols like the *Entrok* and the sea, allowing literature to serve as a platform for ideological critique and cultural affirmation. The comparative approach bolsters the assertion that local literature is essential in resisting cultural homogenization and preserving identity within a globalized context. These insights enhance ongoing academic discussions regarding literature, identity, and globalization, underscoring the significance of narrative as a mechanism for cultural resilience and transformation.

D. Conclusion

This research investigates the active construction and negotiation of cultural identity in Indonesian local literature through a semiotic analysis of *Entrok* by Okky Madasari and *Laut Bercerita* by Leila S. Chudori. Utilizing Roland Barthes' framework of denotation, connotation, and myth, the research elucidated the multifaceted meanings of cultural symbols within both novels. These symbols, *Entrok* and the sea, function as both narrative components and ideological instruments that both reflect and contest prevailing socio-cultural norms.

The comparative analysis indicates that *Entrok* concentrates on individual resistance within domestic and socio-economic frameworks, whereas *Laut Bercerita* highlights collective resistance grounded in ecological and historical awareness. Both books use symbols to criticize powerful systems and support people who are on the outside. This two-pronged approach shows how literature can be a place of cultural strength, giving communities a way to express their values and fight against forces that try to make everyone the same.

The findings are closely related to Indonesia's social and political situation. *Entrok* talks about problems with gender inequality and class struggle in society after the New Order, while *Laut Bercerita* talks about political violence and environmental damage. These stories show the bigger problems that Indonesian communities have with keeping their cultural identity in a globalized world. By deciphering the multifaceted meanings of cultural symbols, the study illustrates how literature can function as a counter-narrative to prevailing ideologies and foster cultural sustainability.

The ramifications of this research transcend literary theory. The results show teachers how important local literature is for helping students think critically about identity, history, and social justice. The study emphasizes to policymakers the necessity of endorsing literary initiatives that foster cultural diversity and resilience. For people who work in the arts and culture, it gives them a way to use stories to get people involved in their community and keep their culture alive. These suggestions come from the idea that literature is not just a way to express art, but also a way to empower cultures.

Subsequent research ought to broaden the analytical framework to encompass additional genres and regional literatures, incorporating methodologies such as ecocriticism, intersectionality, and reader-response theory. These kinds of studies would help us learn more about how different types of literature and audiences interact with cultural symbols and shape their own identities. This interdisciplinary methodology would augment the significance of literary scholarship in confronting modern cultural dilemmas.

In conclusion, this study enhances the field of literary and cultural studies by illustrating how Barthesian semiotics can elucidate the proactive role of literature in opposing cultural homogenization. The examination of *Entrok* and *Laut Bercerita* reveals that local narratives are not mere passive reflections of tradition; rather, they are dynamic arenas in which identity is constructed, contested, and affirmed. In this context, literature becomes a potent vehicle for cultural resilience and transformation within an increasingly globalized landscape.

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