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Forms Of Propaganda In The Novel Laut Bercerita By Leila S. Chudori: A Study Based On Foulkes' Theory

Moh. Andika Pringgadani
Universitas Mataram, Indonesia
Nuriadi
Universitas Mataram, Indonesia
Aswandikari
Universitas Mataram, Indonesia
Johan Mahyudi
Universitas Mataram, Indonesia
Irma Setiawan
Universitas Mataram, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: andikapringg@gmail.com

Abstract

This study discusses the forms of propaganda in the novel Laut Bercerita by Leila S. Chudori by applying Foulkes' theory of propaganda. This research employs a qualitative descriptive method, with data consisting of narrative passages and character dialogues taken from the novel Laut Bercerita. The data were collected through library research methods and subsequently analyzed using qualitative methods and content analysis. The study finds that there are systematic and layered forms of propaganda within the novel. A total of 17 forms of propaganda were identified, conveyed through four propaganda frameworks: narrative structure propaganda, character characterization propaganda, thematic and ideological propaganda, and language and symbolism propaganda. Narrative structure propaganda is presented through the forms of in medias res, emotional arcs, a two-part structure, and the silencing of antagonistic voices. Character characterization propaganda is conveyed through key characters who function as counter-narratives, authoritative figures, traumatic connectors, and forms of character dehumanization. Thematic and ideological propaganda are expressed through the codification of memory as a political act, resistance, and the myth of sacrifice. Language and symbolism propaganda are conveyed through multidimensional symbolism, chronological contrast

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metaphors, irony, hyperbole, and reduplication.

Keywords: Forms of Propaganda, Laut Bercerita, Foulkes.

INTRODUCTION

Literary works do not merely function as aesthetic media, but also as means of conveying the author's ideas and ideology. René Wellek and Austin Warren (1996:94) state that literature is a "mirror of society" that can influence readers' social consciousness. Therefore, literature often becomes a medium of propaganda through language, symbols, and social representation. Jacques Ellul (1973:63) explains that propaganda is a systematic effort to shape perceptions and direct society toward particular ideas. In literature, propaganda is not always negative in nature, but can serve as a strategy to build awareness of humanitarian, political, and social justice issues (George Orwell, 1946; Garth S. Jowett et al., 2019). Through narrative and the aesthetics of language, authors can influence readers' perspectives on social reality.

In Indonesia, propaganda in literature has developed from the struggle for independence to the digital era. Various studies show that literature is capable of conveying ideology through symbolic strategies, emotional appeals, and character representation. Yuliani (2018) states that literary works can function as media for ideological expression through conflicts and characters connected to socio-political realities. Research by Sari (2021) also demonstrates that authors employ symbolic and emotional strategies to influence readers' perceptions of humanitarian issues and social justice.

The study of literary propaganda was further developed by Foulkes in Literature and Propaganda (2013). According to Foulkes, propaganda in literature operates through narrative, characterization, symbolism, and emotion rather than through direct political slogans. One Indonesian novel rich in ideological content is Laut Bercerita by Leila S. Chudori. Leila Salikha Chudori was born on December 12, 1962, and is known as a novelist, screenwriter, and literary essayist (Safitri, 2022). Published in 2017, Laut Bercerita portrays the tragedy of activist kidnappings prior to the 1998 Reformasi movement through the characters Biru Laut and Asmara Jati. The novel presents criticism of the New Order regime through narratives of torture, enforced disappearances, and the suffering of victims' families.

Laut Bercerita is compelling to study because it contains propaganda constructed through character portrayal, conflict, and emotional narrative. The activist characters are depicted as symbols of humanitarian struggle, while state apparatuses are represented as symbols of

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repressive power. This strategy builds readers' empathy toward the victims while simultaneously criticizing the state.

Based on these considerations, this study applies Foulkes' theory of propaganda to analyze the forms of propaganda in Laut Bercerita. The research focuses on how propaganda is constructed through the novel's language aesthetics, characterization, and narrative structure. This study is expected to broaden the discourse on propaganda in modern Indonesian literature and serve as a reference for understanding the relationship between literature, ideology, and social criticism.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach using Foulkes' theory of propaganda as the analytical framework. A qualitative descriptive approach aims to describe phenomena systematically and in depth through the interpretation of the analyzed data (Polit & Beck in Wiwin, 2019:83). This approach is used to analyze the forms of propaganda in the novel Laut Bercerita by Leila S. Chudori.

The primary data source of this study is the novel Laut Bercerita by Leila S. Chudori, published in 2017 and consisting of 379 pages. The novel was selected because it represents Indonesia's socio-political realities during the New Order era through stories of struggle, loss, and the search for justice. The research data consist of narrative excerpts, dialogues, and sections of the story containing forms of propaganda based on Foulkes' theory.

The data collection method was conducted through library research using reading and note-taking techniques. The researcher repeatedly read the novel to understand the context of the story and identify relevant data. Quotations related to propaganda were then marked, recorded, and classified according to the focus of the study. In addition to the novel, this research is also supported by books, journals, articles, and other relevant scholarly sources.

The data were analyzed using qualitative analysis, content analysis, and thematic analysis. Qualitative analysis was used to interpret the meaning of the data in depth through an inductive approach. Content analysis was conducted by identifying, coding, and categorizing the data based on the forms of propaganda found in the novel. Furthermore, thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns and themes related to propaganda based on Foulkes' theory.

The stages of analysis began with repeatedly reading the novel, identifying relevant quotations, classifying the data according to Foulkes' propaganda elements, and then describing and interpreting the research findings. The final stage involved drawing conclusions based on the

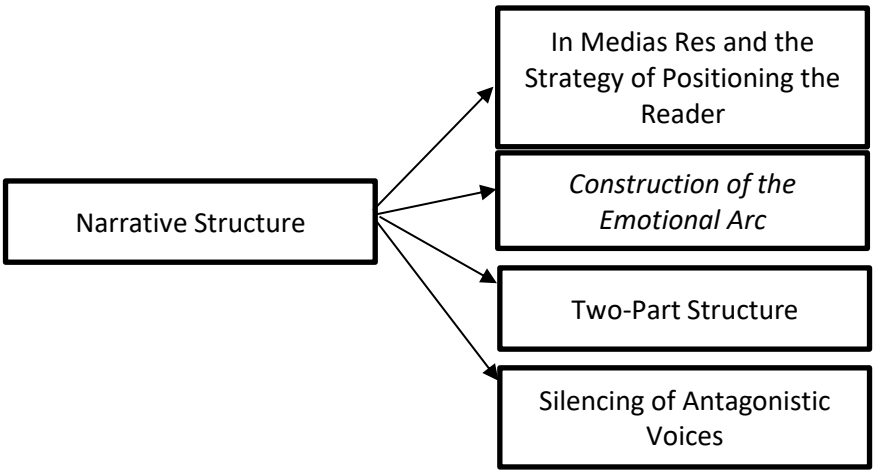
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results of the analysis to answer the research problem concerning the forms of propaganda in the novel Laut Bercerita by Leila S. Chudori.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Narrative Structure

The first aspect in Foulkes' propaganda framework is narrative structure. According to Foulkes, propaganda in literature operates through the way a narrative is constructed, such as the determination of point of view, the sequence of events, and the arrangement of readers' emotions. Propaganda is not always presented in the form of direct persuasion, but rather works subtly through the emotional experiences readers undergo while following the story. In the novel Laut Bercerita, narrative structure is used to build readers' empathy toward the victimized characters while simultaneously directing readers toward criticism of repressive power.



1. *In Medias Res*

The novel *Laut Bercerita* opens with the *in medias res* technique, directly presenting the central conflict when Biru Laut experiences captivity and torture.

"After nearly three months of being confined in darkness, they took me to a black, gloomy place..." (Chudori, 2017:2)

Diction such as *musty*, *feces*, and *urine* concretely portrays suffering, allowing readers to experience the character's physical and psychological condition. According to Foulkes, affective propaganda works through emotion before rational judgment is formed. Therefore, the opening of this novel effectively builds readers' emotional engagement. The use of the first-person point

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of view also strengthens emotional intimacy because readers witness events directly from the victim's perspective. This strategy directs readers to side with the victims and reject state violence. This finding is consistent with the study by Sembada and Andalas (2019), which states that *Laut Bercerita* represents resistance to New Order authoritarianism and supports human rights values.

2. Construction of the Emotional Arc

Within Foulkes' framework, literary propaganda operates through the management of readers' emotions. *Laut Bercerita* constructs emotion through two stages: emotional intimacy and emotional destruction. The first stage presents the activists as warm, intellectual, and highly solidaristic individuals.

"In Seyegan we were free to speak, free to debate..." (Chudori, 2017:46)

"We devoured every work by European and Latin American writers..." (Chudori, 2017:50)

The activists are portrayed not as threats to the state, but as idealistic individuals who value knowledge. According to Foulkes, this emotional closeness intensifies the impact of the characters' suffering on readers. The second stage presents emotional destruction through torture and uncertainty.

"Liar! The electric shock device struck my thighs and chest." (Chudori, 2017:111)

"The hardest thing was dealing with uncertainty..." (Chudori, 2017:108)

The repetition of interrogations and torture creates a traumatic atmosphere that allows readers to feel the characters' fear and despair. In Foulkes' view, this trauma becomes an ideological instrument that strengthens criticism of repressive power.

3. Two-Part Structure

Laut Bercerita is divided into two parts with different points of view: Biru Laut in Part I and Asmara Jati in Part II. This structure constructs complementary emotional propaganda. The first part establishes readers' emotional closeness to Laut, while Part II reveals the impact of loss on the family. The trauma of loss is reflected in Laut's father's habit of continuing to prepare four dinner plates even though only three family members remain.

"He would surely take four dinner plates and place them one by one on the dining table." (Chudori, 2017:233)

This scene demonstrates that enforced disappearance does not only torment the victims, but also destroys the families left behind. According to Foulkes, the most effective propaganda emerges through personal and emotional experiences rather than direct political slogans. Asmara Jati's perspective also broadens the novel's ideological dimension by presenting the voices of victims' families and showing that political tragedies leave prolonged social and emotional wounds.

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4. Silencing of Antagonistic Voices

Another propaganda strategy in *Laut Bercerita* can be seen in the silencing of antagonistic voices. State apparatus characters such as Red-Eyes, Tree-Man, and the Giant are not given space to explain their motivations, but instead appear solely as symbols of violence and terror.

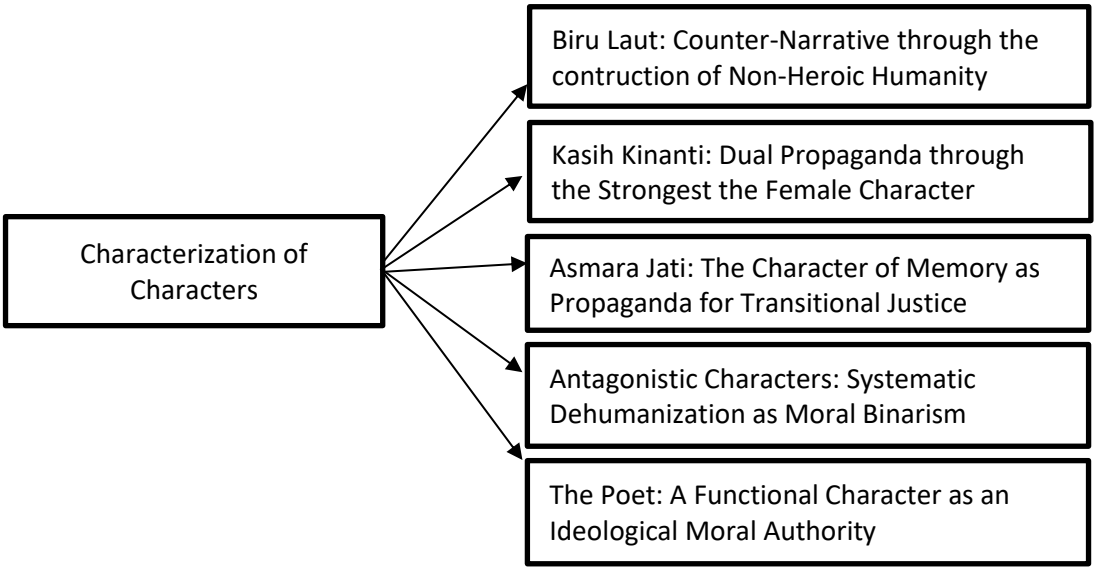
"You will die... But you will die slowly." (Chudori, 2017:5)

"...Tree-Man and the Giant who carried the stench of rancid sweat." (Chudori, 2017:3)

The harsh and repulsive physical descriptions consistently construct a negative image. From Foulkes' perspective, this strategy maintains the moral binary between victims and perpetrators. The protagonists are portrayed as humane and complex, while the antagonists are reduced to symbols of repressive power. This strengthens the novel's ideological position and directs readers to side with the victims.

Characterization of Characters

The second aspect in Foulkes' framework is characterization. According to Foulkes, characters in literary works do not merely function as individuals within a story, but also as carriers of ideology. The way characters are constructed, the values they uphold, and the experiences they undergo become means of conveying particular ideological perspectives to readers. In the novel Laut Bercerita, characterization is used to build sympathy, empathy, and moral legitimacy toward the activists' struggle.



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1. Biru Laut: Counter-Narrative through the Construction of Non-Heroic Humanity

Biru Laut becomes the primary medium for conveying ideology in *Laut Bercerita*. However, Leila S. Chudori does not portray him as a perfect hero, but rather as an ordinary young man who is shy and full of doubt.

"I know myself very well; I am not like Naratama, who speaks fluently..." (Chudori, 2017:8)

"I do not know whether I have left any trace..." (Chudori, 2017:30)

This humane characterization makes it easier for readers to empathize with him. According to Foulkes, ideological propaganda is more effective when conveyed through realistic characters who feel close to readers.

Laut's character also serves as a counter-narrative to New Order propaganda that labeled activists as threats to the state. Instead, Chudori presents Laut as an English Literature student who enjoys reading, discussing ideas, and caring about humanity. Laut's political awareness is shaped through intellectual discussions and habits.

"We devoured every work by European and Latin American writers..." (Chudori, 2017:26)

"We do not want to remain forever under the rule of one person..." (Chudori, 2017:25)

Criticism of authoritarian government is delivered naturally through conversation rather than political lecturing. From Foulkes' perspective, this strategy makes ideology feel more personal and emotional.

Research by Arabella et al. (2024) also shows that the students' resistance in *Laut Bercerita* represents opposition to oppression and builds moral legitimacy for the characters' struggle.

2. Kasih Kinanti: Dual Propaganda through the Strongest Female Character

Kasih Kinanti occupies a strong ideological position in *Laut Bercerita*. She is portrayed as calm, intelligent, and authoritative. Her influence is not built through aggressiveness, but through moral firmness and intellectual depth.

"Her voice was never loud, never fiery, yet it was always the one most listened to..." (Chudori, 2017:39)

This quotation shows that Kinanti's authority emerges from her intellectual and moral qualities. From Foulkes' perspective, such characterization contains ideological propaganda because it presents a model of leadership different from repressive power. Implicitly, Chudori also constructs a feminist idea about women's ability to lead social movements.

Kinanti's ideological role is evident when she encourages Laut.

"Every step you take, every step we take ... is a contribution, Laut..." (Chudori, 2017:45)

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Through this intimate conversation, Kinanti conveys that struggle is never meaningless. Within Foulkes' framework, delivering ideology through personal relationships becomes an effective propaganda strategy because it feels like emotional support rather than political preaching.

Kinanti's character directs readers to see that resistance against injustice is not merely a political act, but also an expression of humanity and hope. Research by Ginting and Yuhdi (2023) also shows that Kinanti represents the existence of women who are able to endure amid male dominance and regime pressure.

3. Asmara Jati: The Character of Memory as a Propagandist of Transitional Justice

Asmara Jati, Biru Laut's younger sister and the narrator of Part II, functions ideologically as the guardian of memory and the demand for justice. If Laut and Kinanti represent past struggles, Asmara demonstrates that the wounds of enforced disappearance continue to live on within the victims' families.

"Every Sunday, Mother and Father seemed to enter a cocoon..." (Chudori, 2017:53)

The cocoon metaphor illustrates prolonged grief that encloses the lives of the victims' families. From Foulkes' perspective, emotional metaphors such as this become strategies of affective propaganda because they allow readers to feel the suffering themselves.

As a character of memory, Asmara also preserves the continuity of the justice narrative through the Black Umbrella action.

"The Black Umbrella will continue to stand before the state palace..." (Chudori, 2017:10)

This sentence does not present resolution, but rather hope and an ongoing struggle. The use of ellipsis in the phrase "the next one..." emphasizes that the demand for justice remains unfinished. Within Foulkes' framework, this strategy builds propaganda of hope while maintaining collective memory of injustice.

Through Asmara Jati's character, *Laut Bercerita* emphasizes that the tragedy of enforced disappearance is not merely a past event, but an ongoing humanitarian issue that continues to demand justice.

4. Antagonistic Characters: Systematic Dehumanization as Moral Binarism

The characterization of antagonists in *Laut Bercerita* demonstrates propaganda through a strategy of dehumanization. Characters such as Red-Eyes, Tree-Man, and the Giant appear without clear identities or backgrounds, functioning only as symbols of state violence.

"You will die... But you will die slowly." (Chudori, 2017:5)

"...Tree-Man and the Giant who carried the stench of rancid sweat." (Chudori, 2017:3)

Naming based on physical traits, such as Red-Eyes and the Giant, becomes a form of

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depersonalization. From Foulkes' perspective, this strategy constructs a firm moral binary between victims and perpetrators.

Sensory descriptions such as the smell of cigarettes and rancid sweat also intensify readers' feelings of disgust and fear toward the antagonists. Thus, propaganda operates through emotional experience rather than mere ideological explanation.

In contrast, Biru Laut is constructed with humane psychological complexity. The imbalance between the complex protagonists and the simplistic antagonists strengthens the novel's moral propaganda. Within Foulkes' framework, the humanization of protagonists and the dehumanization of antagonists work together to direct readers to side with the victims and reject repressive power.

5. The Poet: A Functional Character as an Ideological Moral Authority

The Poet character in *Laut Bercerita* functions as a moral and ideological authority within the novel. This character represents intellectuals and artists who use art as a form of resistance against a repressive regime. His presence resembles the historical figure Wiji Thukul, an activist poet who disappeared during the New Order era. Therefore, the appearance of the Poet carries strong ideological significance for readers who understand the historical context.

"Darkness is part of nature. But we must never reach the point of utter gloom..." (Chudori, 2017:17)

"That art and politics cannot be separated for those living under a repressive regime." (Chudori, 2017:57)

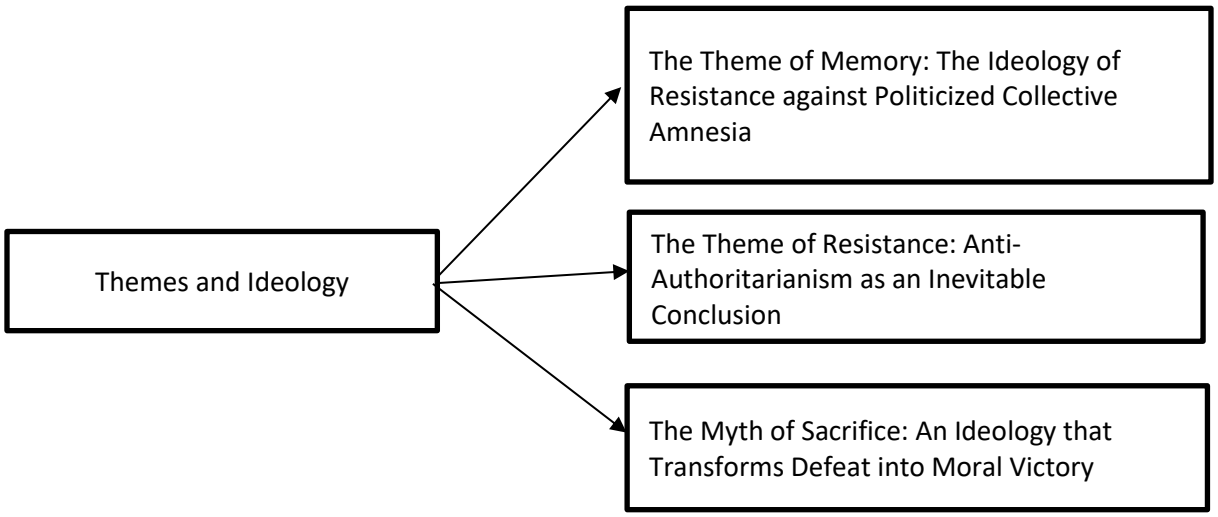
These quotations show that the Poet functions not only as a supporting character, but also as a conveyor of philosophical and ideological values within the novel. He emphasizes that the struggle against oppression must be carried out with moral steadfastness and that art plays an important role as a medium of social and political criticism. From Foulkes' perspective, the Poet becomes a form of ideological legitimacy through cultural authority. Messages conveyed through a character possessing moral credibility are more easily accepted by readers because they appear as voices of wisdom rather than direct propaganda. Through the Poet, Leila S. Chudori also legitimizes *Laut Bercerita* as a literary work born from social anxiety and resistance against injustice.

The presence of the Poet reinforces the idea that art and literature cannot be separated from socio-political reality. In this novel, literature is positioned not merely as aesthetic expression, but also as a medium of struggle, memory, and criticism of repressive power.

Themes and Ideology

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The third aspect in Foulkes' framework is themes and ideology. According to Foulkes, propaganda in literature operates most effectively when ideology is conveyed through universal themes that are closely related to readers' emotional experiences, such as justice, freedom, sacrifice, and truth. In this way, ideological messages do not feel like imposed doctrines, but instead appear as something natural and emotionally acceptable. In Laut Bercerita, the most dominant theme is memory, which is constructed as a form of resistance against the erasure of history and state injustice.



1. The Theme of Memory: The Ideology of Resistance against Politicized Collective Amnesia

In the novel *Laut Bercerita*, memory is not portrayed merely as personal recollection, but as a political act of resisting the erasure of history. Remembering becomes a form of resistance against state efforts to eliminate traces of violence and human rights violations.

"They can create their own history; we seek the truth." (Chudori, 2017:40)

"We cannot simply swallow the information put forward by the government." (Chudori, 2017:26)

These quotations show that the search for truth and critical thinking are positioned as forms of resistance against the state's official narrative. From Foulkes' perspective, ideological propaganda operates through linking universal themes of truth with the concrete experiences of injustice endured by the characters in the novel.

The ideology of memory is also evident in the novel's structure, which reintroduces the victims of enforced disappearances with complete identities, lives, and stories. By giving narrative space to those erased from official history, Leila S. Chudori implicitly rejects the practice of

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collective amnesia constructed by those in power. The theme of memory becomes even stronger through the representation of the Black Umbrella action, which refers to the Kamisan movement as a form of demanding justice for victims' families.

"Perhaps the Black Umbrella action every Thursday is not merely a lawsuit, but also a form of therapy..." (Chudori, 2017:10)

This quotation demonstrates that remembering past tragedies is not only a political demand, but also an emotional and psychological necessity for the victims' families. Within Foulkes' framework, the combination of personal and political dimensions makes ideological propaganda more effective because readers can understand the struggle both emotionally and morally.

Through the theme of memory, *Laut Bercerita* constructs the ideology that histories of violence must never be forgotten and that justice must continue to be pursued. This theme becomes a means of propaganda that connects readers' emotional experiences with criticism of impunity and the state's repressive power.

2. The Theme of Resistance: Anti-Authoritarianism as an Inevitable Conclusion

Another major theme in *Laut Bercerita* is resistance against authoritarianism. The novel conveys criticism of the New Order's repressive power through dialogue, metaphor, and emotionally constructed character experiences. From Foulkes' perspective, ideological propaganda works when political ideas are not delivered as direct lectures, but instead emerge through experiences that make readers feel that resistance against injustice is natural and unavoidable.

"The Regional House of Representatives or the House of Representatives has long been a septic tank, merely a place of containment." (Chudori, 2017:46)

"Only in a dictatorial country can one person rule for so long." (Chudori, 2017:70)

The use of the *septic tank* metaphor demonstrates sharp criticism toward state institutions perceived as having lost their democratic functions. The metaphor not only conveys political criticism, but also builds a negative emotional response in readers toward the repressive system of power. Within Foulkes' framework, the use of strong and emotional language such as this becomes an effective propaganda tool because it shapes how readers perceive authority.

The anti-authoritarian ideology is also visible in the way the novel portrays language as an instrument of power. This is evident in the interrogation scenes conducted by state officials.

"Distributing things equally? Like communist teachings, is that it?" (Chudori, 2017:97)

This quotation shows how the regime uses the label *communist* to criminalize ideas about social justice. In the novel, the label is portrayed as a tool of power used to silence criticism and create

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fear. Through this portrayal, Chudori constructs counter-hegemonic propaganda by exposing how authority creates narratives and legitimizes repressive actions.

Research by Daud (2024) shows that *Laut Bercerita* represents the mechanisms of New Order repressive power in detail. From Foulkes' perspective, this representation functions not only as historical documentation, but also as a persuasive strategy directing readers to reject authoritarian practices and side with the victims of injustice.

3. The Myth of Sacrifice: An Ideology that Transforms Defeat into Moral Victory

From Foulkes' perspective, literary propaganda also operates through the construction of ideological myths. One of the strongest myths in *Laut Bercerita* is the myth of meaningful sacrifice. The novel transforms the tragedy of loss and the failure to obtain justice into a moral victory that continues to live on through memory and struggle.

This myth is established from the very beginning of the novel through the use of an epigraph from a poem by Sutardji Calzoum Bachri.

"Die, you may die, but you will be born again and again..." (Novel epigraph)

The epigraph provides an ideological framework suggesting that the deaths of the activists are not the end of the struggle, but the beginning of the continuation of memory and resistance. Within Foulkes' framework, the use of an epigraph functions as an ideological marker that directs how readers understand the entire narrative. The idea of meaningful sacrifice is further reinforced through the characters' dialogues.

"I do not know whether I have left any trace during my life." (Chudori, 2017:83)

"You already have. You created the first stanza of your life's poem. You resisted." (Chudori, 2017:88)

"Every step you take ... is a contribution, Laut." (Chudori, 2017:72)

These quotations build the belief that struggle possesses moral value even when it does not always produce tangible victory. Resistance is viewed as meaningful because it is grounded in courage and moral steadfastness. From Foulkes' perspective, this strategy represents a form of propaganda of hope that sustains the spirit of struggle amid injustice and impunity.

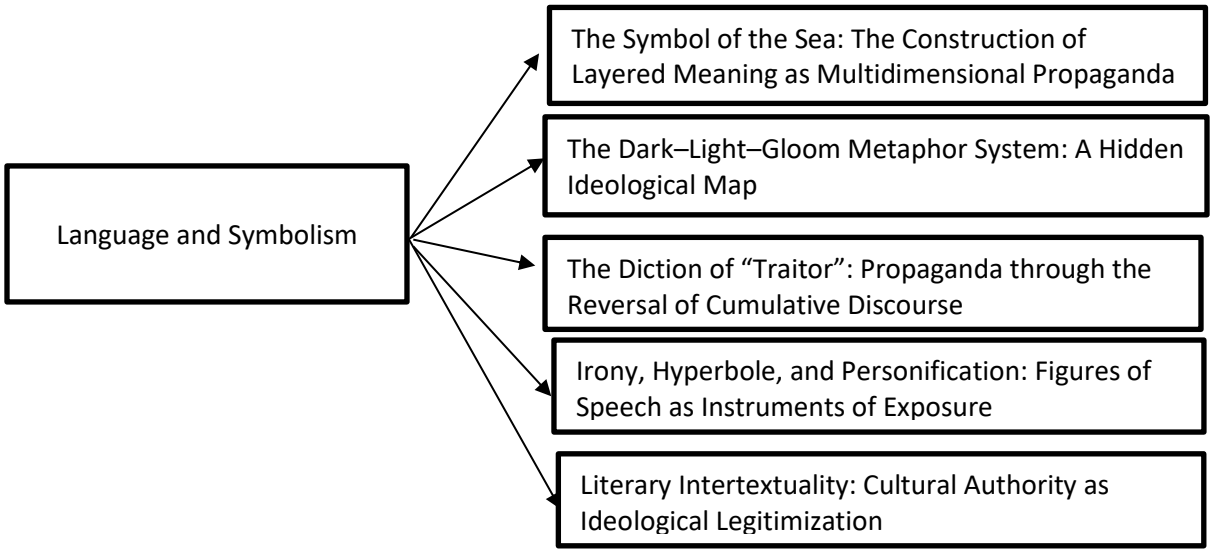
Through the myth of sacrifice, *Laut Bercerita* presents the ideology that the struggle against oppression is never meaningless. The victims may disappear physically, but the values of their struggle continue to live within collective memory and public consciousness. Thus, the novel constructs the belief that historical defeat can be transformed into a moral victory that continues to inspire future generations.

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Symbols and Language

Foulkes emphasizes that propaganda operates most effectively at the deepest layer of a text, namely through symbolic language, metaphors, and diction choices that shape readers' emotional perceptions before rational evaluation takes place. Propaganda in literature does not always appear in the form of direct statements, but instead operates subtly through systems of symbols that direct how readers understand social and political realities within the text. An analysis of the novel Laut Bercerita shows that the mechanism of symbolic propaganda is constructed through various semiotic elements that function emotionally and ideologically. This study identifies five major mechanisms, with the symbol of the sea serving as the central symbol that possesses the most complex construction of meaning.



The Symbol of the Sea: The Construction of Layered Meaning as Multidimensional Propaganda

The symbol of the sea is the most dominant symbol in the novel *Laut Bercerita*. This symbol appears not only as the title of the novel, but also as the name of the main character and as a natural element that repeatedly emerges in the story's most important narrative moments. Based on the semiotic study of Roland Barthes conducted by *Jurnal Kajian Ilmiah* (2025), the symbol of the sea possesses denotative, connotative, and mythical layers of meaning. From Foulkes' perspective, these layers not only construct literary aesthetics, but also function as media of ideological propaganda.

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At the first layer, the name “Biru Laut” creates connotations of freedom, vastness, and boundlessness. In Indonesian cultural imagination, the sea is understood as a space that cannot be fully controlled by terrestrial power. The sea is always moving, transcending boundaries, and incapable of being permanently confined. Therefore, naming the main character “Laut” becomes a semiotic construction that from the outset associates the character with values of freedom and resistance against oppressive authority.

Within Foulkes’ propaganda framework, this symbolism works persuasively because readers do not merely recognize Laut as an individual, but also as an ideological representation of freedom itself. Readers’ emotional identification with the character then develops into identification with the values he struggles for.

At the second layer, the symbol of the sea undergoes a transformation of meaning when it becomes the site of Biru Laut’s death. This scene is presented through intense and visual narration:

“With my vision still blurred... I finally realized that we were standing on a rocky cliff at the edge of the shore. Apparently, the sun had not completely set... Now I understood. They had brought me to the edge of the sea, to the edge of death.” (Chudori, 2017:4–5)

“Suddenly I felt a hard blow to the back of my head. And I fell toward the edge of the cliff... and plunged into the dark ocean.” (Chudori, 2017:9)

The analysis reveals a strong symbolic irony: a character named Laut is ultimately killed and thrown into the sea. The space that once symbolized freedom is transformed into a medium of death. From Foulkes’ perspective, this symbolic transformation creates effective emotional propaganda because it presents a betrayal of the meaning of freedom itself. The propaganda in this section is not conveyed through direct political argumentation, but through symbolic collision that generates profound emotional experience. The sea as a symbol of freedom is seized by repressive power and turned into an instrument of annihilation. Readers are thus directed to perceive the regime as a force that fundamentally destroys freedom.

At another level, the sea is interpreted as a grave without a tombstone. This symbol represents the families of victims of enforced disappearance who possess neither graves nor certainty about the whereabouts of their loved ones. The vast sea becomes a symbol of endless loss.nWithin Foulkes’ framework, propaganda operates through symbolic emptiness. The absence of graves and burial rituals intensifies grief because the loss is denied closure. This finding aligns with research by Meitridwiastiti (2022), which states that Leila S. Chudori employs emotional and symbolic language to strengthen the novel’s psychological atmosphere. From Foulkes’

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perspective, the symbol of the sea functions not only aesthetically, but also as an ideological propaganda tool that builds empathy toward the victims and rejection of repressive power.

Thus, the symbol of the sea in *Laut Bercerita* functions as a representation of freedom, a medium of death, and a symbol of endless loss. These three meanings together construct emotional propaganda that operates through readers' symbolic and affective experiences.

The Dark–Light–Gloom Metaphor System: A Hidden Ideological Map

The analysis shows that Leila S. Chudori constructs a consistent metaphorical system through the opposition of three poles: darkness, light, and gloom. These metaphors not only strengthen the narrative atmosphere, but also form a hidden ideological map that gradually directs readers toward a particular understanding of oppression, struggle, and moral endurance.

This metaphorical system works cumulatively. Each appearance of the words *dark*, *light*, and *gloom* carries increasingly powerful emotional and ideological meanings as the story develops. This can be seen in the following quotations:

"After nearly three months of being confined in darkness, they brought me to a black, gloomy place." (Chudori, 2017:2)

"In Seyegan we were free to speak, free to debate, free to curse the rulers. Here, we could mention Pramoedya's name loudly without fear." (Chudori, 2017:46)

"Darkness is part of nature. But we must never reach the point of gloom, because gloom is a sign that we have surrendered. Gloom is bitterness, a point when we feel life can no longer be sustained." (Chudori, 2017:11)

The first quotation shows that darkness and gloom are used to depict captivity and oppression. Darkness is associated with fear, isolation, and the loss of freedom, allowing readers to experience the characters' repressive conditions emotionally.

In contrast, the second quotation presents an atmosphere of light through freedom of speech and the courage to criticize authority. Seyegan is constructed as a space free from repression. Within this metaphorical system, light signifies freedom, openness, and intellectual courage. The opposition between darkness and light therefore forms an ideological dichotomy between repression and freedom. The third quotation demonstrates a deepening of metaphorical meaning. The Poet distinguishes darkness as a part of life that can still be endured, while gloom signifies a condition of moral and psychological surrender. From Foulkes' perspective, this distinction becomes a strategy of moral propaganda.

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According to Foulkes, propaganda works effectively through the naturalization of values in everyday language. Chudori does not directly urge readers to resist oppression, but instead constructs a value system that views surrender as moral failure. Gloom is not merely sadness, but a symbol of the loss of dignity and hope. The analysis shows that the dark–light–gloom metaphor system subtly constructs moral propaganda. Readers are directed to perceive struggle as moral steadfastness, while surrender is viewed as inner destruction. Because this is conveyed through poetic language and philosophical reflection, the propaganda works subtly.

This finding aligns with research by Izzati (2025), which states that the language style in *Laut Bercerita* functions as an instrument of symbolic resistance against repression and historical erasure. From Foulkes' perspective, this metaphorical system is not merely aesthetic, but ideological, because it constructs a moral framework concerning courage, resistance, and endurance in the face of repressive power.

Thus, the dark–light–gloom metaphors in *Laut Bercerita* not only shape the narrative atmosphere, but also influence how readers emotionally and morally understand struggle and oppression.

The Diction of "Traitor": Propaganda through the Reversal of Cumulative Discourse

The analysis reveals that one of the most dominant techniques of linguistic propaganda in *Laut Bercerita* is the repeated and cumulative use of the diction *traitor* and its variations. This word evolves from a mere narrative term into a moral category that organizes how readers evaluate relationships among characters and ideological conflicts within the novel. The use of this diction appears in several quotations:

"Traitors are everywhere, even right before our eyes, Laut. We never know what drives someone to betray: it could be money, power, revenge, or simply fear and pressure from the authorities." (Chudori, 2017:30)

"We cannot expect everyone to remain loyal forever to struggle and friendship." (Chudori, 2017:17)

"The person who one day betrays us is usually the one we least expect, the one you thought could never stab you in the back." (Chudori, 2017:21)

"We must learn to be disappointed when the person we trusted turns out to hold a knife and stab us in the back." (Chudori, 2017:32)

These quotations demonstrate the gradual development of the meaning of betrayal, beginning with motives such as money, power, and fear, and extending to betrayal of friendship and

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struggle. At its most emotional level, betrayal is metaphorized as a stab in the back, symbolizing pain and the destruction of trust.

From Foulkes' perspective, repetition of particular diction becomes an effective propaganda technique because it gradually builds emotional associations. In this novel, the word *traitor* is continuously associated with fear, emotional wounds, and threats to solidarity. As a result, readers are directed to perceive betrayal as the most morally destructive act.

The analysis also reveals a reversal of discourse. During the New Order era, activists were often labeled as traitors to the state. However, *Laut Bercerita* instead defines traitors as those who surrender their comrades, destroy solidarity, or submit to the pressures of authority for personal interests.

Thus, the regime is no longer positioned as the guardian of stability, but rather as the source of fear that gives rise to betrayal. Interestingly, this reversal is not delivered directly, but is constructed through the characters' experiences, dialogues, and emotional repetition. Within Foulkes' framework, such a strategy is more effective than direct propaganda because readers feel that the meaning emerges naturally from the narrative. Therefore, the diction *traitor* in *Laut Bercerita* functions as an instrument of ideological propaganda that constructs moral solidarity among victims while simultaneously delegitimizing repressive power.

Irony, Hyperbole, and Personification: Figures of Speech as Instruments of Exposure

The analysis shows that Leila S. Chudori uses various figures of speech especially irony, hyperbole, and personification as instruments of propaganda that expose the mechanisms of repressive power. These figures of speech operate in different ways, yet share the same purpose: to construct readers' emotional and moral awareness regarding the injustices experienced by the characters.

a. Irony as an Exposure of the Absurdity of Power

Irony is sharply employed in interrogation scenes concerning ideas of equality and accusations of communism:

"'Distributing things equally? Like communist teachings, is that it?' said Red-Eyes mockingly." (Chudori, 2017:97)

The analysis shows that the irony in this quotation operates on several levels. First, the dialogue portrays a repressive interrogation setting. Second, the irony reveals that even a simple idea of social justice is treated as an ideological threat.

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From Foulkes' perspective, irony becomes an effective mechanism of propaganda because it invites readers to recognize the absurdity of power without direct explanation. Readers are guided to see that the regime in the novel has criminalized the concept of justice merely because it is associated with a particular ideology.

The propaganda effect emerges when readers not only rationally understand the injustice, but also emotionally perceive its moral absurdity. Thus, irony functions as an instrument of exposure that makes repressive practices appear absurd and ethically unacceptable.

b. Hyperbole as the Affirmation of Moral Position

In addition to irony, Chudori also uses hyperbole to portray the political condition of the New Order provocatively.

"The Regional House of Representatives or the House of Representatives has long been a septic tank, merely a place of containment..." (Chudori, 2017:62)

Comparing legislative institutions to a *septic tank* constitutes a rhetorically aggressive hyperbole. The analysis shows that this figure of speech not only expresses the character's anger, but also encourages readers to take a moral stance toward the criticized political system.

From Foulkes' perspective, hyperbole becomes a propaganda technique because it eliminates emotional neutrality. Extremely intense metaphors make it difficult for readers to remain ambiguous. The empathy previously constructed toward victims of repression reinforces readers' acceptance of the criticism.

This finding aligns with research by Meitridwiastiti (2022), which identifies hyperbole as a dominant figure of speech in *Laut Bercerita*. Within Foulkes' framework, the dominance of hyperbole serves an ideological function by constructing the impression that the political system has become fundamentally corrupted.

c. Personification as Political Morality

Personification in this novel is strategically employed to transform political issues into more personal and emotional moral issues. This can be seen in the following quotation:

"Asmara... we live in a country that oppresses its own people. Father is happy to be among young people who understand that moving forward, even by only one or two steps, is far more valuable and dignified than remaining silent." (Chudori, 2017:77)

In this quotation, the state is personified as an active agent oppressing its own citizens. The word *own* carries strong moral significance because it implies betrayal of those who should have been protected.

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The analysis shows that this personification shifts interpretation from the political realm to the ethical and humanitarian realm. The state is no longer understood as an abstract system, but as a moral entity that has failed to fulfill its responsibilities.

From Foulkes' perspective, this strategy is effective because moral judgment is more easily accepted than complex political argumentation. Readers more readily feel empathy and anger when oppression is portrayed as betrayal against one's own people.

Thus, the use of irony, hyperbole, and personification in *Laut Bercerita* not only strengthens the narrative aesthetics, but also becomes an instrument of ideological propaganda that emotionally and persuasively exposes the absurdity, moral corruption, and violence of repressive power.

Literary Intertextuality: Cultural Authority as Ideological Legitimization

The analysis reveals that one of the most distinctive aspects of language in *Laut Bercerita* is the use of literary intertextuality as a mechanism of ideological propaganda. The novel consistently presents references to literary figures and works historically associated with struggles for freedom and resistance against political repression. The most dominant figure appearing in this intertextuality is Pramoedya Ananta Toer, as seen in the following quotations:

"Here, we could mention Pramoedya's name loudly without fear." (Chudori, 2017:46)

"Pramoedya will breathe the air of freedom here. All his works banned by the government can be read freely." (Chudori, 2017:55)

These quotations show that Pramoedya's name functions not merely as a literary reference, but also as a symbol of intellectual freedom and resistance against state censorship. In Indonesian history, Pramoedya is known as a writer whose works were banned and who was imprisoned during the New Order era; therefore, the mention of his name carries strong historical and emotional significance.

From Foulkes' perspective, such intertextuality becomes a form of propaganda through cultural authority. Chudori utilizes Pramoedya's moral and intellectual legitimacy to strengthen the ideological position of the characters' struggle. Readers familiar with Pramoedya's history are likely to connect Biru Laut and his friends' struggle with the long tradition of fighting for freedom of expression in Indonesia.

The analysis reveals a double legitimization. First, the activists' struggle is positioned as honorable and moral. Second, the repressive regime is portrayed as a continuation of power that suppresses freedom of thought and artistic expression.

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In addition to Pramoedya, the novel also mentions Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa, Jorge Luis Borges, and Milan Kundera. These literary figures are widely associated with issues of freedom and criticism of repressive power.

These literary references construct the characters' intellectual identity as part of a global intellectual tradition that struggles for freedom. Within Foulkes' framework, this strategy works persuasively because ideology is conveyed through cultural association rather than direct political doctrine. Thus, intertextuality in *Laut Bercerita* functions not only aesthetically, but also as an instrument of ideological propaganda that strengthens the moral legitimacy of the characters' struggle.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the novel Laut Bercerita by Leila S. Chudori contains literary propaganda that is systematically and multilayeredly constructed. Based on the theory of literary propaganda proposed by A. P. Foulkes (1983), seventeen forms of propaganda were identified within four major aspects: narrative structure, characterization, themes and ideology, as well as language and symbolism.

In the aspect of narrative structure, the study identified empathetic propaganda, affective tragedy, affective resonance, and demonization. The narrative structure is designed to create readers' emotional engagement with the experiences of victims of enforced disappearance and state violence.

In the aspect of characterization, the study identified propaganda of identification, subtle internalization, transitional justice, moral binarism, and moral authority. The characters in the novel function as media for conveying ideological values. Readers are directed to side with the victims and the activists, while antagonists are represented as symbols of repressive power.

In the aspect of themes and ideology, the study identified propaganda of resistant memory, ideological naturalization, and the myth of sacrifice. The novel presents collective memory of the tragedy of enforced disappearances as a form of resistance against historical erasure. The ideology of anti-authoritarianism is conveyed through themes of freedom, justice, solidarity, and sacrifice.

In the aspect of language and symbolism, the study identified multidimensional symbolic propaganda, ideological resilience, moral vigilance, rhetorical exposure, and cultural legitimacy. The symbol of the sea, the dark–light–gloom metaphors, the diction of traitor, figures of speech,

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and literary intertextuality construct a system of meaning that influences readers' emotions and perceptions.

These seventeen forms of propaganda are interconnected and form a coherent ideological architecture. The narrative structure constructs emotional conditions, characterization introduces persuasive agents, themes insert ideology through humanitarian issues, while language and symbolism operate through subtle metaphors and linguistic constructions.

The strength of propaganda in Laut Bercerita lies in the fact that it is not delivered explicitly. Ideology emerges through emotional experience, narrative experience, and symbolism, allowing readers to feel as though they discover the meanings naturally. Thus, the novel successfully conveys an anti-authoritarian ideology, constructs collective memory, and sustains demands for transitional justice through a literary medium that remains both aesthetic and persuasive.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Future research on propaganda in literature, particularly in Laut Bercerita, should move beyond identifying forms of propaganda toward a deeper exploration of how literary propaganda shapes readers' emotional, ideological, and moral perceptions. Further studies could examine the qualitative dimensions of readers' responses to narrative structures, characterization, symbolism, and ideological themes in order to understand how literary texts construct persuasion subtly through aesthetic experiences. Such investigations would contribute to developing a more comprehensive framework for analyzing propaganda not merely as political persuasion, but as a cultural and emotional process embedded within literary discourse.

Furthermore, future studies should explore the relationship between literary propaganda and collective memory, particularly in the context of historical trauma, authoritarianism, and transitional justice. The findings of this study indicate that propaganda in Laut Bercerita operates through emotional identification, symbolic constructions, and ideological naturalization. However, the long-term influence of such literary strategies on readers' historical awareness, empathy, and social consciousness remains underexplored. Future researchers may employ interdisciplinary approaches combining literary studies, cultural studies, psychology, and memory studies to examine how literature contributes to preserving historical narratives and resisting collective amnesia.

Another important direction for future research lies in comparative studies of propaganda strategies across different literary works, historical contexts, and cultural traditions. Comparative

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analyses between Indonesian novels and international literary works dealing with political repression, violence, or social resistance could reveal similarities and differences in narrative persuasion, symbolic mechanisms, and ideological constructions. In addition, future research may investigate how contemporary digital culture, social media, and popular discourse influence the reception and reinterpretation of literary propaganda among younger generations. Such studies would provide broader insight into the evolving relationship between literature, ideology, collective memory, and socio-political resistance in modern society.

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