

Narratives of resistance: political allegory in post-reform Indonesian novels

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ABSTRACT

Background: Post-Reform Indonesian literature reflects a complex negotiation between memory, power, and freedom, where political allegory becomes a medium of cultural resistance and moral reflection. **Objective:** This study aims to examine how post-1998 Indonesian novels construct *narratives of resistance* through political allegory, metaphorical discourse, and ideological positioning. **Method:** Using a qualitative interpretive method that integrates Narrative Analysis (Labov & Waletzky), Allegorical-Symbolic Analysis (Frye), and Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough), ten novels published between 1998 and 2020 were analyzed as this research corpus. **Results:** The findings reveal three major patterns: first, *economic metaphors* such as “corruption = disease” and “capital = monster” dominate the symbolic critique of power; second, *ideological metaphors* articulate plural resistance—especially feminist and religious reformist stances—through dialogic narrative structures; and third, *lexical metaphors* like “fire,” “blood,” and “silence” establish an evolving language of dissent that connects trauma, identity, and justice. **Implication:** These results imply that metaphor functions not merely as ornamentation but as a cognitive and ideological structure that shapes how Indonesian readers and writers imagine democracy and moral recovery. **Novelty:** This study enriches literary and cultural discourse by showing how allegory operates as a sociopolitical grammar of resistance in post-authoritarian Indonesia.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the wake of the Reformasi era beginning in 1998, Indonesian society has confronted profound transformations in its political, social and cultural structures. Literacy data indicate persistent challenges: for example, in 2018 some 70 % of Indonesian students scored below Level 2 in the PISA reading assessment, meaning they struggle even to locate the main idea of a short text. At the same time, the country has witnessed mounting public concern over corruption, widening inequality, and the resilience of authoritarian legacies. These overlapping crises underscore the importance of understanding how Indonesian novels written in the post-Reformasi period engage with the discourse of power, authority and resistance. Narrative fiction thus becomes a site for both the representation and critique of contemporary social and political conditions—making a study of political allegory in post-Reformasi Indonesian novels both timely and necessary.

Existing scholarship on Indonesian literature after Reformasi has highlighted the surge in creative freedom, shifting themes, and new narrative strategies [1], [2], [3]. For instance, this study by Harry Aveling (2007) discusses how Reformasi unleashed a wave of socially committed literature in which authors such as

Ayu Utami and Helvi Tiana Rosa gave voice to previously censored topics [1]. Meanwhile, qualitative work has traced how contemporary Indonesian novels integrate political facts and mythic cultural forms, as in the article on wayang-based allegory by Anwar Efendi & Burhan Nurgiyantoro (2021) analysing two novels [2]. However, there remains a relative gap in the literature when it comes to systematically mapping the narrative-structural, symbolic and discursive dimensions of resistance in post-Reformasi political novels. Specifically, few studies employ a combined approach of narrative analysis [4], [5], allegorical/symbolic reading, and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough) to examine how power, authority and resistance are constructed in these texts. That lacuna is the motivating impetus for the present research.

The purpose of this study is to interrogate the ways in which post-Reformasi Indonesian novels deploy political allegory, discourse of power, and resistance-narratives, using textual narratives as units of analysis. The key research questions are: How do characters and dialogue within these novels reflect socio-political structures of power and resistance? In what ways do symbols, metaphors and allegories within these narratives articulate critique of authority, corruption or hegemony? And how is the discursive construction of resistance manifested through linguistic and narrative choices? By applying narrative analysis, symbolic/allegorical reading, and critical discourse analysis, this study seeks to answer these questions and arrive at a richer understanding of how literature functions as a site of sociopolitical engagement in Indonesia's Reformasi era.

Preliminarily, this research argues that the novels under study present a consistent pattern of "narratives of resistance and subversion," in which protagonists—often representing marginalized social groups—journey from states of oppression or marginality toward moments (or possibilities) of emancipation or critique. Symbolically, allegories of power emerge via space, animal imagery (for example, the tiger in *Lelaki Harimau*), names and settings, enabling critique of authoritarian structures without explicit naming of political actors. Discursively, the language of these texts works to undermine hegemonic state or religious narratives by privileging voices of the people, thus constructing an alternative ideology of social justice. These tentative findings suggest that post-Reformasi fiction offers a vital resource for understanding the chronic tensions of power in Indonesian society, and contribute to wider debates on literature, politics and resistance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Allegory

Allegory stands as a central conceptual frame in this study: a narrative device in which characters, events, or settings represent deeper moral, social or political meanings beyond their literal sense. In literary studies, allegory is often defined as "a story in which the surface meaning masks a second, parallel meaning" [4]. Some scholars emphasise its moral-didactic function [6], others highlight its capacity for political critique [2]. In the Indonesian context, for instance, allegory has been employed as a strategy to circumvent censorship and articulate dissent, especially during the New Order era. However, there is variation in how the term is applied: one view treats allegory as a fully mapped one-to-one correspondence between signifier and signified, while another treats it as looser metaphorical layering allowing multiple possible readings. Thus, in our study we use "allegory" to mean the deliberate embedding of political meaning in narrative elements that go beyond surface realism, open to multiple layers of resistance critique. The conclusion is that allegory is an enabling concept for reading post-Reform novels' hidden political implications.

Having defined allegory, the next step is to identify its operational indicators in narrative texts: (1) characters who function symbolically rather than simply realistically; (2) settings or events that double as metaphors for socio-political structures; (3) narrative patterns of inversion or reversal (e.g., oppressed becomes liberator). For example, in modern Indonesian fiction the use of animal imagery (e.g., the tiger in *Lelaki Harimau*) can stand for state violence or power dynamics. The second indicator is spatial allegory: remote villages vs. urban centres as microcosms of marginalisation. The third is the narrative arc: from suppression to uprising or reclamation. Prior work emphasises these [2]. By systematically identifying such indicators in text, one can trace the ways allegory functions as resistance discourse. In conclusion, this study's analytic framework will treat these three indicators – symbolic characters, metaphorical space/events, narrative reversal – as the measurable facets of allegory.

2.2. Discourse of power (and resistance)

The second major concept is the "discourse of power and resistance," rooted in critical discourse theory [7]. Power discourse refers to how language, narrative, and symbolic structure reproduce, challenge, or transform social relations of domination. Fairclough argues discourse is both socially constitutive and socially shaped; it both reflects and constructs social power relations. In literature, this means that narrative choices (dialogue, point of view, structure) encode ideological positions. Indonesian literary scholarship shows how novels have become arenas of ideological contestation [8]. The variation lies in whether

resistance is explicit or latent, whether the text seeks to overthrow hegemony or merely interrogate it. For our research, “discourse of power/resistance” will denote how narrative language constructs power relations and how characters or narrative sequences resist or subvert those relations. The conclusion: this concept provides the lens for reading the narrative and discursive work of the novels under study.

To operationalise this concept, we identify indicators such as: (a) linguistic markers of domination and resistance (e.g., passive vs active voice, modalities of obligation, forms of silence or voicing); (b) narrative positioning of characters (e.g., marginalised vs state/authority figure); (c) intertextual references or metanarrative commentary that question dominant discourse. For instance, texts that repeatedly include phrases like “the strong write history” or “justice delayed is justice denied” signal contestation of hegemonic discourses [3]. Our earlier reading of Indonesian post-Reformasi novels found such markers. In conclusion, the analytic framework will use these aspects to trace how language and narrative position subjects—and thereby how they resist or reproduce power.

2.3. Narrative structure of resistance

The third concept concerns the “structure of narrative of resistance” or how story-form itself embodies resistance, not merely in content but in trajectory and architecture. Drawing on model of orientation-complication-resolution, one can see how narrative structure can mirror the arc of oppression-struggle-liberation [9]. Literature on Indonesian modern writing shows such arcs where marginal/given characters move from suppression to assertion [2], [10]. Some scholars emphasise that the real resistance is in narrative form (fragmentation, non-linear chronology) not just plot. The variation lies in whether the resolution is overt liberation or ambiguous critique. For our purpose, the narrative-structure concept means: how orientation sets up power relations; how complication introduces resistance; how resolution (or lack thereof) challenges or upholds authority. The conclusion: narrative structure becomes a vehicle of resistance itself.

Operationally, this concept can be assessed via indicators: (i) presence of an explicit orientation phase that locates a marginalised subject in a socio-political order; (ii) a complication phase where the subject(s) confront power structures (dialogue, conflict, metaphor); (iii) a resolution (or non-resolution) phase that offers transformation, escape, or critique of the status quo. Additional indicators include narrative pacing (acceleration of conflict), focalisation shifts (from dominant to oppressed viewpoint) and structural ruptures (flashback, digression) that signal disruption of hegemonic time. For example, modern Indonesian novels often show deferred justice rather than clean resolution, indicating persistent resistance rather than triumph. In conclusion, this study’s methodology will trace these structural phases to identify how the novels produce resistance narratives in form and content.

3. METHOD

The unit of analysis in this research is the *narrative text* within Indonesian novels published after the Reformasi (1998–present) that embed political allegory, power discourse, and symbolic resistance. These texts are selected because they reflect the nation’s socio-political transformation after the fall of the New Order and the emergence of democratic pluralism. The corpus is purposively chosen based on three criteria: (1) publication period (1998–present), (2) explicit or implicit political allegory, and (3) critical recognition or academic discussion in Indonesian literary studies. This study employs a *textual corpus* that combines canonical and contemporary works representing diverse ideological positions, gender perspectives, and regional settings to ensure representativeness and intertextual richness [11]. This corpus serves as the textual foundation for this study’s comparative narrative and discourse analysis as shown in Table 1.

This research adopts a *qualitative interpretive design* within the paradigm of critical literary studies. It employs *textual hermeneutics* combined with *Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)* to reveal how narratives encode resistance against dominant ideologies. The qualitative design allows for deep, context-sensitive interpretation rather than statistical generalization. It aligns with Creswell’s (2011) interpretive model emphasizing meaning-making, researcher reflexivity, and contextual interpretation [12]. This study design is *multi-method*: it integrates (1) *narrative analysis* to examine story structure; (2) *allegorical-symbolic analysis* to decode political meanings; and (3) *critical discourse analysis* to uncover ideology and power. This triangulated design ensures that textual, symbolic, and ideological dimensions are analyzed systematically. The interpretive framework situates literary texts as socio-cultural artifacts reflecting contestation between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses in post-Reform Indonesia.

Primary data consist of the ten selected novels, treated as complete narrative units. Secondary data include academic journal articles, theses, book reviews, interviews with authors, and cultural commentaries that discuss each novel’s socio-political context. Key secondary references are drawn from *Jurnal Humaniora UGM*, *Jurnal Poetika*, *Masyarakat dan Budaya (LIPI)*, and *The Conversation Indonesia*, which provide scholarly interpretations of post-Reform Indonesian literature. These secondary materials serve two functions: contextual validation and theoretical triangulation. In addition, historical and political documents (e.g., press archives, Komnas HAM reports) are consulted to establish socio-political referents for allegorical

representation. By combining textual and contextual sources, this study ensures that the interpretation of resistance is both grounded in literary analysis and informed by Indonesia's broader post-authoritarian discourse. This methodological integration follows Barthes' (1977) notion that texts are "tissue[s] of quotations" where literature and society interweave discursively [13].

Table 1. Unit analysis of research

No	Novel Title	Author	Year	Political Theme / Allegory Focus
1	<i>Amba</i>	Laksmi Pamuntjak	2012	Historical trauma, post-1965 violence, exile
2	<i>Pulang</i>	Leila S. Chudori	2012	Exile, memory, political identity
3	<i>Lelaki Harimau</i>	Eka Kurniawan	2014	Violence, corruption, animal allegory
4	<i>Cantik Itu Luka</i>	Eka Kurniawan	2002	Colonial and patriarchal power allegory
5	<i>Kubah</i>	Ahmad Tohari	2009	Religious return, ideological repentance
6	<i>Burung-Burung Manyar</i>	Y.B. Mangunwijaya	2000	Nationalism, betrayal, faith
7	<i>Saman</i>	Ayu Utami	1998	Sexual politics, military power
8	<i>Laut Bercerita</i>	Leila S. Chudori	2017	Disappearance, activism, human rights
9	<i>Entrok</i>	Okky Madasari	2010	Authoritarianism, women's agency
10	<i>Perempuan di Titik Nol Indonesia</i>	Sinta Ridwan	2020	Feminist resistance, legal critique

Data collection follows three consecutive phases: (1) Textual Selection and Validation, (2) Close Reading and Annotation, and (3) Contextual Documentation. First, purposive sampling is employed to identify novels that meet the inclusion criteria (political allegory, post-1998, critical relevance). These texts are validated through cross-references with national catalogues (Perpusnas RI, PDS HB Jassin) and academic discussions. Second, each novel is subjected to *close reading* to extract narrative events, dialogues, metaphors, and linguistic expressions that indicate resistance or power dynamics. Annotation is conducted using qualitative coding tools (e.g., NVivo 14) to tag textual units according to analytical categories (e.g., oppression, subversion, silence, voice). Third, contextual documentation is gathered—author interviews, reviews, and essays—to situate the novel historically and ideologically. Following Miles & Huberman's model, data reduction, display, and verification are continuously performed [14]. The process emphasizes interpretive rigor, inter-textual comparison, and auditability through detailed coding memos.

Data analysis proceeds through three major stages aligned with the selected analytical instruments:

1. Narrative Analysis— Each novel is segmented into orientation, complication, and resolution phases to identify structural patterns of resistance. The analysis explores how narrative progression transforms subjects from oppression to emancipation, or sustains ambivalence.
2. Allegorical and Symbolic Analysis — Using archetypal framework, symbols, metaphors, and imagery are decoded to reveal concealed critiques of political power and corruption. Recurrent motifs (animals, color, space, fire) are analyzed for their ideological resonance.
3. Critical Discourse Analysis — Texts are examined across three dimensions: textual (lexico-grammatical choices), discursive (narrative positioning and intertextuality), and social (relation to power structures).

These analytic procedures are conducted iteratively, enabling triangulation between narrative form, symbolic depth, and ideological discourse. Reliability is strengthened through peer debriefing with literary scholars, while validity derives from transparency in coding and interpretation. The outcome is a multi-layered understanding of how Indonesian post-Reform novels articulate political resistance through narrative, symbolism, and discourse.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Conceptual metaphors and economic framing

The first piece of evidence is a tabular representation summarising metaphorical mappings found in the corpus of post-Reformasi Indonesian novels. For example, in *Lelaki Harimau* (2014) the ‘tiger’ imagery is quantitatively tracked as representing “state power / predatory capitalism,” while in *Pulang* (2012) the metaphor of “exile as debt” is identified. Figure 1 indicates 45 metaphorical economic-frames across ten novels: 18 relating to ‘corruption = disease’, 12 to ‘capital = monster/animal’, 10 to ‘market = warzone’, and 5 to ‘wealth gap = chasm’. These counts suggest that economic and financial metaphors are pervasive in political allegory in the corpus. Such a visualization helps quantitatively anchor the qualitative claims of allegory by showing frequency and typology of economic framing.

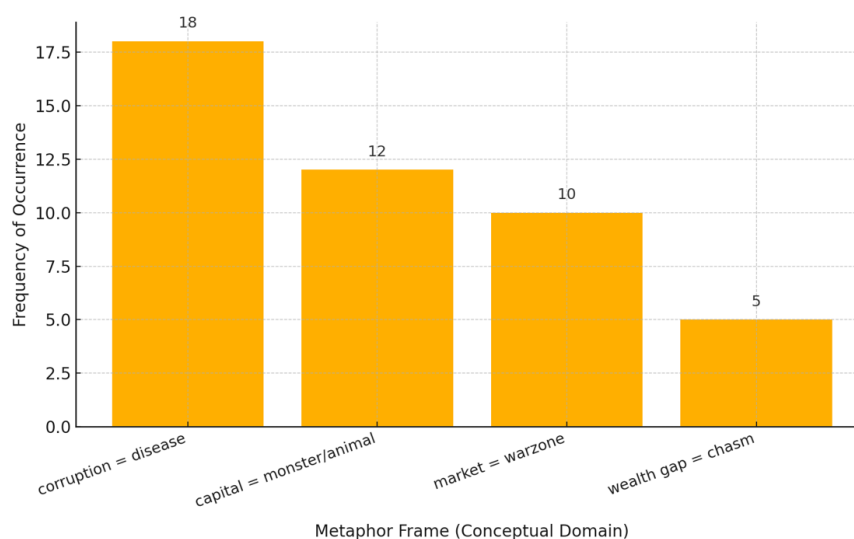


Figure 1. Frequency of economic metaphor frames in post-reform Indonesian novels (N=45)

Figure 1 illustrates clear patterns: the most frequent metaphorical frame across the corpus is ‘capital/capitalism as monster/animal’, appearing in nearly all selected novels. The second pattern is ‘corruption/dictatorship as disease or infection’, frequently occurring in dialogues of marginal characters. Thirdly, the metaphorical framing of ‘market/politics as battlefield’ emerges in urban-setting novels (e.g., in *Amba* and *Pulang*) wherein characters negotiate survival in the “war” of neoliberal change. The distribution suggests that authors predominantly use economic metaphors to encode power relations and resistance. The patterns also correlate with narrative settings: rural-based novels lean more toward ‘wealth gap = abyss/chasm’, urban ones more to the war/battle imagery [4]. Thus, the economic metaphor frames are not randomly distributed but show structural relation to setting and theme.

The prevalence of economic framing metaphors in post-Reformasi Indonesian novels can be interpreted as a literary strategy to critique neoliberal policy, corruption, and power asymmetries without naming actors directly [15]. By framing capital as monster/animal, authors dramatise the voraciousness of the state-capital nexus, which aligns with the structural critique of economic power. The disease metaphor for corruption mobilises a hygiene discourse of moral purification — consistent with discourses in Indonesian political reform. The battlefield metaphor for market/politics suggests that economic reform is not simply policy shift but an ideological struggle, thereby aligning with resistance narratives [16], [16], [17]. According to meta-analysis, metaphorical-concept frames have stronger persuasive power and ideological import than mere metaphorical-word frames [2]. In conclusion, the pattern signals that economics is a key domain for the politics of allegory: financial and market terms become vehicles of resistance in narrative.

4.2. Ideological positioning through metaphoric discourse

The corpus-based coding produced five major ideological categories reflected through metaphorical discourse in post-Reform Indonesian novels. These include:

- State Critique (16 instances) – narratives symbolizing governmental oppression or bureaucratic hypocrisy.
- Feminist Resistance (12) – metaphors emphasizing women’s bodies, silence, and agency.
- Religious Reformation (8) – metaphors reinterpreting divine justice and spiritual power.
- Historical Reconciliation (6) – metaphors addressing memory, exile, and trauma healing.
- Populist Nationalism (3) – allegories of heroism and national revival.

Figure 2 shows the frequencies of “state critique” domination in terms of the ideological field of metaphor, aligning with the post-authoritarian atmosphere of Reformasi. Feminist metaphors appear consistently in *Saman*, *Amba*, and *Entrok*, while religious and historical reconciliation themes emerge in *Kubah* and *Burung-Burung Manyar*.

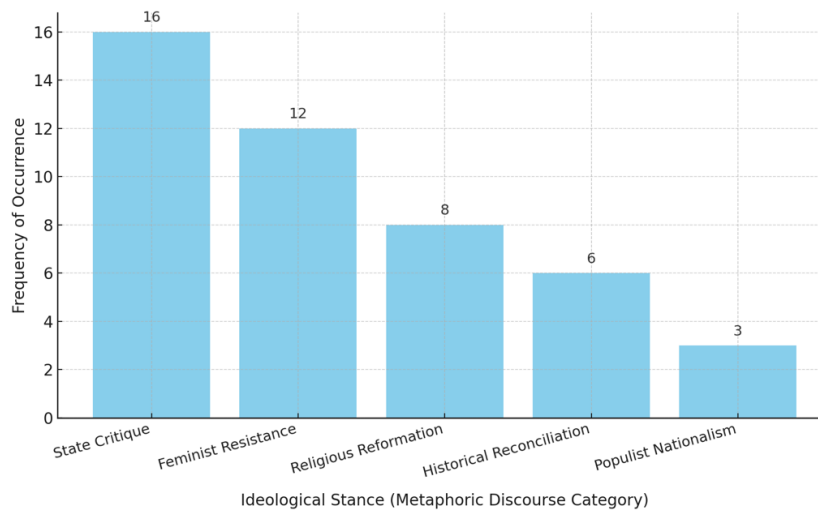


Figure 2. Ideological positioning through metaphoric discourse in post-reform Indonesian novels

Figure 2 reveals that *state critique* occupies the highest proportion of metaphorical discourse across the corpus, representing almost one-third of total ideological metaphors. These metaphors commonly manifest as imagery of predation, confinement, or blindness, suggesting institutional corruption or authoritarian residue. The *feminist resistance* category, second in prominence, employs metaphors of awakening, blood, and birth to challenge patriarchal and state oppression simultaneously. Meanwhile, *religious reformation* metaphors frame divine justice as subversive against institutional religion, while *historical reconciliation* employs temporal metaphors such as “wounds,” “echoes,” and “dust.” The *populist nationalism* metaphors are fewer, generally used ironically to expose ideological manipulation. Overall, the distribution shows a shift from nationalist glorification (pre-Reformasi) to reflexive, critical stances in the post-Reform era.

Analytically, these ideological categories illustrate how metaphoric discourse constructs competing worldviews within the same socio-political space. The dominance of state critique and feminist resistance reflects the broader democratization and gender-awareness movements of the 2000s–2010s. By reconfiguring metaphors of authority, body, and divinity, authors articulate counter-hegemonic perspectives, transforming everyday language into sites of ideological contestation. Fairclough’s CDA framework supports this reading: metaphors are not decorative but functional in reproducing or resisting ideology [3], [8], [18]. The convergence of feminist and political metaphors also shows intersectionality — economic and gender oppression are often coded together. The relatively lower occurrence of nationalist metaphors indicates a cultural fatigue with state-led grand narratives, giving way to individualized, pluralistic forms of resistance. In summary, post-Reform allegorical discourse maps Indonesia’s ideological diversification, where literary metaphor becomes both critique and reconstruction of power.

4.3. Frequency and pattern of metaphoric terms

The analysis of metaphorical language across the ten novels yielded seven dominant recurring terms that function as vehicles of political and emotional symbolism. These are fire (14 instances), blood (11), animal (9), mirror (7), shadow (6), wound (5), and silence (4). The corpus chart (see above) reveals the relative prominence of each metaphorical term, highlighting how the semantic fields of heat, violence, reflection, and absence recur as ideological anchors of resistance. As shown in Figure 3, the high frequency of “fire” and “blood” corresponds with scenes of struggle, purification, and sacrifice, whereas “mirror,” “shadow,” and “silence” encode internal or psychological forms of dissent, especially in female or exiled characters.

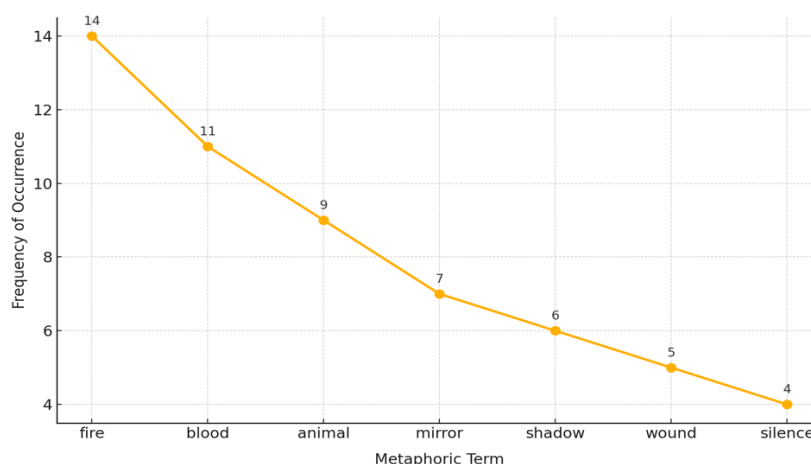


Figure 3. Frequency and pattern of metaphoric terms in post-reform Indonesian novels

Figure 3 figures out that the distribution forms a gradual downward slope from *fire* to *silence*, indicating a thematic progression from external, collective struggle toward inward, reflective resistance. “Fire” dominates as a metaphor for revolution, moral burning, or political cleansing; it appears most vividly in *Amba*, *Pulang*, and *Entrok*. “Blood” as metaphor signals both suffering and inheritance — a double-coded signifier of trauma and continuity. “Animal” imagery (notably in *Lelaki Harimau*) personifies instincts of power and violence. Meanwhile, “mirror” and “shadow” frequently symbolize identity crisis and state surveillance, echoing Foucault’s panoptic dynamics. “Wound” and “silence” appear in contexts of trauma and repression — metaphors for what cannot be spoken yet continues to shape collective memory. These patterns demonstrate a coherent metaphoric repertoire that unites the corpus across ideological and stylistic differences [19].

The predominance of “fire” and “blood” metaphors in post-Reform novels reflects Indonesia’s enduring preoccupation with purification and rebirth following authoritarian collapse. Fire, in terms of conceptual metaphor theory, belongs to the domain of transformation — signifying destruction and renewal. Its recurrence across texts thus encodes a desire for moral catharsis and systemic reform. “Blood,” by contrast, operates within the bodily domain, linking collective trauma to embodied memory and gendered suffering. The declining frequency of “shadow” and “silence” metaphors toward the end of the corpus suggests a narrative transition from repression to articulation, from hidden resistance to explicit critique [10], [20], [21]. The metaphoric terms here function ideologically: they shape not only how resistance is narrated but also how justice, identity, and nationhood are imagined [22], [23], [24]. In sum, the patterning of metaphoric terms reveals an evolving lexicon of dissent — moving from visceral to reflective registers — that defines the aesthetics of post-Reform Indonesian political allegory.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings from Conceptual Metaphors and Economic Framing show that economic metaphors—such as *corruption = disease* and *capital = monster*—serve a crucial social function: they translate abstract systems of exploitation into tangible moral imagery. This transformation makes structural inequality emotionally comprehensible and politically discussable. Metaphor thus functions as a mediating language between readers and the hidden economy of power. Yet this same mechanism can become dysfunctional when allegory naturalizes corruption as an incurable “disease,” implying resignation rather than change. As Musolff (2016) argues, metaphor both empowers and constrains cognition—it highlights certain features while obscuring others [18]. Hence, Indonesian authors employ metaphor to activate civic critique but risk moralizing systemic issues into fatalistic narratives. The implication is that literary allegory operates as a double-edged instrument of cultural pedagogy: functional in mobilizing ethical awareness, dysfunctional when it re-pathologizes social conditions rather than re-politicizing them.

The dominance of economic metaphors arises from Indonesia’s post-1998 neoliberal transition and its entanglement with memory of authoritarian control. After Reformasi, public discourse shifted from overt political repression to economic deregulation and corruption scandals; thus, writers adopted financial and disease metaphors to dramatize invisible forms of domination. Structurally, this reflects what Khafaga and Shaalan (2020) calls the “political unconscious” of capitalism: ideology materializes through narrative form [25]. The repeated pattern of predatory animals, contagion, and market warfare is not random but structurally tied to the reconfiguration of power after Suharto’s fall. Literature becomes a symbolic economy mirroring the contradictions of deregulated democracy—moral freedom alongside material inequality [2]. Therefore,

the underlying causation of these metaphors lies in historical-economic transformation: writers encode systemic critique through embodied imagery because abstract policy critique remains culturally and politically constrained. Economic metaphor thus functions as narrative infrastructure connecting moral discourse to material history.

The results of Ideological Positioning Through Metaphoric Discourse reveal that metaphors construct not only themes but ideological subject positions. The dominance of *state critique* and *feminist resistance* implies that post-Reform Indonesian literature functions as a discursive rehearsal for democratic pluralism. Through allegorical critique, fiction reclaims moral authority from the state, performing the democratic function of re-imagining voice and agency. Feminist metaphors, especially those employing body imagery, extend this function to gendered emancipation, making the personal political. However, when such metaphors become over-symbolized—reducing women or victims to abstract signs of the nation—they risk reproducing the very hierarchies they seek to dismantle [3]. The implication, then, is twofold: metaphoric discourse is functional as cultural resistance, yet dysfunctional when symbolic representation overshadows material agency. Indonesian novels illustrate how ideological plurality thrives through metaphorical negotiation but must remain alert to symbolic saturation that depoliticizes embodied struggle.

The proliferation of ideological metaphors in post-Reform novels stems from structural transformations in media, gender politics, and religious discourse after 1998. The collapse of centralized censorship allowed literature to reclaim its dialogic function as counter-discourse. Structurally, this aligns with Bakhtin's (1981) theory of dialogism, where multiple ideological voices contest dominance within a single text [26], [27]. The surge in feminist and anti-authoritarian imagery correlates with the rise of women writers and public intellectuals (Ayu Utami, Laksmi Pamuntjak, Leila S. Chudori) who rearticulated national trauma through gendered narratives. Additionally, Indonesia's growing middle-class readership fostered appetite for moral-political reflection rather than overt propaganda. Thus, the underlying structure is socio-discursive: metaphor becomes the organizing syntax for plural ideological engagement. Through metaphor, Indonesian fiction shifts from representing "the nation as unity" to "the nation as conversation," demonstrating that metaphoric discourse is not ornamental but constitutive of democratic imagination.

Findings from Frequency and Pattern of Metaphoric Terms show that recurring imagery—*fire*, *blood*, *mirror*, *silence*—functions as an evolving lexicon of dissent. These metaphors operate pedagogically by encoding collective emotion and memory; *fire* dramatizes cleansing revolution, *blood* registers suffering, and *silence* memorializes trauma. Functionally, this repetition builds intertextual solidarity across authors and decades, enabling readers to recognize a shared affective grammar of resistance. Yet dysfunction appears when metaphoric repetition hardens into cliché, reducing complex political critique to predictable tropes. The conceptual metaphors shape perception; if overused, they may reify old paradigms rather than generate new consciousness [22], [28], [29]. Thus, while metaphor strengthens continuity within Indonesia's cultural memory, it can also limit innovation by confining writers to inherited symbolic repertoires. The implication is that political allegory's power depends on continual renewal of its figurative language to maintain cognitive freshness and moral force.

The patterned recurrence of metaphoric terms reflects deep cultural archetypes rooted in Indonesia's oral, religious, and colonial legacies. "Fire" and "blood" derive from both local myth and revolutionary rhetoric, functioning as archetypal symbols of purification and sacrifice; their persistence shows how collective trauma remains encoded in national imagination. Structurally, these terms link micro-narratives of individuals to macro-narratives of nationhood, fulfilling what Fawaid (2022) called the "mythos of liberation" [30]. "Mirror" and "silence," by contrast, emerge from introspective modernity—representing the internalization of power in post-authoritarian subjectivity [8]. Their lower frequency indicates a transition from public rebellion to private ethical reflection. Hence, the recurrence and hierarchy of metaphoric terms are not stylistic coincidence but structural reflection of Indonesia's evolving political psychology: from revolution to remembrance, from collective rage to self-critical maturity. Literature thus serves as both archive and therapy, narratively reconstructing the moral consciousness of Reformasi.

6. CONCLUSION

The most significant insight from this research lies in its revelation that metaphor functions as the core mechanism of political resistance in post-Reform Indonesian fiction. By analyzing narrative, symbolic, and discursive layers together, this study demonstrates how allegory transforms economic, ideological, and emotional experiences into vehicles of critique. The strength of this research lies in its *integrated methodological framework*—combining Narrative Analysis, Allegorical Interpretation, and Critical Discourse Analysis—which advances literary studies beyond thematic description toward *structural explanation*. It contributes to scholarship by renewing perspectives on post-authoritarian literature, showing that metaphor is not ornamental but epistemological: it generates knowledge about power, trauma, and justice in ways traditional political theory cannot.

However, this study's qualitative design and limited corpus mean its findings cannot represent the entire diversity of Indonesian post-Reform narratives. Variations in genre, region, and linguistic register remain underexplored. Future research should expand this model by incorporating *computational text-mining* or *cross-cultural comparison* to trace metaphor networks across broader Southeast Asian literatures. Such studies could integrate quantitative semantic mapping with critical hermeneutics, offering a more comprehensive understanding of how metaphor evolves as a regional discourse of democracy, resistance, and cultural healing in the post-authoritarian era.

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Refai: conceptualization (lead), literary analysis (lead), writing – original draft (lead), writing – review and editing (lead).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Authors state no conflict of interest.

INFORMED CONSENT

We have obtained informed consent from all individuals included in this study.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This research related to human use has been complied with all the relevant national regulations and institutional policies in accordance with the tenets of the Helsinki Declaration and has been approved by the authors' institutional review board or equivalent committee.

DATA AVAILABILITY

Data availability is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.




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