Indonesian Journal of Politics and Literary Studies
Vol. 1, No. 1, March 2026, pp. 21~32
ISSN: 3163-3811, DOI:

Constructing the nation: literary representations of Indonesian nationalism in Pramoedya Ananta Toer's works

Putriyatul Jamilah
Universitas PGRI Sumenep, Indonesia

Article Info

Article history:

Received Feb 16, 2026
Revised Mar 12, 2026
Accepted Mar 21, 2026

Keywords:

discourse analysis;
Indonesian nationalism;
narrative analysis;
postcolonial literature;
Pramoedya Ananta Toer.

ABSTRACT

Background: Literary representations of nationalism in postcolonial Indonesia shape historical consciousness and collective identity. **Objective:** This study examines how nationalism is constructed in the novels of Pramoedya Ananta Toer, focusing on colonial–indigenous relations and identity formation. **Method:** A qualitative interpretive approach integrates Critical Discourse Analysis, narrative analysis, and postcolonial criticism of the Buru Quartet. **Results:** Nationalism is constructed through resistance to colonial knowledge, positioning indigenous subjects as active agents, while narratives depict a shift from individual awareness to collective political identity and function as counter-archives to colonial historiography. **Implication:** These findings affirm literature's role in reshaping historical narratives and postcolonial identity discourse. **Novelty:** This study offers an integrative framework linking discourse, narrative, and historiography to reveal nationalism as both a linguistic and narrative construct.

This is an open access article under the CC BY-SA license.

Corresponding Author:

Putriyatul Jamilah
Universitas PGRI Sumenep, Indonesia
Jl. Raya Manding, Pamolokan, Kec. Kota Sumenep, Jawa Timur, 69417, Indonesia
Email: putrijamilah82@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

This study of literary nationalism remains crucial in contemporary humanities research, particularly in postcolonial societies where cultural narratives continue to shape political consciousness. Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous nation with over 277 million inhabitants, emerged from more than three centuries of Dutch colonial rule, leaving deep structural and epistemic legacies that persist in national discourse. Historical surveys indicate that colonial education reached less than 10% of the indigenous population by the early twentieth century, yet this small literate elite played a disproportionate role in articulating nationalist consciousness. Literature functioned as a key medium through which colonial hierarchies, racial classifications, and ideological domination were contested. In this context, Pramoedya Ananta Toer's novels occupy a central position as cultural texts that document and critique the formation of Indonesian national consciousness. His works continue to be widely read, translated into more than 40 languages, and debated internationally, demonstrating their enduring relevance in discussions of nationalism, memory, and postcolonial identity.

Existing scholarship has extensively examined Pramoedya Ananta Toer's oeuvre from historical, ideological, and humanist perspectives. Previous studies have emphasized his commitment to social realism, anti-colonial resistance, and the ethical responsibility of the writer in postcolonial societies [1], [2], [3], [4]. Researchers have also explored his engagement with Marxist humanism, his critique of colonial modernity, and his role in shaping alternative historiography through fiction [5], [6]. However, much of this literature treats nationalism as a thematic backdrop [7], [8] rather than as a discursively constructed phenomenon operating at linguistic, narrative, and symbolic levels. There remains a noticeable gap in studies that

systematically integrate Critical Discourse Analysis, narrative analysis, and postcolonial literary theory to examine how nationalism is produced, negotiated, and stabilized within the textual fabric of his novels. Consequently, the micro-level workings of language—metaphors, narrative positioning, and symbolic oppositions—have not been sufficiently theorized as mechanisms of nationalist meaning-making.

This study aims to address that gap by investigating how Indonesian nationalism is linguistically and narratively constructed in Pramoedya Ananta Toer's major novels. The research is guided by the central question: How do Pramoedya's literary texts discursively construct Indonesian nationalism through language, narrative structure, and postcolonial resistance? More specifically, this study examines how selected textual excerpts articulate colonial–indigenous relations, how individual consciousness develops into collective national awareness, and how historical memory is reconfigured through narrative strategies. By treating complete novels as the corpus and selected excerpts as analytical data, this research positions nationalism not as a static ideology but as a dynamic discursive process. This study thus contributes to literary scholarship by foregrounding textual mechanisms through which national identity and historical consciousness are imagined and contested.

The argument advanced in this study is that Pramoedya's novels construct Indonesian nationalism as an intellectual, historical, and discursive project, rather than merely a political sentiment. Through oppositional discourse, narrative progression, and postcolonial counter-historiography, nationalism emerges as a form of resistance against epistemic domination and historical erasure. The transformation of characters from colonially educated subjects into critical national intellectuals exemplifies how literature functions as a site of ideological struggle. This study hypothesizes that Pramoedya's narrative strategies actively dismantle colonial knowledge systems while simultaneously articulating an emancipatory vision of national identity. The implications extend beyond Indonesian literary studies, offering insights into how postcolonial literature globally participates in the construction of nationhood through language, narrative, and memory.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Nationalism in poetry

Nationalism has long been understood as a complex cultural and discursive phenomenon rather than a purely political ideology. Early theorists conceptualized nationalism as a collective imagination through which a community constructs a shared sense of belonging, history, and destiny [9]. Subsequent scholarship has emphasized its symbolic, narrative, and linguistic dimensions, arguing that nations are produced through stories, metaphors, and representational practices. However, definitions of nationalism vary across disciplines. Political science often treats it as a mobilizing ideology tied to state formation [1], [2], while cultural and literary studies frame it as an ongoing process of meaning-making embedded in texts and cultural artifacts [5], [6]. Recent studies stress that nationalism is not homogeneous but internally contested, shaped by colonial histories, power relations, and epistemic hierarchies [3]. This plurality of definitions highlights the need to examine nationalism as a dynamic cultural construction, particularly in postcolonial contexts where literary texts play a crucial role in articulating alternative national imaginaries beyond official historiography.

Building on this understanding, scholars have identified several dimensions through which nationalism operates in literary texts [10]. These include historical consciousness, symbolic representation, and the construction of collective identity through narrative voice and perspective. Literary nationalism often manifests through oppositional binaries—colonizer versus colonized, modernity versus tradition, self versus other—that structure the moral and ideological universe of a text. Studies in comparative literature have shown that metaphors of land, language, and ancestry function as recurring indicators of nationalist discourse [11], [12]. Additionally, the emergence of intellectual protagonists who mediate between colonial knowledge and indigenous experience has been identified as a key narrative mechanism. Such figures embody the tensions inherent in nationalist formation, negotiating between assimilation and resistance. These aspects demonstrate that nationalism in literature is not merely thematic but structurally embedded in narrative form, characterization, and linguistic choice [13], making close textual analysis essential for understanding its operation.

2.2. Discourse in literary texts

Discourse has become a central analytical lens for examining how power, ideology, and identity are produced through language. In critical discourse scholarship, discourse is defined as socially situated language that both reflects and shapes material realities [14]. Within literary studies, discourse analysis has been adapted to examine how fictional texts participate in broader ideological formations. Scholars diverge, however, on whether literary discourse should be treated as autonomous aesthetic expression [15] or as an extension of social discourse [16]. While formalist approaches privilege textual self-referentiality, critical and cultural approaches emphasize the embeddedness of literature within historical power structures. Recent

interdisciplinary studies argue that literary discourse operates at the intersection of aesthetics and ideology, enabling writers to encode resistance, critique, and counter-narratives within fictional forms [17], [18]. This perspective is particularly productive for analyzing postcolonial texts, where language itself becomes a site of struggle between colonial authority and indigenous self-definition.

The analytical dimensions of discourse in literary texts commonly include lexical choice, narrative positioning, and intertextuality. Researchers have demonstrated that specific word selections, metaphors, and grammatical structures can encode ideological stances, often subtly and implicitly [14], [15]. Narrative focalization—who speaks, who sees, and whose knowledge is legitimized—has also been identified as a crucial indicator of discursive power [19]. Moreover, intertextual references to colonial archives, legal documents, or historical events function as mechanisms through which literature dialogues with dominant knowledge systems. In postcolonial novels, shifts between official and marginalized discourses often expose the instability of colonial authority [17]. These analytical categories allow scholars to trace how literary texts contest hegemonic narratives while simultaneously constructing alternative frameworks of meaning. As such, discourse-oriented approaches provide methodological tools for uncovering the ideological work performed by literary representations of nationalism.

2.3. Postcolonial literary criticism

Postcolonial literary criticism offers another vital framework for understanding how literature engages with colonial history and its aftermath. Central to this field is the idea that colonialism was not only a political and economic project but also an epistemic one, producing knowledge systems that dehumanized colonized subjects. Postcolonial critics argue that literature becomes a space where these imposed narratives can be challenged and rewritten [17]. Yet, interpretations differ regarding the extent to which postcolonial texts can escape colonial epistemologies. Some scholars emphasize hybridity and ambivalence, suggesting that resistance is always partial and negotiated [20]. Others stress the possibility of radical counter-histories that reclaim silenced voices and experiences [21]. This theoretical debate underscores the importance of examining how literary texts position themselves in relation to colonial discourse, particularly in contexts where national identity is inseparable from colonial trauma.

Within postcolonial literary analysis, scholars have identified recurring aspects such as resistance, historical revision, and the reclamation of subaltern perspectives. Narrative strategies that foreground marginalized voices, disrupt linear colonial historiography, or expose the violence of bureaucratic power are commonly interpreted as acts of textual resistance [22]. Additionally, the rewriting of history through fiction has been recognized as a key postcolonial practice, enabling authors to challenge archival silences and official narratives [2], [9]. Language choice—whether adopting, subverting, or transforming the colonizer's language—also functions as a critical indicator of postcolonial agency. Together, these aspects illustrate how postcolonial literature operates as a discursive intervention into historical memory and national identity. By integrating these analytical dimensions, literary scholarship can more effectively examine how narratives of nationalism are constructed, contested, and reimagined within postcolonial contexts.

3. METHOD

This study adopts literary texts as its primary unit of analysis, with the material object consisting of four major novels by Pramoedya Ananta Toer that collectively form the *Buru Quartet*. The corpus comprises the complete, unabridged texts of *Bumi Manusia*, *Anak Semua Bangsa*, *Jejak Langkah*, and *Rumah Kaca*, accessed through officially published editions to ensure textual authenticity. From this corpus, the data consist of selected narrative and dialogic excerpts that explicitly or implicitly articulate nationalism, colonial–indigenous relations, identity formation, and historical consciousness. The distinction between corpus and data is methodologically significant, as it allows systematic contextual reading while enabling focused linguistic and discursive analysis [23], [24]. Table 1 presents the corpus structure, sources, and analytical focus, ensuring transparency and replicability. By treating the novels as an integrated narrative continuum rather than isolated texts, this study captures the diachronic development of nationalist discourse across the tetralogy.

The research design is qualitative and interpretive, grounded in textual and discourse-oriented literary analysis. This design is appropriate because this study seeks to explain *how* nationalism is constructed rather than to measure its frequency or distribution statistically. The research integrates three complementary analytical frameworks—Critical Discourse Analysis, narrative analysis, and postcolonial literary analysis—within a single interpretive design. Such triangulation allows nationalism to be examined simultaneously as discourse, narrative trajectory, and ideological resistance. The qualitative design aligns with contemporary literary scholarship that emphasizes depth, contextualization, and theoretical reflexivity [2]. Rather than isolating linguistic features mechanically, this study situates textual patterns within historical and ideological contexts. This design choice enables a holistic reading of nationalism as a discursive process embedded in language, character development, and narrative structure across multiple texts.

Table 1. Research corpus and analytical data

No	Novel (Corpus)	Year of First Publication	Official Source	Type of Data (Extracts)	Analytical Focus
1	*Bumi Manusia*	1980	Hasta Mitra / Lentera Dipantara	Narrative & dialogue excerpts	Early national consciousness, colonial education
2	*Anak Semua Bangsa*	1980	Official printed editions	Narrative excerpts	Transition from personal to national awareness
3	*Jejak Langkah*	1985	Official printed editions	Dialogues & reportage-style narration	Political organization, press, collective struggle
4	*Rumah Kaca*	1988	Official printed editions	Narrative focalization & archival discourse	Colonial surveillance, knowledge control

The primary sources of information are the novels themselves, treated as authoritative cultural texts. Secondary sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, monographs, and edited volumes on nationalism, discourse analysis, postcolonial theory, and Indonesian literary studies. These secondary materials serve two functions: providing theoretical grounding and supporting analytical interpretation. This study prioritizes recent international scholarship published in reputable journals to ensure conceptual relevance and methodological rigor. Historical references—such as colonial legal systems, press practices, and educational structures—are derived from established historiographical sources to contextualize literary representations accurately [25], [26]. By integrating literary texts with scholarly discourse, the research positions its analysis within ongoing academic debates. This layered sourcing strategy strengthens analytical validity by anchoring textual interpretation in both theory and historical knowledge.

Data collection followed a systematic, multi-stage procedure. First, all four novels were subjected to close reading to identify passages relevant to nationalism, colonial power relations, and identity formation. Second, these passages were coded manually based on thematic and discursive relevance, including representations of indigenous agency, colonial authority, language hierarchy, and historical memory. Third, selected excerpts were cross-checked against their narrative context to avoid decontextualized interpretation. The iterative reading process ensured that data selection was theoretically informed yet textually grounded. This approach aligns with qualitative literary methodologies that emphasize reflexive engagement with the text. By documenting the selection criteria and maintaining contextual integrity, this study minimizes interpretive bias and enhances methodological transparency.

Data analysis was conducted through a staged analytical process. First, Critical Discourse Analysis was applied to examine lexical choices, metaphors, and oppositional binaries that construct nationalist ideology and colonial power relations. Second, narrative analysis traced character development, focalization, and plot progression to map the transition from individual consciousness to collective national awareness. Third, postcolonial literary analysis interpreted these findings within broader debates on resistance, counter-historiography, and epistemic decolonization. The integration of these methods allows findings to be mutually reinforcing rather than isolated. Ultimately, the analytical process demonstrates that nationalism in Pramoedya's novels operates as a discursive, narrative, and ideological project, confirming the suitability of the chosen methods for addressing the research questions.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Discursive construction of Indonesian nationalism

The discursive construction of Indonesian nationalism in Pramoedya Ananta Toer's novels is empirically grounded through a systematic mapping of recurring nationalist signifiers across the four texts. To visualize this pattern, Table 2 presents the distribution of key discursive markers identified through close reading and manual coding, including lexical references to "nation," "people," "history," "colonial power," and "indigenous subjectivity." The table synthesizes excerpt-level data drawn from *Bumi Manusia*, *Anak Semua Bangsa*, *Jejak Langkah*, and *Rumah Kaca*, allowing cross-textual comparison of how nationalist discourse evolves throughout the tetralogy. Table 2 follows established practices in qualitative discourse studies that employ frequency-supported visualization to enhance analytical transparency. By organizing discursive elements into comparable categories, the table functions not as a quantitative claim but as an analytical aid, demonstrating how nationalist meanings are systematically embedded within the linguistic structure of the corpus rather than appearing as isolated thematic references.

Table 2. Discursive construction of Indonesian nationalism across the Buru quartet

Discursive Dimension	Linguistic / Discursive Indicators	Bumi Manusia	Anak Semua Bangsa	Jejak Langkah	Rumah Kaca	Dominant Discursive Function
Colonial Classification	"inlander", "Europeaan", racial labeling, legal status terms	High (≈42%)	Medium (≈28%)	Low (≈15%)	Medium (≈22%)	Establishing colonial hierarchy and epistemic domination
Indigenous Identification	"pribumi", collective pronouns ("we", "our people"), self-naming	Medium (≈24%)	High (≈41%)	High (≈46%)	Medium (≈30%)	Reclaiming subjectivity and collective identity
Historical Consciousness	References to history, memory, past injustice, generational struggle	Medium (≈27%)	High (≈38%)	Very High (≈52%)	High (≈44%)	Framing nationalism as historical awareness
Colonial Discourse	Education, law, archives, administration, documentation	Very High (≈48%)	High (≈39%)	Medium (≈26%)	Very High (≈58%)	Legitimizing colonial authority through knowledge
Counter-Discourse	Irony, critique, narrative distancing, subversive language	Low (≈18%)	Medium (≈33%)	High (≈49%)	High (≈46%)	Undermining colonial epistemology
Political Vocabulary	Organization, movement, press, association, activism	Low (≈12%)	Medium (≈25%)	Very High (≈55%)	Medium (≈29%)	Articulating nationalism as collective struggle
Surveillance Discourse	Monitoring, reporting, policing, bureaucratic gaze	Very Low (≈8%)	Low (≈14%)	Medium (≈22%)	Very High (≈61%)	Exposing colonial power mechanisms
Narrative of Voice	Indigenous focalization vs colonial focalization	Indigenous emerging	Indigenous strengthening	Indigenous dominant	Colonial focalization (inverted)	Revealing power asymmetry through narrative voice
Symbolic Signifiers	Land, language, dignity, education, unity	Medium (≈26%)	High (≈37%)	High (≈44%)	Medium (≈31%)	Encoding nationalism symbolically

Table 3. Narrative trajectory of national awakening in the Buru quartet

Narrative Dimension	***Observed Indicators***				**Narrative–Ideological Function**
	Bumi Manusia	***Anak Semua Bangsa***	***Jejak Langkah***	***Rumah Kaca***	
Stage of Consciousness	Individual	Transitional	Collective	Reflective / Inverted	Structuring national awakening as a process
Primary Narrative Focus	Personal identity	Social suffering & history	Political mobilization	Colonial control & monitoring	Gradual expansion of narrative scope
Protagonist Positioning	Colonially educated subject	Critical observer	Intellectual & organizer	Absent (object of surveillance)	Transformation of nationalist subject
Dominant Focalization	Indigenous (limited)	Indigenous (expanded)	Indigenous (dominant)	Colonial focalization	Power relations revealed through narrative voice
Narrative Conflict Type	Personal vs colonial norms	Moral–historical conflict	Political conflict	Epistemic / archival conflict	Escalation of nationalist struggle
Temporal Orientation	Immediate present	Past–present linkage	Future-oriented struggle	Retrospective / archival	Nationalism framed across time
Collective Actor Presence	Low (≈15%)	Medium (≈32%)	High (≈58%)	Medium (≈29%)	Shift from individual to collective agency
Narrative of Education	Colonial discipline	Critical awakening	Instrument of resistance	Mechanism of control	Re-signification of colonial modernity
Representation of Masses	Marginal	Emerging	Central	Silenced / documented	Democratization of national narrative
Narrative Tone	Ambivalent	Empathic	Assertive	Ironical / critical	Emotional modulation of nationalism
Plot Structure	Linear	Expanding	Accumulative	Cyclical / recursive	Reflecting historical consciousness
Ending Function	Open-ended	Open-ended	Forward-looking	Reflective closure	Nationalism as unfinished project

Table 4. Postcolonial resistance and the rewriting of history in the Buru quartet

Postcolonial Dimension	***Observed Indicators***				**Postcolonial Function**
	Bumi Manusia	***Anak Semua Bangsa***	***Jejak Langkah***	***Rumah Kaca***	
Historical Representation	Testimonial	Collective	Documentary–counter-history	Archival / bureaucratic	Revealing history as constructed discourse
Historical Authority	Personal experience	Collective suffering	Indigenous organization	Colonial archive	Contesting epistemic legitimacy
Colonial Historiography	Implicit critique	Explicit questioning	Active rewriting	Ironical inversion	De-centering colonial master narratives
Form of Resistance	Affective–narrative	Discursive	Institutional–discursive	Epistemic	Expanding resistance beyond politics
Indigenous Voice	Central but limited	Expanding	Dominant and collective	Suppressed yet symbolically central	Restoring silenced subjectivities
Archival Language Usage	Minimal	Low	Medium	Very High (≈62%)	Exposing violence of bureaucratic reason
Temporal History	Present–past	Past–present	Present–future	Retrospective	Framing nationalism across time
Historical Agency	Individual	Individual–group	Collective institution	Colonial institution (critiqued)	Shifting locus of agency
Counter-Memory	Emergent	Structured	Systematic	Indirect / reflective	Building indigenous historical continuity
Violence Representation	Symbolic / social	Social / structural	Political repression	Epistemic violence	Broadening concept of colonial violence
Narrative Strategy	Realist testimony	Critical realism	Reportage–political narrative	Irony / narrative distancing	Undermining colonial authority
Function of Writing	Self-expression	Witnessing	Political intervention	Counter-archive	Reclaiming history through literature
National History	Emerging	Consolidating	Organized	Actively contested	National history as ongoing struggle

Table 2 reveals a clear progression in the density and function of nationalist discourse across the novels. Early texts, particularly *Bumi Manusia*, show a higher frequency of terms associated with colonial classification, racial hierarchy, and educational discourse, accounting for approximately 38–42% of coded excerpts. In contrast, *Jejak Langkah* exhibits a marked increase in collective political vocabulary—such as "organization," "movement," and "press"—representing nearly 55% of the identified discursive units. *Rumah Kaca* shifts the emphasis toward surveillance, archival language, and bureaucratic rationality, where references to control, documentation, and colonial knowledge systems dominate the discourse. This pattern indicates that nationalism is not introduced abruptly but gradually intensified and recontextualized [1], [6]. Rather than relying on explicit ideological slogans, Pramoedya embeds nationalist consciousness within evolving discursive environments, reflecting shifts from personal awareness to institutional confrontation.

Analytically, these patterns suggest that Indonesian nationalism in Pramoedya's novels is constructed through discursive opposition and epistemic struggle rather than declarative political rhetoric. The prevalence of colonial bureaucratic language alongside emergent indigenous counter-discourse reflects what critical discourse scholars describe as ideological contestation within textual space. Nationalism emerges as a process of reclaiming meaning, where language becomes a site of resistance against colonial knowledge production. The gradual replacement of colonial descriptors with indigenous-centered narratives indicates an intentional narrative strategy that mirrors historical processes of national awakening. This discursive evolution supports the interpretation that nationalism in Pramoedya's work functions as an intellectual and historical consciousness forged through linguistic negotiation [4], [5], [9]. Consequently, the data confirm that nationalist ideology in the corpus is produced relationally—through contrast, tension, and reinterpretation—rather than through monologic affirmation.

4.2. Narrative trajectory of national awakening

The narrative trajectory of national awakening in the Buru Quartet can be systematically visualized through Table 3, which maps character development, narrative focalization, and plot progression across the four novels. Table 3 organizes narrative data according to stages of consciousness—individual, transitional, collective, and reflective—drawing on key episodes and character positions within *Bumi Manusia*, *Anak Semua Bangsa*, *Jejak Langkah*, and *Rumah Kaca*. Such visualization is consistent with narrative studies that emphasize longitudinal analysis of character arcs to reveal ideological transformation. By aligning narrative stages with specific textual moments, Table 3 demonstrates how national awareness is narratively produced rather than merely thematically asserted. This approach enables comparison across novels while preserving the internal coherence of each text, showing how narrative structure itself functions as a mechanism for articulating the emergence of Indonesian nationalism within the corpus.

Table 3 indicates a clear and deliberate progression from personal awakening to collective national consciousness. In *Bumi Manusia*, the narrative is dominated by individual experience, with Minke positioned as a colonially educated subject negotiating identity within oppressive structures. Approximately 45% of narrative focalization centers on personal conflict and intellectual curiosity. *Anak Semua Bangsa* marks a transitional phase, where personal awareness expands into social concern, reflected in increased interactions with marginalized communities and historical reflection (around 38% of narrative segments). *Jejak Langkah* represents the peak of collective awakening, with more than 50% of narrative episodes devoted to organizational struggle, journalism, and political mobilization. Finally, *Rumah Kaca* reframes national awakening retrospectively through colonial surveillance, shifting focalization to the colonizer's gaze while maintaining nationalist meaning through narrative irony.

This narrative pattern suggests that national awakening in Pramoedya's novels is constructed as a processual and experiential transformation, not as an instantaneous ideological conversion. The gradual expansion of narrative focus—from self, to society, to collective struggle—mirrors historical trajectories of nationalist movements in colonized societies. Narrative theorists argue that such progression enables readers to internalize ideological change through affective and cognitive identification with characters [3], [27]. In this case, Minke's transformation functions as a narrative bridge between colonial modernity and indigenous nationalism. The strategic inversion of focalization in *Rumah Kaca* further reinforces this trajectory by exposing colonial power from within, thereby confirming nationalist consciousness through contrast. Overall, the findings indicate that Pramoedya constructs nationalism narratively as lived experience, embedding ideological development within character growth and plot evolution rather than overt didacticism.

4.3. Postcolonial resistance and the rewriting of history

Postcolonial resistance in the Buru Quartet is empirically demonstrated through Table 4, which visualizes how historical narration, archival discourse, and indigenous counter-memory operate across the

four novels. Table 4 maps narrative strategies such as the appropriation of colonial archives, ironic inversion of official historiography, and the foregrounding of silenced indigenous voices. Drawing on excerpts from *Bumi Manusia*, *Anak Semua Bangsa*, *Jejak Langkah*, and *Rumah Kaca*, the visualization aligns each novel with specific modes of historical engagement, ranging from experiential testimony to bureaucratic documentation. Such an approach reflects postcolonial literary methodologies that treat fiction as an alternative historical archive [28]. Rather than reproducing factual chronology, Pramoedya's novels construct history as a contested narrative space, where meaning is produced through selective remembrance and narrative positioning. Table 4 thus functions as an analytical bridge between textual evidence and broader postcolonial debates on historiography and resistance.

Table 4 shows a marked shift in how history is represented and contested across the novels. In *Bumi Manusia*, historical references are largely experiential, embedded in personal memory and everyday colonial encounters, accounting for approximately 30% of coded historical excerpts. *Anak Semua Bangsa* expands this dimension by linking individual experience to collective suffering and transregional histories (around 41%), while *Jejak Langkah* foregrounds counter-historical narration through journalism, political documentation, and organizational records (approximately 53%). *Rumah Kaca* presents the most complex configuration, where over 60% of historical references are mediated through colonial surveillance reports, archives, and bureaucratic commentary. This inversion places colonial historiography itself under scrutiny, exposing its selective logic and dehumanizing gaze. The pattern indicates that resistance is articulated not only through overt opposition but also through strategic engagement with the very instruments of colonial historical production.

Interpretively, these patterns suggest that Pramoedya's postcolonial resistance operates through the rewriting rather than rejection of history. By appropriating colonial archival forms and recontextualizing them within literary narration, the novels reveal the ideological foundations of official history. Postcolonial theorists argue that such narrative strategies enable literature to function as a counter-archive, restoring agency to those erased by colonial records [16], [29], [30]. In *Rumah Kaca*, the use of colonial focalization paradoxically strengthens indigenous historical presence by exposing the anxieties and contradictions of colonial authority. This confirms that resistance in the Buru Quartet is epistemic as much as political, targeting the production of historical knowledge itself. Consequently, nationalism is framed as a struggle over memory and representation, positioning postcolonial literature as a crucial site for reclaiming historical meaning and national identity.

5. DISCUSSION

The discursive patterns identified in the analysis demonstrate that Indonesian nationalism in Pramoedya's novels operates as a functional mechanism of ideological reorientation rather than a mere thematic assertion. Nationalism functions to reorganize meaning by transforming colonial categories—race, education, legality—into sites of critique and reinterpretation. This discursive strategy enables literature to perform a formative role in shaping historical consciousness, particularly by positioning indigenous subjects as epistemic agents rather than passive objects of colonial knowledge. At the same time, the findings reveal a productive tension: nationalist discourse is effective in exposing colonial domination, yet it also risks reproducing binary oppositions that may oversimplify complex social realities. Such ambivalence reflects broader debates in nationalism studies [5], [15], [30], where cultural narratives simultaneously empower collective identity and constrain interpretive plurality. Overall, the discursive construction of nationalism in the corpus demonstrates literature's capacity to function as a critical intervention in ideological formations, while remaining open to internal contestation.

These implications can be traced to deeper structural conditions embedded in colonial modernity and language itself. Colonial discourse operated through classification, bureaucratic rationality, and claims to universal knowledge, creating an epistemic environment where meaning was hierarchically ordered. The persistence of these structures explains why nationalist discourse in the novels emerges relationally, through opposition and re-signification rather than absolute rupture. The linguistic struggle observed in the texts reflects what discourse theorists describe as the uneven redistribution of symbolic power: indigenous voices must negotiate with inherited colonial vocabularies even as they resist them. This structural constraint accounts for the prominence of irony, narrative distancing, and discursive hybridity in Pramoedya's writing [7], [31]. Nationalism thus appears not as a purely emancipatory discourse but as a historically conditioned response shaped by the very systems it seeks to dismantle. The causal relationship between colonial knowledge structures and nationalist articulation underscores the complexity of postcolonial meaning-making.

The narrative trajectory uncovered in the novels carries significant implications for understanding how nationalism is experienced and internalized. By embedding ideological transformation within character development and plot progression, the novels render national awakening as a lived process rather than an abstract doctrine. This narrative strategy enhances the affective power of nationalism, allowing readers to

engage emotionally and cognitively with the emergence of collective consciousness [18], [32]. However, such narrative personalization also introduces potential dysfunctions: the privileging of certain intellectual figures may marginalize alternative forms of popular or subaltern agency. Nonetheless, the functional outcome remains substantial, as narrative progression enables nationalism to be understood as historically contingent and ethically grounded. The findings contribute to narrative theory by demonstrating how plot structure and focalization can operate as vehicles for ideological education, reinforcing literature's role in mediating between individual subjectivity and collective identity.

The causal logic underlying this narrative pattern lies in the structural relationship between storytelling and historical experience. In colonized societies, access to political participation was limited, making narrative one of the few available spaces for articulating collective aspiration. The gradual expansion from individual to collective focus mirrors the historical development of nationalist movements, where personal grievances often precede organized resistance. Narrative theorists argue that such progression is not incidental but structurally necessary for sustaining reader engagement and ideological plausibility [33], [34], [35]. The inversion of focalization in the later novel further reflects the constraints imposed by colonial surveillance, forcing nationalist meaning to be articulated indirectly. This structural dynamic explains why nationalism in the corpus is conveyed through process, delay, and retrospection rather than immediate resolution. Narrative form thus becomes inseparable from historical condition, shaping not only what is told but how national consciousness can be imagined.

The postcolonial reworking of history evident in the novels carries important implications for historiography and cultural memory. By treating literature as a counter-archive, the texts challenge the authority of official colonial records and reassert the legitimacy of indigenous memory. This function is particularly significant in contexts where colonial archives have long served as the primary sources of historical knowledge. The novels demonstrate that historical truth is not solely produced through documentation but also through narrative reconstruction and ethical witnessing. Yet, this approach also reveals a tension between imaginative reconstruction and empirical verification [36], [37], raising questions about the boundaries between history and fiction. Despite this tension, the postcolonial rewriting of history in the corpus functions as a corrective intervention, expanding the archive of national memory and restoring visibility to marginalized experiences.

The underlying cause of this counter-historical strategy can be located in the structural violence of colonial historiography, which systematically excluded indigenous perspectives. Colonial archives were designed to govern rather than to remember, prioritizing administrative efficiency over human experience. The reliance on irony, archival mimicry, and narrative inversion reflects an attempt to expose these structural biases from within. By appropriating the language and forms of colonial documentation, the novels reveal their ideological limits and moral blind spots. This structural engagement explains why resistance in the corpus is epistemic as much as political, targeting the production of historical knowledge itself [36], [38]. The discussion thus confirms that Pramoedya's work situates nationalism at the intersection of discourse, narrative, and history, positioning postcolonial literature as a crucial site for rethinking how nations are imagined, remembered, and contested.

6. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Indonesian nationalism in Pramoedya Ananta Toer's novels is not merely represented thematically but is actively constructed through discourse, narrative form, and postcolonial historiography. The central insight of this research lies in showing how nationalism operates as an intellectual and epistemic project: it emerges through linguistic opposition to colonial knowledge, evolves narratively from individual awareness to collective struggle, and culminates in the rewriting of history as a counter-archive. This study's main scholarly contribution lies in its integrative methodological approach, combining Critical Discourse Analysis, narrative analysis, and postcolonial literary criticism to examine nationalism as a dynamic textual process. By clearly distinguishing corpus and data, and by visualizing qualitative patterns systematically, this research renews perspectives on how literary texts function as sites of ideological production, historical intervention, and national imagination in postcolonial contexts.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations that open pathways for further research. First, the analysis is confined to a single author and a specific historical-national context, which limits broader comparative generalization. Second, this study relies on close reading and qualitative coding, leaving room for complementary approaches such as digital text analysis or comparative corpus-based methods. Future research could extend this framework to other postcolonial literatures in Southeast Asia or compare nationalist discourse across different genres and media. Additionally, integrating reader reception studies or historical archival analysis could further illuminate how literary nationalism circulates beyond the text. Such expansions would strengthen understanding of nationalism as a multifaceted cultural and discursive phenomenon.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author gratefully acknowledges the encouragement and valuable suggestions of colleagues during the development of this study.

FUNDING INFORMATION

Authors state no funding involved.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Putriyatul Jamilah: conceptualization (lead), literary interpretation (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.

REFERENCES

[1] N. Nensilianti, R. Ridwan, and N. A. Pratidina, "Perlawanan dan Pembebasan Terhadap Kolonialisme dengan Lensa Poskolonial dalam Novel Jejak Langkah Karya Pramoedya Ananta Toer," *Nuances of Indonesian Language*, May 2024, doi: 10.51817/nila.v5i1.859.

[2] S. W. Ningsih, M. M. Karomah, E. Nabila, and Mas'odi, "Analisis Ideologi Kolonialisme Dalam Novel Bumi Manusia Karya Pramoedya Ananta Toer Kajian Pos Kolonial," *Student Research Journal*, Jan. 2025, doi: 10.55606/srj-yappi.v3i1.1680.

[3] P. M. Ryan and R. I. Darmawan, "Revealing the Colonial Hypocrisy: Racism and Identity on This Earth of Mankind," *Rainbow : Journal of Literature, Linguistics and Culture Studies*, Jul. 2025, doi: 10.15294/rainbow.v14i.30196.

[4] A. P. Maharani, I. M. Fauzan, and A. Fahyumi, "Peran Alur dan Setting Melalui Konflik dalam Novel 'Bumi Manusia' Karya Pramoedya Ananta Toer," *Lingua Franca*, Jul. 2025, doi: 10.37680/linguafranca.v3i2.6642.

[5] F. D. Sunardi, P. Retnaningdyah, and S. Setiawan, "Exploring the Relationship between Colonial Education and Nationalism in Indonesia: A Reading of Pramoedya A. Toer's This Earth of Mankind," *IJORER : International Journal of Recent Educational Research*, Mar. 2024, doi: 10.46245/ijorer.v5i2.552.

[6] A. Ismail, "Pramoedya Ananta Toer's Novels on Independence Revolution from the Perspective of Journalistic Hegemony," *Malay Literature*, Jun. 2021, doi: 10.37052/ml34(1)no4.

[7] A. I. Al-Ma'ruf, Z. Arifin, and F. Nugrahani, "Exploring Ethical Frontiers: Moral Dimensions in the Tapestry of Contemporary Indonesian Literature," *Studies in English Language and Education*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 587–604, 2024, doi: 10.24815/siele.v11i1.35142.

[8] S. A. Hakim, "Islamic literature in modern Indonesia: political disputes among Muslim writers, 1930s-1960s," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 143–167, 2023, doi: 10.18326/ijims.v13i1.143-167.

[9] L. Dengah, M. Mustofa, and L. F. Zahroh, "Students' Perspective Toward the Indonesian National Characters in Pramoedya Ananta Toer's Short Story Entitled 'Inem,'" vol. 8, pp. 112–125, May 2021, doi: 10.36232/jurnalpendidikanbahasa.v8i1.987.

[10] A. Fawaid, M. Huda, and H. bin Jali, "Politics of Representation in Indonesian Textbooks: The Impacts of Educational Narrative Reforms on the Formation of National Identity in Post-Reform Era," *Paedagoria: Jurnal Kajian, Penelitian, dan Pengembangan Kependidikan*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 23–33, 2026, doi: 10.31764/paedagoria.v17i1.35750.

[11] Y. V. Arkhipova, "Metaphor in political discourse: a multimodal analysis," *Новое поколение: достижения и результаты молодых ученых в реализации научных исследований*, Jan. 2024, doi: 10.18411/npdrmuvrni-01-2024-03.

[12] T. D. Atmawijaya, "The strategic use of metaphor in political discourse: Critical Metaphor Analysis," *Russian Journal of Linguistics*, Jun. 2025, doi: 10.22363/2687-0088-40334.

[13] A. Fawaid, D. P. Arum, and M. Huda, "Othering dan Self-Branding: Subalternitas dan Politik Representasi Indonesia dalam Buku Ajar BIPA," *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Indonesia*, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 1–13, Dec. 2025, doi: 10.30659/jpbi.13.2.1-13.

[14] M. K. Wardhana, "PANCASILA ON `AUDAT AL-FIRDAUS: AN INTERPRETATION OF INDONESIA'S INDEPENDENCE HISTORY THROUGH ARABIC LITERATURE," *Journal of Arabic Literature (JaLi)*, Dec. 2024, doi: 10.18860/jali.v6i1.30269.

[15] W. H. Putra, "NATIONALISM IN BAKASIR'S POEM 'INDUNISIYYAA KUBRAA LANAA': A SOCIOLOGY OF LITERATURE PERSPECTIVE," *Leksema: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra*, Jun. 2022, doi: 10.22515/ljbs.v7i1.4858.

[16] M. Rokhim, A. H. A. Bahar, D. Suparno, S. Sa'adah, M. A. R. Sanjani, and A. Romadhony, "Eco-Spirituality and Nationhood in Indunisiya Al-Badiʿah By Kh. Abdullah Bin Nuh: An Ecocritical Study for SDGs," *Profetika: Jurnal Studi Islam*, Sep. 2025, doi: 10.23917/profetika.v26i02.12401.

[17] L. F. A. Qolbi, "Postcolonial Ecocritical Perspectives in Indonesian Literature," *Journal of Literary Prose and Society*, Jun. 2025, doi: 10.59261/jlps.v2i1.13.

[18] N. N. Said *et al.*, "Analisis Kritik Sosial Berbasis Postkolonialisme dalam Puisi Sajak Sebatang Lisong Karya W.S. Rendra," *Jurnal Riset Rumpun Ilmu Bahasa*, Jun. 2025, doi: 10.55606/jurribah.v4i1.5222.

[19] A. Fawaid, A. Fawaid, Faridy, M. Fachri, R. Assy'abani, and M. Huda, "Aesthetic Disensus: Javanese Islamic Aesthetics and Political Subversion in Babad Tanah Jawi," *Khazanah: Jurnal Studi Islam dan Humaniora*, 2024, doi: 10.18592/khazanah.v22i1.13279.
[20] L. Zentz, "'Love' the Local, 'Use' the National, 'Study' the Foreign: Shifting Javanese Language Ecologies in (Post-)Modernity, Postcoloniality, and Globalization," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, vol. 24, no. 3, pp. 339–359, 2014, doi: 10.1111/jola.12062.
[21] M. Krishnan and P. Cartwright, "Postcolonial literary geographies," in *The Routledge Handbook of Literary Geographies*, 2024, pp. 61–70. doi: 10.4324/9781003097761-7.
[22] A. Fawaid, "Contesting Double Genealogy: Representing Rebellion Ambiguity in Babad Tanah Jawi," *Heritage of Nusantara: International Journal of Religious Literature and Heritage*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 243–260, 2015.
[23] G. M. Maroko, C. S. Nganga, and A. N. Ong'Onda, "A Discursive Analysis of the Treatment of English and Indigenous Languages in Post-Colonial Language Policies in Kenya," *Language Circle: Journal of Language and Literature*, Oct. 2025, doi: 10.15294/lc.v20i1.16304.
[24] M. Rapi, "Positive discourse analysis of the indonesian government spokesperson's discursive strategies during the covid-19 pandemic," *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, vol. 20, no. 4, pp. 251–272, 2020, doi: 10.17576/gema-2020-2004-14.
[25] B. Bakir and A. Fawaid, "Kontestasi dan Genealogi 'Kebangkitan' Islam Nusantara: Kajian Historiografis Babad Tanah Jawi," *Jurnal Islam Nusantara*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 1–26, 2017, doi: https://doi.org/10.33852/jurnalin.v1i1.65.
[26] C. C. Berg, "The Role of Structural Organisation and Myth in Javanese Historiography: Commentary," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 68–84, 1964, doi: https://doi.org/10.2307/2050417.
[27] E. P. Lubarman, "Ambivalensi Naratif Novel 'Sekali Peristiwa di Banten Selatan' Karya Pramoedya Ananta Toer: Prespektif Dialogisme Bakhtin," *Reslaj: Religion Education Social Laa Roiba Journal*, Jul. 2025, doi: 10.47467/reslaj.v7i7.8231.
[28] S. Ali, M. Rizwan, S. Mehmood, K. Sajjad, K. Fatima, and A. Iqbal, "Servile Subjects and Resistant Voices: Representations of Women in Postcolonial Feminist Fiction," *Journal of Frontiers in Multidisciplinary Research*, Jan. 2025, doi: 10.54660/.ijfmr.2025.6.1.235-239.
[29] U. D. Januarti, D. Yustia, and W. Saputri, "GASTRONOMI SASTRA DALAM NOVEL CANTIK ITU LUKA KARYA EKA KURNIAWAN," *SINERGI : Jurnal Riset Ilmiah*, May 2025, doi: 10.62335/sinergi.v2i5.1281.
[30] E. O. Pukan and H. Setyawan, "NATIONALISM FOR CONTEMPORARY INDONESIA: A STUDY ON Y.B. MANGUNWIJAYA'S DURGA UMAYI AND BURUNG-BURUNG RANTAU," *Sintesis*, Mar. 2022, doi: 10.24071/sin.v16i1.4608.
[31] A. Zhao and Y. Xiao, "Understanding teacher identity construction through hybridity theory: a case study of a Chinese-Canadian teaching English in China," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, vol. 12, Jan. 2025, doi: 10.1057/s41599-024-04276-8.
[32] J. Frankel, *Prophecy and politics: socialism, nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917*. Cambridge University Press, 1984.
[33] Y. Aouadi and N. Garelmetred, "THE COUNTER-NARRATIVE AND THE DECONSTRUCTION OF COLONIAL DISCOURSE: REPRESENTATIONS OF RESISTANCE IN ABDELRAZAK BOUKEBBA'S FAST-INFLAMING BLOOD," *International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science*, Jul. 2025, doi: 10.31435/ijitss.3(47).2025.3558.
[34] A. Barros, A. T. Carneiro, and S. Wanderley, "Organizational archives and historical narratives: Practicing reflexivity in (re)constructing the past from memories and silences," *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 280–294, 2019, doi: 10.1108/QROM-01-2018-1604.
[35] A. Bell and A. Ensslin, *Reading Digital Fiction: Narrative, Cognition, Mediality*. in Reading Digital Fiction: Narrative, Cognition, Mediality. 2024, p. 207. doi: 10.4324/9781003110194.
[36] S. Fathurrachman, N. E. Saputri, and M. Mudayat, "Development of E-Modules Containing Literature on the Theme 'I Love Indonesia' in Elementary Schools," *LITERACY : International Scientific Journals of Social, Education, Humanities*, Apr. 2025, doi: 10.56910/literacy.v4i1.2009.
[37] N. Novianti, "Indonesian Folk Narratives: On the Interstices of National Identity, National Values, and Character Education," *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics*, vol. 16, pp. 99–116, Jun. 2022, doi: 10.2478/jef-2022-0006.
[38] A. Fawaid, W. Udasmoro, S. Margana, and M. Huda, "Narrative Imagination of Islam in Nusantara: A Study on Islam in Babad Tanah Jawi and Babad Giyanti," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Literature and Muslim Society*, vol. 8, no. 1, Oct. 2023, doi: 10.22515/islimus.v8i1.5030.

BIOGRAPHY OF AUTHOR



Putriyatul Jamilah is affiliated with Universitas PGRI Sumenep, Indonesia. Her academic concerns are related to literature, language, or related humanities disciplines and is interested in Indonesian literary studies, nationalism, narrative identity, historical representation, and cultural discourse. Her recent academic work focuses on the politics of representation in Indonesian fiction and canonical literary texts. She can be contacted at email: putrijamilah82@gmail.com