Rewriting the Sacred: Mythopoesis and Cultural Identity in Contemporary Indonesian Novels

Ria Kasanova[1], Mohammad Rudiyanto[2]
[1,2] Universitas Madura, Madura, Indonesia
Corresponding author, email: kasanovaria@unira.c.id

Artikel Info	Abstrak

This study aims to analyse the processes of mythopoesis in the contemporary Indonesian novels *Tanah Tabu* by Anindita S. Thayf, *Burung-Burung Manyar* by Y.B. Mangunwijaya, and *Para Priyayi* by Umar Kayam in reconstructing myths and articulating plural and dynamic cultural identities. The methodology used was a qualitative analysis with a literary discourse approach that emphasised contextual and critical interpretations of the text. The main focus of this research is the patterns of mythopoesis, the narrative function of myths, and the articulation of cultural identity as a result of negotiations between tradition and modernity, local and national, and subaltern and hegemonic. The findings reveal that mythopoesis in the three novels serves as a creative and critical mechanism to affirm and revitalise cultural heritage, while also functioning as a tool for legitimising social-political struggles and criticising modernity and hegemonic state power practices. The cultural identity produced through the process of rewriting myths is not essentialist but plural and constantly evolving in response to dynamic socio-political contexts. These findings reinforce Hall's theory of cultural identity and Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity, regarding identity as a continuously negotiated construction. The contribution of this research lies in the development of contemporary Indonesian literary studies through an understanding of mythopoesis as a narrative strategy that plays a role in identity formation and social criticism. The practical implications of this research are also relevant for literary education because it prioritises critical and contextual approaches to understanding Indonesia's cultural diversity.

Keywords: *Mythopoesis, Cultural Identity, Contemporary Indonesian Literature, Social-Political Criticism*

A. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the long history of human culture, myths have not merely been ancient narratives about gods, the origins of the world, or sacred orders. They are symbolic structures that convey collective values, strengthen social cohesion, and establish ontological frameworks for communities. (Bennett, 2022a; Bubnov, 2025; Cromby, 2019; Kirkpatrick et al., 2024)Beyond its function as spiritual heritage, myth has played

an important role in the formation of cultural and political identity, often used to justify power structures or legitimise dominant narratives (Kozhemiakina, 2022; Meijen, 2020). Roland Barthes (2013). It even articulates myths as ideological discourses that work subtly in everyday language, turning them into hegemonic instruments disguised as natural truths. However, in the context of modernity and post-colonialism, myths undergo a transformation in function and position. They are no longer accepted as unquestionable truths but are revised, challenged, and rewritten through various cultural media, including literature (Datta, 2019)This phenomenon is known as mythopoesis, the practice of creating or reconstructing myths in aesthetic discourse. In contemporary novels, mythopoesis has become a narrative strategy that allows authors to rework sacred narratives to challenge power, fight for identity, or respond to complex sociopolitical realities (Kwok, 2020).Here, myths do not merely exist as traditions, but become a dialectical arena between cultural heritage and critical praxis.

Contemporary Indonesian literature offers fertile grounds for exploring mythopoesis (Frolova, 2024)In the midst of postcolonial and multicultural conditions, mythological narratives in Indonesian novels often serve as a battleground for local, ethnic, and national identities (Luneva, 2022).Novels such as Tanah Tabu by Anindita S. Thayf, Burung-Burung Manyar by Y.B. Mangunwijaya and Para Priyayi by Umar Kayam show how Indonesian writers reconstruct myths both local and national traditions to criticise state hegemony, Western modernity, or exclusive social systems. This reconstruction is not merely aesthetic but also political; myths have become a counter-discourse used to challenge the dominance of mainstream representations. Within this framework, mythopoesis can be interpreted as a practice closely tied to the formation and negotiation of a cultural identity (Toibazar et al., 2025). Hall and DuGay (2012) emphasise that identity is not a fixed essence, but rather a discursive position that is constantly negotiated in the fields of history and power. Thus, the rewriting of myths in novels can be understood as part of a process of cultural positioning,""in which subjects and communities negotiate their places on a map of national and global identities (Zajko, 2020).

This article aims to analyse how contemporary Indonesian novels employ mythopoeia as a representational strategy for shaping or challenging cultural identities. The main question raised is: How are myths rewritten in these novels, and what are the implications for the articulation of cultural identity? To answer this question, this study uses an interpretive qualitative approach with a theoretical framework that combines the concepts of mythopoesis, cultural identity theory, and postcolonial representation studies. The contribution of this study lies in its effort to expand the understanding of the role of myth in contemporary Indonesian literature, not merely as a symbol of the past, but as an active and productive ideological field. This research also offers an alternative reading of the relationship between sacred, historical, and political elements in literary texts, and it increases awareness of the novel as a space for the decolonisation of cultural meanings in postcolonial society. In the context of literary and cultural education, an understanding of mythopoesis in novels also opens new pedagogical opportunities for discussing identity, local values, and social criticism in a reflective and critical manner in the classroom.

B.METHOD

This study uses an interpretive qualitative approach that focuses on the analysis of literary texts as a form of cultural and ideological practice. (Creswell & Poth, 2018)A qualitative approach was chosen due to the in-depth and exploratory nature of the study

of the construction of mythopoetic meaning and the articulation of cultural identity in contemporary Indonesian novels. With this method, researchers can grasp the complexities of narratives, symbols, and mythological structures that are not easily measured quantitatively and open up a rich space for interpretation of the cultural and power dynamics contained in the text.

This research corpus consists of three contemporary Indonesian novels that explicitly feature myth reconstruction as a main narrative element, namely Tanah Tabu (2009) by Anindita S. Thayf, Burung-Burung Manyar (1981) by Y.B. Mangunwijaya and Para Priyayi (1992) by Umar Kayam. These three novels were selected based on their geographical, cultural, and thematic representativeness, as well as their relevance to the study of mythopoesis and cultural identity formation. Tanah Tabu represents Papuan myths related to the relationship between indigenous communities and the land and spirits of their ancestors, Burung-Burung Manyar explores nationalist myths in a postcolonial context, while Para Priyayi highlights Javanese socio-cultural myths and the process of modernisation. The selection of these three novels allows for a cross-contextual analysis of diverse yet complementary cultural contexts.

Data were collected through intensive reading of the three novels, focusing on identifying narratives, symbols, characters, and mythological motifs reconstructed in the text. (Creswell, 2008). Researchers have made detailed notes on parts containing mythical elements or displaying mythopoietic processes, including depictions of sacred figures, the use of symbolic language, and intertextuality with oral traditions or mythological texts. Additionally, this study incorporated supporting research from secondary sources, including literary criticism, cultural studies, and mythological theories, to enhance interpretation.

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic analysis method combined with a narrative hermeneutic approach (Rogers-Dillon, 2005)The thematic approach enables the identification of significant recurring patterns related to the practice of mythopoesis and the expression of cultural identity in texts. Narrative hermeneutics is used to explore the more profound meanings of narrative structures, symbols, and mythical representations in novels, considering the historical and socio-political contexts that underlie the production of the text. The analysis process involved an iterative cycle of interpretation, beginning with initial reading and thematic data coding, culminating in the synthesis of interpretations within the theoretical framework of mitopoesis and postcolonial cultural identity theory.

To maintain the validity and credibility of the findings, this study applied data triangulation through a comparative analysis between texts and relevant literature sources. Interpretations were developed transparently by referring to relevant text quotations and tested theories. The entire analysis process was conducted critically to avoid subjective bias. Regarding the ethical aspects, this study is based on the use of officially published literary texts that respect the copyrights of their authors while prioritising academic integrity in the presentation of data and interpretations.

C.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Result

Style Mythopoesis

An analysis of the novels Tanah Tabu (Anindita S. Thayf), Burung-Burung Manyar (Y.B. Mangunwijaya), and Para Priyayi (Umar Kayam) reveal several patterns of myth reconstruction or mythopoesis that are distinctive in the context of contemporary Indonesian literature. These patterns display adaptations of ancient mythological narratives and demonstrate a creative process that modifies, deconstructs, and contextualises these myths to negotiate complex cultural identities. Broadly speaking, the patterns of mythopoesis can be categorised into four main types: (1) transformation of mythological characters, (2) reinterpretation of origin myths, (3) fragmentation and deconstruction of sacred narratives, and (4) hybridisation of traditional and modern elements.

1. Transformation of Mythological Characters

One of the most prominent patterns is the transformation of mythological characters from rigid sacred figures to more complex and humanistic figures. In Tanah Tabu, for example, Anindita S. Thayf reimagines the spirits of ancestors, traditionally seen as sacred and absolute entities, with human dimensions and internal conflicts. Anindita S. Thayf portrays the spirit of the ancestors as figures with ambivalence, vulnerability, and even moral dilemmas related to social change and the threat of colonialism. This shifts the position of the myth from a dogmatic entity to a reflective medium for contemporary social dynamics in Papua. In this way, the mythopoesis in this novel opens up space for readers to reposition myths within a historical context that is not static but rather dynamic and evolving.

Similarly, in Burung-Burung, Manyar Y. B. Mangunwijaya presents characters who function as symbols of nationalism and the struggle for independence, but with a critical and unsentimental reinterpretation. The character Teto, for example, is not a mythological hero in the traditional sense, but rather an ordinary human being with doubts and moral ambiguities that reflect postcolonial identity anxieties. This transformation of the character demonstrates how mythopoesis serves to decommodify the dominant heroic myths in official national narratives, replacing them with pluralistic and problematic representations.

2. Reinterpretation of Origin Myths

The second pattern is the reinterpretation of origin myths, which in many cultures serve as sacred explanations for the existence and identity of a group. In Para Priyayi, Umar Kayam uses Javanese socio-cultural myths related to the origins of the priyayi class as the basis for his narrative, but in a way that questions and dismantles the validity of these myths in the context of modernisation. The novel tells the story of how ancestral myths and the priyayi value system, passed down from generation to generation, are preserved and criticised by characters experiencing identity crises and moral struggles. Here, mythopoiesis functions as a tool of deconstruction, dismantling old myths while affirming the need for renegotiating cultural values in the face of changing times.

In a similar context, Tanah Tabu reinterprets the origin myths of Papuan society, particularly those related to the spiritual relationship between humans and land. However, this reinterpretation is not merely a repetition of sacred narratives, but a form of criticism against colonialism and the exploitation of nature. The origin myth is recontextualised as a form of cultural resistance that affirms customary rights and cultural sovereignty. This pattern of mythopoesis is both symbolic and political.

3. Fragmentation and Deconstruction of Sacred Narratives

The third pattern is the fragmentation and deconstruction of sacred narratives. All three novels show a tendency to break down mythological narratives that were previously considered whole and sacred into fragments that are treated critically and sceptically. In Burung-Burung Manyar, for example, the national struggle narrative, which has been central and heroic, is broken down into personal stories that are full of contradictions and ambiguities. This fragmentation allows readers to see national myths not as a single truth but as constructions that are vulnerable to internal conflicts and negotiations of meaning.

The Priyayi presents fragmented sacred narratives by employing nonlinear storytelling and multiple focal points. Javanese myths, once regarded as the moral and social foundation, are now viewed not as dogma but as narratives that characters confronting modernity often reimagine and question. This pattern underscores that mythopoesis in contemporary literature is not merely about preserving myths but also about deconstructing hegemonic discourses and creating space for cultural dialogue.

4. Hybridisation of Traditional and Modern Elements

The fourth notable pattern is the hybridisation of traditional and modern elements in the reconstruction of myths. All three novels combine classical mythological elements with contemporary issues, modern languages, and innovative narrative forms. For example, in Tanah Tabu, in addition to the depiction of ancestral spirits, there is a critical dialogue about modernity, the state, and capitalism that influences the lives of indigenous peoples. This hybridisation creates a space for dialogue between the past and the present, revealing mythopoeia as a dynamic and adaptive process.

Similarly, Burung-Burung Manyar uses national mythological symbolism but contextualises it within the complex and heterogeneous realities of the postcolonial era. Meanwhile, Parapriyayi depicts the conflict between traditional Javanese values and the demands of social, economic, and political modernisation, presenting cultural hybridity as a central theme.

These four patterns of mythopoesis do not stand alone, but function as narrative strategies that enable the novel to negotiate and articulate complex, layered cultural identities. The transformation of mythological characters humanises myths, making them more relevant to modern readers' experiences. Reinterpreting origin myths allows for the examination and reconstruction of group identity narratives that may have faced alienation or discrimination. The fragmentation of sacred narratives breaks the monopoly of dominant narratives, opening up possibilities for alternative voices and multiple interpretations. Meanwhile, the hybridisation of traditional and modern elements reflects the cultural reality of Indonesia as a society that continues to move between the legacies of the past and the demands of the present.

Theoretically, these patterns of mythopoesis reinforce Roland Barthes's argument that myths are discursive constructions that can be re-signified and have their meanings shifted according to the socio-political context (Barthes & Lavers, 2013). Mythopoesis in contemporary Indonesian novels demonstrates that myths are not dead or obsolete, but rather alive and evolving as arenas of ideological and identity struggles. Within the postcolonial framework emphasised by Homi Bhabha, this process also constitutes a form of hybridity, a third space where identities are dynamically shaped through negotiation and resistance (Bhabha & Chomsky, 2005).

The Narrative Function of Myths in Novels

In literary and cultural studies, myths function not only as narratives of origin or static traditional symbols, but also as dynamic mediums that articulate ideas, identities, and struggles. The findings of this study reveal that in the contemporary Indonesian novels analysed Tanah Tabu, Burung-Burung Manyar, and Para Priyayi mitos myths perform two main narrative functions that are interrelated but have different dimensions. First, myths justify sociopolitical struggles. Second, myths were reimagined to critique hegemonic modernity and state-power practices. These two functions are manifestations of mythopoesis as a narrative strategy that represents cultural heritage and plays an active role in contemporary cultural and political dialogue.

1. Myths as Justification for Social-Political Struggles

One of the main functions of mythology in the novels examined is to legitimise political struggles. In this context, myths are recalled and rewritten to assert cultural rights, build community solidarity, and provide a strong symbolic foundation for resistance to domination or oppression. For example, in Tanah Tabu, ancestral myths and the spirits of the land are not merely spiritual backdrops but are constructed as moral and cultural foundations that affirm the sovereignty of the indigenous Papuan community. This mythological narrative serves to justify the struggle against internal colonialism, marginalisation, and the exploitation of natural resources by states and corporations.

The author uses myths as a symbolic language that connects the sacred past with the conflict-ridden present. In the novel, the spirits of ancestors and myths about the origins of Papua are transformed into political representations that affirm that the struggle of indigenous peoples is not merely a material demand but also an effort to preserve cultural existence and spiritual relations with nature. Thus, myths serve as a narrative tool that provides moral and political legitimacy and strengthens the identities of subaltern groups, which are often marginalised in national discourse.

A similar phenomenon occurs in Burung-Burung Manyar, where myths of nationalism and the struggle for independence are critically reconstructed. The character Teto and the narrative surrounding him not only elevate traditional myths of heroism but also reveal the complexity and ambiguity of postcolonial identity. Myths have been revised to serve as a medium for justifying struggles that are nonlinear and rife with internal conflicts, both on a personal and collective scale. Myths serve to represent the heterogeneous realities of social-political struggles and provide a platform for voices previously marginalised in official narratives.

In Para priyayi, Javanese sociocultural myths are also used to legitimise class struggles and identities. The novel shows how the myths of the priyayi class, passed down from generation to generation, become a symbolic basis for certain social classes to maintain their cultural dominance. However, characters who experience crises and upheavals also observe that these myths become a source of internal criticism and motivation for social change. Thus, the myths in this novel not only justify the status quo but also support the struggle for social transformation through the recognition and renegotiation of cultural identity.

2. Myths as Criticism of Modernity and State Power

In addition to legitimising the struggle, the findings also show that the myths in these novels have been reworked to challenge and criticise hegemonic modernity and repressive and exploitative state practices. The process of mythopoesis in this context is not merely about preserving cultural heritage but also involves deconstructing and

resisting the narratives of modernity dominated by technocratic rationality, secularism, and economic development that often overlook cultural and ecological aspects.

In Tanah Tabu, ancestral myths and spiritual connections to the land serve as a critique of the modernity brought about by the state and corporations, which view land solely as an economic resource. The novel depicts how modernity has caused profound cultural and ecological dislocations in the indigenous Papuan community. Myths are reimagined to expose these imbalances and injustices, asserting that the modern paradigm must not overlook spiritual and cultural dimensions. Thus, mythopoesis has become a medium for ecological and cultural criticism, offering an alternative to mainstream development discourse.

Meanwhile, in Burung-Burung Manyar, criticism of modernity and state power is evident through the portrayal of the characters' dissatisfaction with the homogeneous and centralised narrative of national development. The reconstructed myth of nationalism reveals the dark side of modernity, namely alienation, identity conflicts, and failure to achieve social justice. Through this narrative, the myth serves as a tool to expose the paradoxes of postcolonial modernity and opens a critical dialogue about the socio-political consequences of the state's development project.

The Priyayi also used myths as a tool to criticise social and political modernisation, which often suppressed traditional values and created identity conflicts. Mythopoesis here serves as a reflection of the process of cultural hybridisation occurring amid social change while also expressing the tension between the continuity of tradition and the need for adaptation. This novel uses myths as a symbolic language to question the impact of modernity, which does not always bring progress to all layers of society but also gives rise to social fragmentation and dislocation.

3. Integration of Mythical Narrative Functions in Theoretical and Socio-Cultural Contexts

The narrative function of myths in these novels theoretically supports the view that myths are discourses that are always open to resignification and reinterpretation in accordance with changing sociopolitical contexts (Barthes & Lavers, 2013). Mythopoiesis enables authors not only to reproduce old myths but also to use them as critical tools to fight for social justice and question oppressive power structures. From a postcolonial perspective, this process is part of a strategy to decolonise discourse and create spaces for more inclusive and plural identities (Bhabha & Chomsky, 2005).

In multicultural and postcolonial Indonesia, myths serve a relevant function as justifications for the struggle against and criticism of modernity. Myths are reintroduced in novels as a medium for dialogue between identity and history, enabling readers to realise that cultural identities are never static but are always in the process of negotiation and reconstruction. This highlights the strategic role of literature, especially the novel, in promoting alternative narratives and giving voice to long-marginalised voices.

Articulation of Cultural Identity

Cultural identity in the context of contemporary Indonesian literature is not a static or monolithic entity, but rather a dynamic and complex process that is constantly negotiated and rearticulated through various narrative practices, including mythopoesis. An analysis of the novels Tanah Tabu by Anindita S. Thayf, Burung-Burung Manyar by Y.B. Mangunwijaya, and Para Priyayi by Umar Kayam reveals that the practice of

rewriting myths in these works serves as the primary medium for projecting, debating, and articulating plural and heterogeneous cultural identities. Through the reconstruction of myths, these three novels demonstrate how cultural identity is the result of a complex negotiation process between tradition and modernity, local and national, and subaltern and hegemonic.

1. The Process of Identity Negotiation

An important finding of this analysis is how the three novels represent cultural identity as an arena of negotiation involving overlapping and interacting cultural dimensions. In Tanah Tabu, for example, the identity of the indigenous Papuan community is articulated through ancestral myths and spiritual relations with the land that has been passed down from generation to generation. However, the narrative does not merely perpetuate tradition dogmatically; it also reflects how this identity is constantly confronted by the challenges of modernity, internal colonialism, and state pressure. Through mythopoesis, ancestral myths have been revisited and rewritten, highlighting the tension between preserving traditional values and the need to adapt to changing times. This process affirms that Papuan identity is not essentialist and unchanging, but rather a product of history and ongoing negotiation involving resistance and reconstruction.

In Burung-Burung Manyar, national and postcolonial identities are questioned and negotiated through the reconstruction of heroic myths, which have long been the sole narrative of the state. The novel depicts identity as fragmented and problematic, with characters experiencing inner conflicts and existential anxieties that reflect the complexity of post-colonial Indonesian sociopolitical conditions. Mythopoesis serves as a medium to open a dialogue between hegemonic national identities and marginalised local, or subaltern, identities. Thus, the novel rejects the homogeneity of identity and affirms the plurality and dynamism of cultural identity.

The Priyayi raise issues of class identity and Javanese culture, articulated through sociocultural myths that have long symbolised status and traditional values. However, this novel does not merely depict the arrogance and conservatism of the Priyayi class; it also reveals internal conflicts and moral struggles that demonstrate how this identity is being transformed amid a tide of modernisation. Through mythopoesis, the myths of the priyayi undergo renegotiation, affirming their identity as a dynamic historical process rather than as an unshakeable essentialist legacy.

2. Representation of Plural and Dynamic Identities

All three novels consistently portray cultural identities as plural and dynamic, challenging essentialist or homogenising understandings. The process of mythopoesis opens up a space for complex and layered representations of identity in which various narratives, voices, and perspectives intertwine and interact. In Tanah Tabu, for example, ancestral myths do not merely represent a monolithic voice of the indigenous community but also contain ambiguities and internal conflicts that reflect differing views and experiences within the community itself. This demonstrates that identity is never singular, but multi-dimensional and sometimes contradictory.

Similarly, Burung-Burung Manyar avoids simplifying national identity as cohesive and uniform. Identity in this novel is a field of struggle and negotiation involving conflicts between various social, ethnic, and ideological groups. Mythopoiesis plays an important role in articulating these dynamics through narratives that reveal multiple voices and perspectives.

Meanwhile, the Priyayi display an ambivalent and complex class identity where tradition and modernity meet and often clash. This representation emphasises that cultural identity is not static but is always a process of reform, influenced by historical and social contexts.

3. Conflict, Ambiguity, and Complexity of Cultural Identity

The mitopoesis in the three novels also shows that cultural identity is not free from conflict and ambiguity. This conflict arises at both the individual and collective levels, reflecting the inherent tensions in the process of identity formation in multicultural and postcolonial societies. For example, in Tanah Tabu, conflict arises between the need to preserve tradition and the demands of sociopolitical change, as represented by characters facing existential dilemmas. Ambiguity in ancestral myths reflects the uncertainty and dynamics of Papuan society.

Burung-Burung Manyar also demonstrates the complexity of postcolonial identity by depicting characters who experience identity fragmentation and existential uncertainty as a result of the struggle between colonial heritage, nationalism, and contemporary social realities. Mythopoesis functions as a narrative tool to express this ambiguity, avoiding simplification, and providing space for more critical and reflective readings.

In Para Priyayi, complexity arises in the struggle between class and cultural values, which are often contradictory. Pressures of modernisation and social change fracture the identity of the priyayi, long associated with social status and power. Mythopoesis explores these conflicts and ambiguities in depth, revealing that the process of identity is contradictory and constantly changing.

4. Theoretical Framework

These findings on the articulation of cultural identity are in line with Hall's (2012) view that identity is not a fixed essence but rather a "historical product" formed through a process of continuous negotiation and representation. Hall rejected the notion that identity is something natural and univocal, instead emphasising the dynamics, plurality, and contestation inherent in the formation of cultural identities. In this context, the analysed novel's mythology serves as a narrative medium that enables the dynamic practice of negotiating and reconstructing cultural identities.

In addition, Homi Bhabha's (2005) concepts of hybridity and third space provide an important theoretical framework for understanding how cultural identities in these novels are articulated as spaces of encounter, negotiation, and resistance between tradition and modernity, between the local and the global, and between the subaltern and the hegemonic. The process of mythopoesis creates a hybrid space where identity can no longer be understood as monolithic but as the result of complex and dynamic interactions that open up opportunities for alternative readings and cultural transformation.

5. Social-Cultural Relevance and Literary Education

The articulation of cultural identity through mythopoesis in these novels has important implications for understanding culture and literary education in Indonesia. By presenting plural and dynamic representations of identity, literature becomes a critical tool for challenging homogeneous and exclusive narratives that have long dominated national discourse. These novels reflect complex social realities and offer an inclusive space for dialogue between various groups and perspectives.

In the context of language and literature education, understanding the process of articulating cultural identity through mythopoesis can help students and readers appreciate cultural diversity and practice critical attitudes towards narratives of identity. It also encourages the development of pedagogical approaches that are reflective, dialogical, and sensitive to local and global cultural contexts.

Discussion

This study examines the process of mythopoesis in contemporary Indonesian novels as an important mechanism in the formation and negotiation of cultural identity. Through an analysis of three major novels, Tanah Tabu, Burung-Burung Manyar, and Para Priyayi, it is revealed how the rewriting of myths continues literary traditions and functions as a critical medium that enables the renegotiation of cultural and political meanings in a dynamic and complex social context. This discussion will elaborate on the integral relationship between mythopoesis and cultural identity, the function of myths as sociopolitical criticism, and the relevance of theories of mythopoesis, cultural identity, and hybridity in explaining these dynamics. We also discuss the sociocultural and pedagogical implications of these findings, which represent a significant contribution to Indonesian literary and cultural studies.

1. Mythopoiesis as a Mechanism for the Formation and Negotiation of Cultural Identity

First, the results of the study indicate that mythopoesis plays a key role as the primary mechanism in the formation of plural and dynamic cultural identity. Rewriting myths allows us to recontextualise old narratives, once considered sacred and unchangeable, to align with contemporary sociopolitical needs. In other words, mythopoesis is a creative practice that revives myths by adapting their meaning and narrative functions to make them relevant to the realities and challenges of the present day (Antić, 2018)In the context of the novels analysed, mythopoesis is not merely a reproduction of cultural heritage but an arena of negotiation between tradition and modernity, local and national, as well as subaltern and hegemonic. For example, in Tanah Tabu, ancestral myths and spiritual relationships with the land are not only reconstructed as symbols of cultural preservation but also as political tools to fight for the rights of indigenous Papuan communities in the face of internal colonialism and extractive capitalism. This demonstrates that cultural identity is a historical product that is constantly shaped and reshaped through complex processes of interaction and negotiation. (Caputo et al., 2019; Cohen & Kassan, 2018).

This concept is in line with Stuart Hall's view (2012), which asserts that identity is not a fixed essence but rather a "product of history" that is constantly being reshaped through cultural representations and social practices. In this context, mythopoesis in these novels serves as a medium that enables the representation of heterogeneous and plural identities, challenging the homogeneous and essentialist narratives that often dominate cultural discourse. Thus, the process of rewriting myths significantly contributes to creating a space for dialogue that opens opportunities for the recognition of the diversity and complexity of Indonesian cultural identities.

2. The Function of Myths as Social and Political Criticism

In addition, the myths in these novels perform an essential narrative function as tools of social and political criticism, especially in the face of hegemonic modernity,

colonialism, and repressive state practices. This function confirms that myths not only serve as a binding force for cultural identity but also as a medium for resistance and negotiation of power (Alsyouf, 2024; Liu, 2017; Norris, 2023). For example, in Tanah Tabu, reconstructed ancestral myths serve as a criticism of modernity, which solely emphasises economic aspects and physical development without appreciating the spiritual and cultural dimensions of indigenous communities. This narrative reveals how modernity brought about by the state and corporations threatens the sustainability of culture and the environment, making mythopoesis a tool to resist and critique such hegemony. This aligns with the postcolonial theory perspective, which positions culture and myths as arenas of resistance to domination and exploitation (Lei & Wang, 2024; Meijen, 2020). Similarly, Burung-Burung Manyar used a revised nationalist myth to criticise the homogeneous and centralistic narratives of postcolonial development and modernity. This novel reveals the dark side of modernity in the form of alienation, identity conflict, and the social injustice experienced by its characters. By critically reconstructing the myth of heroism, the novel opens up space for dialogue that questions the claim of a singular truth in national narratives and depicts the complexity of often fragmented postcolonial identities (Åse & Wendt, 2018; Rupka, 2023). Meanwhile, the Priyayi portray the conflict between traditional Javanese values and socio-political modernisation as a forum for criticism articulated through mythopoesis. The myths of priyayi, which have long been symbols of social status and morality, are questioned and dismantled in a complex process of cultural negotiation. Thus, mythopoiesis has become a narrative strategy to explore the impact of modernity, which does not always bring progress but also generates tension and social dislocation.

3. The Relevance of Mythopoesis Theory, Cultural Identity, and Hybridity

These findings can be conceptually explained and enriched using relevant critical theories. Roland Barthes (2013) In his study of myths, he states that they are systems of discourse whose meanings can be transferred and politicised according to context. This concept is relevant in understanding how Indonesian novels engage in myth rewriting to shape and negotiate identity, as well as social-political criticism. Mythopoesis, as a creative practice, represents myths not as absolute truths but as texts that are always open to resignification. Furthermore, the perspective Hall & DuGay (2012) The concept of cultural identity as a process of constant reformation and negotiation is very helpful in analysing how cultural identity is articulated through mythopoesis in these novels. Hall rejects the view of identity as a fixed entity, but rather as a plural and complex product of history and culture, which is reflected in the way writers revise and adapt myths in contemporary socio-political contexts.

The concept of hybridity and third space from Homi Bhabha (2005) also greatly helps one comprehend the dynamics of cultural identity in these novels. Mythopoesis becomes a hybrid space where tradition and modernity, local and national, as well as subalterns and hegemonics interact and negotiate. (Smyth, 2023; Zanette et al., 2023)This process creates a space for dialogue that transcends dichotomies and allows for more inclusive and complex identities. These novels show that mythopoesis is not only a preservation of culture but also a form of resistance and transformation of identity in postcolonial societies.

4. Social-Cultural and Pedagogical Implications

These findings have important implications for literary, cultural, and educational research in Indonesia. From a socio-cultural perspective, the rewriting of myths through mythopoesis demonstrates how literature can serve as a vital arena for preserving cultural diversity while also functioning as a medium for criticism and reflection on socio-political realities. Literature is not merely a mirror of society but also an agent of change capable of opening spaces for dialogue and negotiation of identity amidst cultural complexity and conflict. In the field of language and literature education, a profound understanding of the function of mythopoesis and the articulation of cultural identity can enrich the curriculum and teaching methods. A pedagogical approach that positions literature as a tool for understanding the dynamics of plural and complex identities and cultures will encourage students to become critical, reflective, and sensitive readers of their sociocultural contexts. This also contributes to the development of inclusive and democratic cultural awareness, which is crucial in Indonesia's multicultural and ever-changing context.

D. Conclusion

This study successfully reveals the important role of mythopoesis in contemporary Indonesian novels Tanah Tabu by Anindita S. Thayf, Burung-Burung Manyar by Y.B. Mangunwijaya, and Para Priyayi by Umar Kayam as a strategic mechanism in the formation of a plural, dynamic, and reflective cultural identity. Through the process of rewriting myths, these three novels not only preserve cultural heritage, but also practice affirmation and renegotiation of identities in response to the complexities of contemporary sociopolitical and cultural contexts. The research findings confirm that the patterns of mythopoesis in these novels are creative and critical. Myths are not treated as static narratives that are simply passed down but are reworked in new contexts that reveal their relevance in facing the challenges of modernity, internal colonialism, and state hegemony. The narrative function of myths serves as a justification for social-political struggles and as a tool for critiquing modernity and state power practices, affirming mythopoesis as a narrative strategy that simultaneously preserves and critiques culture. Specifically, this study reveals how mythopoesis contributes to the articulation of cultural identities that are not merely essentialistic, but rather the result of complex negotiations between tradition and modernity, local and national, as well as subaltern and hegemonic. Identity in the three novels appears as a dynamic space of dialogue and conflict, accommodating plurality and ambiguity that reflects the reality of Indonesia's multicultural and postcolonial society. This approach aligns with Stuart Hall's cultural identity theory and Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity, which reject the notion of identity as something fixed and singular, but rather as a construction that is constantly in the process of being reconfigured.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in its affirmation of mythopoesis as a strategic discourse that enriches Indonesian literary and cultural studies through a critical and contextual approach. By employing mythopoesis, literary authors not only represent cultural identity but also create spaces of resistance and transformation in the face of contemporary socio-political challenges. This opens new possibilities for more inclusive and reflective interpretations of the role of literature in society. From a sociocultural perspective, the results of this study show that contemporary Indonesian literature can serve as an important medium for preserving cultural diversity while criticising domination and injustice. Literature becomes a forum for dialogue that allows

the recognition of plural identities and opens spaces for voices that have been marginalised or excluded from official narratives.

The pedagogical implications of this study are significant, especially in the context of language and literature education in Indonesia. Understanding the process of mythopoesis and the articulation of cultural identity can enrich teaching approaches that are more critical and contextual. Thus, students are not only encouraged to appreciate literary works as cultural products but also to develop critical awareness of the dynamics of identity and complex social realities. In the age of globalisation and rapid social change, this approach is critical for encouraging the development of inclusive and democratic cultural perspectives.

REFERENCE

Alsyouf, A. (2024). Irish and Palestinian Mythopoetic Cultural Resistance in the Verse of Yeats, Heaney, and Darwish. *World Journal of English Language*, *15*(1), 172. https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v15n1p172

Antić, M. (2018). Ivo Andrić: Against National Mythopoesis. *Slavic Review*, *77*(3), 704–725. https://doi.org/10.1017/slr.2018.206

Åse, C., & Wendt, M. (2018). Gendering the new hero narratives: Military death in Denmark and Sweden. *Cooperation and Conflict*, *53*(1), 23–41. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836717728540

Barthes, Roland., & Lavers, Annette. (2013). *Mythologies : The Complete Edition, in a New Translation*. Hill & Wang.

Bennett, S. (2022a). Mythopoetic legitimation and the recontextualisation of Europe's foundational myth. *Journal of Language and Politics*, *21*(2), 370–389. https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.21070.ben

Bennett, S. (2022b). Mythopoetic legitimation and the recontextualisation of Europe's foundational myth. *Journal of Language and Politics*, *21*(2), 370–389. https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.21070.ben

Bhabha, & Chomsky. (2005). Homi Bhabha Talks with Noam Chomsky. *Critical Inquiry*, *31*(2), 419. https://doi.org/10.2307/3651494

Bubnov, A. (2025). The Foundation Myth as a Category of Historical Politics. *ISTORIYA*, *16*(1 (147)), 0. https://doi.org/10.18254/S207987840034048-1

Caputo, A., Ayoko, O. B., Amoo, N., & Menke, C. (2019). The relationship between cultural values, cultural intelligence and negotiation styles. *Journal of Business Research*, *99*, 23–36. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.02.011

Cohen, J. A., & Kassan, A. (2018). Being in-between: A model of cultural identity negotiation for emerging adult immigrants. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *65*(2), 133–154. https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000265

Creswell, J. W. . (2008). *Qualitative inquiry and research design : choosing among five approaches*. Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic.

Creswell, J. W. ., & Poth, C. N. . (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design*. SAGE.

Curkpatrick, S., Susanto, H., & Pawu, W. J. (2024). Symbolic Cohesion and Interpretive Freedom. *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion*, *37*(2), 243–266. https://doi.org/10.1558/jasr.26695

Datta, A. (2019). Postcolonial urban futures: Imagining and governing India's smart urban age. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, *37*(3), 393–410. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775818800721

Frolova, M. V. (2024). Metamodern in Indonesian Literature: A Night of 1,000 Traitors by Intan Paramaditha (2023). *Studia Litterarum*, *9*(4), 138–159. https://doi.org/10.22455/2500-4247-2024-9-4-138-159

Hall, Stuart., & Du Gay, Paul. (2012). *Questions of cultural identity*. SAGE Publications Ltd.

Kozhemiakina, O. (2022). ARCHETYPAL BASIS OF POLITICAL MYTH: LITERARY TRADITION AND MODERNITY. *Doxa*, *2(36)*, 67–82. https://doi.org/10.18524/2410-2601.2021.2(36).246781

Kwok, S. (2020). Postcolonial translation theories and the language myth: an integrationist perspective. *Language Sciences*, *80*, 101286. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2020.101286

Lei, Y., & Wang, W. (2024). Beyond ' *Black Myth: Wukong* ' itself: the construction of identity from an intercultural communication perspective. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, *19*(1–2), 29–46. https://doi.org/10.1080/17447143.2025.2480381

Liu, H. (2017). Beneath the white gaze: Strategic self-Orientalism among Chinese Australians. *Human Relations*, *70*(7), 781–804. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726716676323

Luneva, Alexandra. I. (2022). Political Myth about the Witch Calon Arang in the Novel "Manjali and Chakrabirava" by the Indonesian Author Ayu Utami. *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. Asian and African Studies*, *14*(2), 320–334. https://doi.org/10.21638/spbu13.2022.210

Meijen, J. (2020). Exporting European values? Political myths of liberal democracy and cultural diversity in creative Europe's literary translation projects. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, *26*(7), 942–958. https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2020.1801659

Norris, P. (2023). Cancel Culture: Myth or Reality? *Political Studies*, *71*(1), 145–174. https://doi.org/10.1177/00323217211037023

Rogers-Dillon, R. H. (2005). Hierarchical qualitative research teams: refining the methodology. *Qualitative Research*, *5*(4), 437–454. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794105056922

Rupka, S. (2023). Shifting histories: Film and nationalist mythmaking through trauma. *Media, War & Conflict*, *16*(2), 119–134. https://doi.org/10.1177/17506352211027093

Smyth, B. (2023). Bensaïd's Jeanne: Strategic Mythopoesis for Difficult Times. *Philosophies*, *8*(1), 12. https://doi.org/10.3390/philosophies8010012

Toibazar, A., Dautova, G., Aliyev, Y., Turdali, T., & Zhalgasbayeva, K. (2025). Ethnic Narratives in Education: The Role of Kazakh Epics in Preserving Cultural Heritage and Identity. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, *12*(5), 154–177. https://doi.org/10.29333/ejecs/2414

Zajko, V. (2020). Contemporary Mythopoiesis: the role of Herodotus in Neil Gaiman's American Gods. *Classical Receptions Journal*, *12*(3), 299–322. https://doi.org/10.1093/crj/claa002

Zanette, M. C., Rinallo, D., & Mimoun, L. (2023). Reclaiming the witch: Processes and heroic outcomes of consumer mythopoesis. *Marketing Theory*, *23*(1), 163–182. https://doi.org/10.1177/14705931221124044