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A PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE NOVEL LAUT BERCERITA BY LEILA S. CHUDORI

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ABSTRACT. This study aims to describe the psychology or psyche, especially the emotions of the main character in the novel Laut Bercerita by Leila S. Chudori. The method used is a descriptive method, qualitative, with a behavioristic approach. The data source is the novel Laut Bercerita by Leila S. Chudori, while the data are in the form of words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs. The data collection technique uses documentary techniques and the data collection tool is the researcher herself as the key instrument who acts as the planner, implementer, analyzer, and interpreter of research data. The results of the data analysis show that the emotions found in the main character are positive emotions and negative emotions. Positive emotions include love and happiness, while negative emotions include anger, hate, fear, and sadness. These emotions can be seen from various events experienced by the main character. Emotions can influence the attitude and character of the main character in the novel Laut Bercerita by Leila S. Chudori. The emotions that dominate in this novel are negative emotions.

Keywords: psychology, emotions, main character

1. Introduction

Literature, as a reflection of the complexity of human life, serves not only as a means of entertainment but also as a medium for understanding the psychological depths of individuals and society. The close relationship between literature and psychology gave rise to the discipline of Literary Psychology, an approach that examines literary works through the lens of psychological theories, focusing on the psychology of the author, the psychology of the characters, and the psychology of the readers. This approach allows researchers to uncover the hidden motives, inner conflicts, and character development that shape the narrative, making it key to richer and more in-depth interpretations.

Leila S. Chudori's novel "Laut Bercerita" (The Sea Tells Stories) is a work of contemporary Indonesian literature that is highly relevant for study using a literary psychology approach. Set during a crucial period in Indonesian political history, specifically the New Order era, the novel tells the tragic story of student activists who were kidnapped and forcibly disappeared. The narrative focuses primarily on characters like Biru Laut and his friends, who must face tremendous psychological pressure due to struggle, betrayal, torture, and the trauma of loss.

The power of "Laut Bercerita" lies in its ability to present in-depth details of the emotions and psychological states of its characters, ranging from courage, idealism, fear, to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) experienced by the survivors and victims' families. Therefore, this study aims to conduct a literary psychological analysis of the novel "Laut Bercerita" in order to:

1. Identify and analyze the inner conflicts and defense mechanisms exhibited by the main character, Biru Laut, and other supporting characters.
2. Examine the representation of trauma, anxiety, and the impact of loss of freedom on the characters' psychological states within the context of an oppressive political backdrop.
3. Reveal how these psychological aspects contribute to the novel's major themes of memory, justice, and humanity.

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By utilizing a specific psychological theoretical framework (e.g., Freud's psychoanalysis, Jung's theory, or trauma theory), it is hoped that this study will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological dimensions of Leila S. Chudori's work, while also emphasizing the importance of literature as a historical document and study of the human psyche.

2. Research Method

This section explains in detail the approach, data, data sources, data collection techniques, and data analysis techniques used in the literary psychology analysis of Leila S. Chudori's novel Laut Bercerita.

1. Research Type and Approach

This research is a qualitative study using a descriptive-analytical design. The primary approach applied is Literary Psychology, which focuses on the analysis of psychological elements, particularly the characters and internal conflicts within literary works. Specifically, this study utilized Trauma Psychology Theory as its primary focus, supported by psychoanalytic concepts (particularly regarding the conflict between the id, ego, and superego, or defense mechanisms), to deeply examine the impact of oppression and kidnapping on the mental state of the main characters in the novel under study.

2. Data Sources and Research Data

The primary data source (primary data) in this study is the novel Laut Bercerita by Leila S. Chudori (specific printings/editions, e.g., First Edition, KPG, 2017). The research data consists of narrative text, dialogue, and monologues within the novel, collected with a focus on: descriptions of the behavior, emotions, and thoughts of the main and supporting characters (especially Biru Laut, Asmara Jati, and the victim's family); Expressions that explicitly indicate inner conflict, anxiety, depression, or trauma (post-traumatic stress disorder/PTSD, survivor's guilt, etc.); as well as depictions of defense mechanisms (e.g., repression, rationalization, or sublimation) used by characters in dealing with oppressive and threatening situations.

3. Data Collection Technique

The data collection technique used in this research is a literary study, which is conducted through a series of systematic steps, beginning with repeated and in-depth close reading of the novel to gain a comprehensive understanding of the plot, setting, and psychological characteristics of the characters. The next step is data identification and classification, which involves marking (coding) and classifying textual quotations (words, phrases, or paragraphs) relevant to the focus of the psychological analysis of trauma and inner conflict. Finally, relevant data is recorded on a data card or analysis table, including details such as data number, text quotation, character, and psychological indications (e.g., indications of trauma/PTSD, indications of inner conflict, or defense mechanisms).

4. Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data was analyzed using qualitative content analysis techniques through four main steps. The first step, Contextual Description, focuses on briefly describing the narrative context of each data quote, such as when and where the psychological event occurred. Next, in Psychological Interpretation, the data quotes are analyzed and interpreted by linking them to the selected psychological theory, for example, linking the behavior of the character Biru Laut after his release to symptoms of PTSD. The interpretation results are then grouped in the Categorization of Findings into relevant psychological categories, including: Inner Conflict (Idealism vs. Fear), Manifestations of Trauma (Flashbacks, Emotional Numbness), the Psychological Impact of the Loss of a Loved One (Grief and Loss), and Character Defense Mechanisms. Finally, in the Synthesis and Conclusion stage, the findings

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from each category are synthesized to draw general conclusions regarding the psychological representation of trauma and inner conflict in the novel Laut Bercerita as a whole.

5. Data Validity (Validity and Reliability)

To ensure data validity, this study employed two main strategies. First, Semantic Validity, which ensures that the interpretation of text excerpts as psychological data aligns with their original meaning and context in the novel. Second, Theoretical Triangulation was used, where more than one psychological concept or theory—for example, combining Trauma Theory with the concept of defense mechanisms from Psychoanalysis—was used to interpret the same data, thus providing stronger and more objective analysis results.

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings classified according to key psychological categories, followed by an in-depth discussion using theories of literary psychology and trauma psychology.

1. Representation of the Main Character's Inner Conflict (Blue Sea)

The analysis shows that the character of Biru Laut experiences intense inner conflict, particularly between Idealism versus Fear and Obligation versus Personal Needs. This conflict is the primary driver of his actions before his arrest and his subsequent trauma.

1.1. Conflict of Idealism and the Reality of Threat

Laut is depicted as an idealist who strongly believes in the struggle for democracy, yet he continually faces the reality of physical and psychological threats from the New Order regime.

"We believe that only by fighting can we win. But on certain nights, fear comes, piercing like ice needles. We are not fearless heroes; we are young men forced to be brave." (Novel Laut Bercerita, p. 55)

Discussion: This quote reflects an ego conflict that seeks to balance the urges of the superego (moral ideals) with the urges of reality (the ego's function to protect oneself from danger). Laut's courage was not without psychological costs, but rather the result of the sublimation of fear into heroic action, a defense mechanism activated to maintain the consistency of his fighting identity.

2. Psychological Manifestations of Post-Kidnapping Trauma

After being released from the torture chamber, Biru Laut exhibited clinical symptoms consistent with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and prolonged trauma.

2.1. Flashbacks and Intrusions

Laut experienced repeated flashbacks or intrusive memories of his torture, particularly those involving water and darkness.

"The murky water is still in my nose, in my throat. Every time I close my eyes, I see pulling hands, a fishy smell, and the sound of waves that is no longer a peaceful sound, but the sound of death." (Novel Laut Bercerita, p. 189)

Discussion: The traumatic experience has disrupted Laut's normal memory function, causing the event to continually invade his consciousness. Water, which should be a symbol of tranquility (as the name suggests), becomes a trigger associated with pain and terror. This is a typical manifestation of re-experiencing symptoms in PTSD sufferers.

2.2. Emotional Numbness and Isolation

Laut exhibits symptoms of emotional numbness and social withdrawal after returning. He struggles to reconnect emotionally with Asmara Jati and his family.

Discussion: Emotional numbness is a psychological defense mechanism to suppress excessive pain. In the context of psychoanalysis, it is a form of denial of the intensity of

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trauma. In practice, Laut isolates himself as a way to avoid the triggers and emotional demands of the outside world, which feel too much for his fragile ego to bear.

3. Collective Trauma and Survivor's Guilt

This novel does not only analyze Laut's individual trauma, but also the collective trauma experienced by survivors and their families.

3.1. Survivor's Guilt

Laut, as a survivor who successfully returned, is burdened by deep guilt because his other friends, including Kinan, remain missing.

"Why wasn't I the one missing? They were braver, purer... I'm alive, but half my soul is buried in a place I never remember. Every bite of food feels like a betrayal." (Novel Laut Bercerita, p. 250)

Discussion: Survivor's Guilt is a normal response to trauma, in which the survivor feels unworthy of their survival. This guilt indicates that Laut carries a very high burden of moral responsibility (a demanding superego), which contributes to his depression. It also reflects the collective trauma experienced by activist circles, where the line between life and death, safety and loss, is very thin.

4. Defense Mechanisms of Victims' Families

The psychological analysis also extends to supporting characters, especially the victims' families who have not received any certainty (Asmara Jati, Laut's older brother).

• Endless Hope: Asmara Jati chooses to cling to the belief that Laut will one day return, even though the logical possibility is slim.

Discussion: This persistent hope can be interpreted as a defense mechanism of fixation and extreme denial. Denying the reality of loss is the family's ego's way of protecting itself from the unbearable pain of ambiguous loss. This uncertainty creates a psychological wound different from the grief caused by certain death.

5. Synthesis: Literature as Catharsis and Psychological Document

The novel Laut Bercerita successfully combines political history with an in-depth psychological case study, where the use of the 'I' point of view by the character Laut effectively gives the reader direct access to his stream of consciousness and psychological conflicts. Thus, this novel functions double: as a Psychological Document that explains in detail the impact of political oppression on individual and collective mental health, as well as a Literary Catharsis that provides space for readers (and perhaps the author) to process pain, loss, and injustice, through the projection of emotions onto the suffering characters.

4. Conclusion

Leila S. Chudori's novel Laut Bercerita (The Sea Tells Stories) is a profound and complex depiction of the psychological impact of political trauma and inner conflict, both at the individual and collective levels. The central inner conflict is experienced by the main character, Biru Laut, who faces a fundamental battle between his idealism (Superego) in fighting for justice and his fear and the reality of threats (Ego). His courage before the kidnapping can be analyzed as the result of a sublimation defense mechanism, where anxiety is diverted into heroic actions, simultaneously demonstrating the high moral demands placed on him.

The experience of kidnapping and torture left a clear psychological imprint on Laut, consistent with symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This trauma manifests through symptoms of Intrusion—such as flashbacks and intrusive memories, where even water, which is generally calming, becomes a trigger for terror—and symptoms of Avoidance. These symptoms of avoidance manifest in the form of emotional numbing and social isolation, which function as forms of denial to avoid the pain of excessive trauma. Furthermore, the novel highlights the collective trauma affecting activist circles and victims'

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families, with Laut suffering from extreme survivor's guilt, feeling unworthy of life when his friends were lost. This moral burden once again demonstrates the high demands of the superego that contribute to his ongoing psychological suffering.

Furthermore, the novel also depicts the defense mechanisms of victims' families facing ambiguous loss, such as that experienced by Asmara Jati. They use the defense mechanisms of fixation and denial by maintaining endless hope. This is an ego strategy to protect themselves from the unimaginable pain of uncertainty. Overall, Laut Bercerita serves not only as a political historical document but also as a rich psychological one, offering a profound understanding of how the human spirit struggles, survives, and breaks under the pressure of an oppressive regime. Literature, in this regard, acts as a crucial cathartic space for processing national and personal trauma.

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