

# Exploring Cultural Narratives in Contemporary Indonesian Poetry

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**Abstract**—The purpose of this study is to analyze cultural narratives in contemporary Indonesian poetry. This research employs a qualitative interpretative method, with textual analysis conducted through semiotic reading. The data sources consist of two poems: “Antropologi dari Kaleng-Kaleng Coca-Cola” and “Kalangan Ronggeng.” The data analyzed are excerpts from these poems that are presumed to contain cultural narratives. The analytical techniques applied include semiotic reading, heuristic reading, and retroactive or hermeneutic reading. The findings reveal that contemporary Indonesian poetry strongly actualizes cultural narratives. These narratives are articulated through diverse cultural aspects, reflecting variations rooted in local traditions, national identity, and global contexts. Contemporary Indonesian poetry thus presents Indonesian cultural narratives that are both complex and diverse. The cultural narratives are grounded in local traditions and expressed through distinctive and powerful symbolic representations imbued with aesthetic value. This indicates that Indonesian contemporary poets possess a strong cultural awareness and affirm that their existence remains closely connected to the surrounding cultural phenomena.

**Index Terms**—contemporary Indonesian poetry, cultural narratives, cultural text, literary text, semiotic reading

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Reformasi of 1998 fostered a more open democratic climate in Indonesia, marked by press freedom, freedom of expression, and increased public participation in politics. This momentum reshaped the structure of power and the relationship between the state and its citizens (Aspinall, 2010). Reformasi opened the gates of democratization, transparency, and freedom of expression, conditions that had previously been suppressed during the New Order regime. At the same time, globalization gained momentum, accelerating the flow of information, human mobility, technology, and transnational cultural exchanges.

Globalization also stimulated the resurgence of cultural and religious identities as forms of resistance. This phenomenon was evident in the rise of religious movements, ethnic identities, and local cultural communities that became increasingly visible in the public sphere (Hefner, 2000). The interplay between Reformasi and globalization—characterized by democratization, transparency, freedom of expression, and the revival of ethnic and local cultural identities generated significant cultural transformations, particularly in Indonesian literature. This transformation was especially prominent in the realm of poetry, with the emergence of contemporary Indonesian poetry.

Contemporary poetry represents a form of literary expression that transcends the conventions of traditional–modernist Indonesian poetry. It is characterized by formal experimentation, stylistic hybridity, intertextuality, and responsiveness to socio-political dynamics, global culture, and local identity (Hatley, 2009).

In general, contemporary poetry is defined as poetry created in the present time. It typically takes a free form, unconstrained by the conventional structures of traditional poetry. Contemporary poetry seeks liberation from prescriptive rules, often employing everyday language, blurring formal structures, and tending toward social engagement and intertextuality. Its characteristics include the use of contextual metaphors and symbols, linguistic interplay between local and global registers, rejection of classical formal structures, and active engagement with socio-political issues. Such aesthetics not only introduce new forms but also create a space for responding to and reflecting on cultural identity with greater flexibility.

Indonesian contemporary poetry emerges within a cultural landscape marked by plural identities and contested meanings. Identity is no longer regarded as static or essential but rather as fluid, negotiated, and constructed through cultural representations. Contemporary Indonesian poets such as Afrizal Malna and W.S. Rendra exemplify this tendency, producing works that are not only artistic expressions but also cultural practices that interrogate and reshape cultural

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narratives.

Theoretically, this article departs from the understanding that identity is a social and cultural construction formed through discourse and representation (Hall, 1996; Bhabha, 1994). Thus, poetry is treated not merely as an autonomous literary work, but as a cultural text imbued with ideological and historical significance. The analysis presented in this article seeks to enrich Indonesian literary studies by demonstrating that poetry, through its aesthetic and symbolic power, can open a space for critical reflection on the meaning of being “Indonesian” in the contemporary era. As Yee (2023) explains, poetry as a cultural text often presents cultural dialogues, even offering intercultural exchanges between nations or geographically distant and diverse regions.

This study analyzes contemporary Indonesian poetry from the perspective that poetry functions as a cultural narrative. Research on cultural narratives in contemporary Indonesian poetry has not yet been carried out by other scholars. A study by Silalahi et al. (2022) examined the evolution of Indonesian poetry through a comparative analysis between classical and contemporary poetry. Their main focus was on continuity and innovation in themes, linguistic features, and cultural influences, as well as how poetry reflects Indonesian identity and its engagement with the global world. Winda Setia Sari (2019) investigated the poetry of Cathy Song and concluded that a person’s identity is not static and that the passage of time significantly shapes it. Her study also emphasized that poetic traditions are preserved and renewed through the “life cycle of the poet-as-poet.” Another study by Mudayat and Pamungkas (2024) explored the poem “*Bukit Semut*” by Seno Joko Suyono. Their findings revealed that “*Bukit Semut*” is not only a beautiful literary work but also an effective medium for instilling educational values. The poem enriches Indonesian literature while contributing significantly to the teaching of life values. In a different context, Butler-Kisber (2002) examined the process of creating poetry, offering suggestions on methodological steps to undertake such work. She argued that researchers interested in qualitative, data-based studies should be supported and suggested that it may be most beneficial to explore and generate various forms of “artistic renderings” as analytical approaches, which may or may not result in a final published product.

An analysis of poetry was also conducted by Siallagan and Alfina (2023), comparing the performance of SeqGAN and GPT-2 in automatically generating Indonesian *pantun*. This study introduced the first publicly available Indonesian *pantun* dataset, consisting of 7.8K *pantun*. The evaluation showed that GPT-2 outperformed SeqGAN in forming the structure and rhyme patterns of *pantun*. Similarly, Reilly (2013) analyzed poetry as a way to stimulate interest in learning, both individually and within organizations. Then, after several weeks, participants were given the results of their poetry analyses and asked to summarize their findings. These findings reflected their thoughts and feelings about using poetry as a learning tool. Based on previous studies, it can be concluded that research on cultural narratives in contemporary Indonesian poetry has not yet been conducted. Therefore, the topic of “*Cultural Narratives in Contemporary Indonesian Poetry*” is highly relevant and worth pursuing.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### A. Cultural Narratives in Literature

Literature, and poetry in particular, constitutes a form of symbolic narrative that not only reflects social realities but also shapes perspectives on culture, history, and collective identity. Ricoeur (1984) emphasizes the importance of narrative in shaping *narrative identity*, an understanding of the self constructed through the stories we tell about our experiences and origins. Therefore, poetry is not merely a reflection of identity but also a medium for its construction. Within this framework and context, contemporary Indonesian poetry can be positioned as a cultural archive that preserves collective memory, local mythologies, historical traumas, and contemporary social dynamics.

Cultural narratives in literature represent the embodiment of a society’s values, beliefs, social practices, and collective memories, actualized through stories, symbols, metaphors, and other expressive forms or styles. Such narratives not only reflect cultural identity but also shape and redefine the understanding of culture itself within particular socio-political contexts. As emphasized by Lotman (1978), culture is a system of signs that constitutes a “semiosphere” where narratives operate, while literature serves as one of the primary carriers of those cultural signs. Said (1993) further argues that literary works not only express and reflect culture but also function as a battlefield for the articulation of contradictory or contested cultural meanings. This perspective underscores that literature is deeply infused with and saturated by cultural narratives.

### B. Poetry as Cultural Text

Beyond being a literary text, poetry can also be viewed as a cultural text—namely, a product of social construction that contains ideological and symbolic meanings. In Williams’s (1977) perspective, literary works do not stand alone but are bound to the structures of experience and discourse within their society. Thus, the analysis of poetry is not merely an exploration of aesthetic meaning, but also a reading of the relations of power, representation, and the articulation of identity. Barthes (1977) states that every cultural text is a site where social meanings are negotiated and symbolically constructed. Therefore, in this context, poetry can be regarded as a cultural text, as it embodies the symbols, myths, ideologies, and collective narratives of the society that produces it.

Meanwhile, Geertz (1973) argues that culture is a system of meanings produced symbolically, and poetry functions as one of the media of symbolic articulation. This corresponds with the very nature of poetry as a literary genre rich with signs and symbols. As Preminger (1974) explains, poetry is indeed a literary work saturated with symbols and signs.

### III. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative interpretative approach using the method of *close reading* or textual analysis of Indonesian contemporary poems that contain cultural themes. Qualitative research, as emphasized by Creswell (2015), seeks to interpret the meaning of phenomena within their social context, which in this case refers to the cultural narratives embedded in literary works. The primary sources of data are the poems “*Antropologi dari Kaleng-Kaleng Coca-Cola*,” “*Celana*,” “*Mantera*,” and “*Kalangan Ronggeng*.” The data consist of selected excerpts from these poems that are presumed to contain cultural narratives.

Textual analysis is conducted through semiotic reading as proposed by Riffaterre (1978), which includes heuristic reading and retroactive or hermeneutic reading. Heuristic reading refers to the linear reading of a literary work, that is reading according to the linguistic structure as a system of first-level semiotic signs (reading based on language conventions). Meanwhile, retroactive or hermeneutic reading refers to rereading accompanied by interpretation. This type of reading is based on the system of second-level semiotic signs, namely reading according to literary conventions. Through hermeneutic reading, poems whose language is often connotative, symbolic, and saturated with signs, can be uncovered in terms of their deeper meanings. In this way, poetry can be understood not only through its linguistic meaning but also through its literary significance (Culler, 1981).

### IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

This study analyzes Indonesian contemporary poetry as a form of cultural narrative. The poems selected for analysis are “*Antropologi dari Kaleng-Kaleng Coca-Cola*” by Afrizal Malna and “*Kalangan Ronggeng*” by W.S. Rendra. Both poets are among the most prominent figures in contemporary Indonesian poetry. These two poems exemplify how poetry can embody powerful cultural narratives that reflect and articulate various dimensions of Indonesian society.

#### A. Cultural Narrative in the Poem “*Antropologi dari Kaleng-Kaleng Coca-Cola*”

*Antropologi dari Kaleng-Kaleng Coca-Cola*

*Holger, di Beerental Weg ini, apartemenmu, aku lihat wayang kulit Jawa, seperti jendela-jendela tertutup itu. Kau sembunyikan juga, Marx dan Budha dalam rak-rak buku. Di manakah manusia kalian temukan di antara kartu pos, donat, dan serakan tisu. Langit mencium sisa-sisa waktu, pada detak sepatumu, putih melulu, putih melulu.*

*Tapi kaos kakiku tak cukup menahan dingin, udara Hamburg bersama orang-orang sunyi dari bangsanya sendiri. Aku lihat boneka 10 negeri, seperti pasangan tua di Hannover, mereka tersenyum: Bisakah menata kota, dengan tomat dan tisu melulu. Mereka dibawa dari televisi yang lain, dari desa-desa kecil, belajar elektronika dan membuat wesel. Langit, tisu berlapis-lapis, putih melulu, putih melulu.*

*Tetapi seorang laki-laki adalah kisah lain, Holger, yang meletakkan dirinya dalam sepi lampu-lampu 5 watt. Dan membuat bisik-bisik dalam bahasa Jerman yang beku. Lalu dari apartemen ini, kita tahu, Holger, di luar orang berlalu, berlalu... meletakkan bangsanya, tanpa membanting ember: Kita hanya mengenang manusia, dari kota-kota, yang ditata dari kaleng-kaleng coca-cola.*  
(1993)

*Anthropology from Coca-Cola Cans*

*Holger, here on Beerental Weg, your apartment, I see Javanese shadow puppets, like the shuttered windows. You hide, too, Marx and Buddha on your shelves. Where have you found humanity among postcards, doughnuts, and scattered tissues? The sky kisses the remnants of time on the rhythm of your shoes, all white, all white.*

*But my socks can't keep the cold away, the Hamburg air filled with people lonely from their own nations. I see dolls from ten countries, like an old couple in Hannover, they smile: Can one arrange a city with only tomatoes and tissues? They are brought from another television, from small villages, learning electronics, making remittances. The sky, tissue upon tissue, all white, all white.*

*Yet a man is another story, Holger, one who lays himself down in the solitude of 5-watt lamps, and whispers in frozen German. Then from this apartment, we know, Holger, outside, people pass, and pass... placing down their nations without slamming buckets: We only remember humanity, from cities built out of Coca-Cola cans.*  
(1993)

The poem “*Antropologi dari Kaleng-Kaleng Coca-Cola*” by Afrizal Malna, although written in everyday and familiar language, actualizes profound aspects of modern life that coexist with cultural dimensions.

The lyrical “I” (the poet) introduces the reader to a figure named Holger, located in Beerental Weg, Hamburg. He observes objects such as */postcards, doughnuts, and scattered tissues/* as symbols of modern life. At the same time, the poet presents symbols of traditional life through the line */I see shadow puppets (wayang kulit)/*. This juxtaposition

illustrates the complexity of life in which modern and traditional elements, as well as modern and traditional cultural forms, intermingle in distinctive ways.

The phrases “*Javanese shadow puppets*” and “*Marx and Buddha on the bookshelves*” serve as symbols of cultural and intellectual diversity embodied by Holger within society. Here, traditional culture (*wayang kulit*) interacts with modern thought (*Marx and Buddha*). Such encounters open broader horizons and forward-looking perspectives on global diversity and the heterogeneity of human values, represented through the figure of Holger.

The interaction between modern and traditional cultures that mutually support and shape human life is also reflected in the line /*Can one arrange a city with only tomatoes and tissues? They are brought from another television, from small villages, learning electronics and making remittances.*/ In structuring a city, modern culture symbolized by /*...tomatoes and tissues*/ dominates urban life. Conversely, even communities in small villages are not detached from modern culture, as indicated by their efforts to /*...learn electronics and make remittances.*/ The words “*electronics*” and “*remittances*” thus function as markers of modern culture. Although these people live /*...in small villages,*/ they remain inevitably connected to the modern world through technological learning and economic activities.

Cultural dislocation is also articulated in the line “*Wayang kulit in a German apartment,*” which actualizes a cultural narrative of alienation where native culture exists within a foreign space. *Wayang kulit*, *Marx*, and *Buddha* become alienated, displayed on the shelves of a German apartment. Within the context of Afrizal Malna’s poem, this depiction represents how Javanese culture and Eastern thought have been transformed into mere ornaments, rather than living experiences.

Cultural narratives concerning the loneliness and impersonality of cosmopolitanism are expressed through the symbolism of *European cities* (Hamburg, Hannover). These cities no longer represent spaces of community but rather landscapes of alienation. The lyrical subject feels a sense of coldness not merely because of the climate, but due to the loss of cultural and human connection. The cultural aspect of critique toward Western modernity is revealed in the line “*The city is arranged from Coca-Cola cans*”. This expresses a satirical cultural narrative, an irony toward the urban world constructed from products of mass consumption. Urban planning and identity are no longer grounded in social or cultural values but in patterns of consumption and global brands. Likewise, the poem articulates a cultural narrative in which the mastery of foreign languages does not ensure human communication. This is reflected in the line /*And making whispers in frozen German*/. The line represents German as a symbol of modernity and intellectuality as “frozen,” incapable of offering warmth or intimacy in human interaction. Thus, language becomes a barrier rather than a bridge to communication.

The cultural aspect relating to “*Popular Anthropology*” also receives critical attention within the poem’s cultural narrative. Contemporary anthropology, as depicted here, observes only the surface and therefore fails to grasp the deeper essence of humanity. In this sense, anthropology does not delve into the meaning of human existence but recognizes humanity only through superficial symbols: *tissues*, *dolls*, *doughnuts*, *Coca-Cola*, and other similar objects.

Afrizal Malna’s poem “*Antropologi dari Kaleng-Kaleng Coca-Cola*” therefore presents a powerful cultural narrative. Although written in everyday language, it conveys profound cultural meanings that unfold through a hermeneutic reading.

#### B. Cultural Narrative in the Poem “*Kalangan Ronggeng*”

*Kalangan Ronggeng*  
*Bulang datang, datanglah ia!*  
*dengan kunyit di wajahnya*  
*dan ekor gaun*  
*putih panjang*  
*diseret atas kepala-kepala*  
*dirahmati lupa.*  
*Atas pejaman hari*  
*yang rela*  
*bergerak pinggul-pinggul bergerak*  
*ronggeng palsu yang indah*  
*para lelaki terlahir dari darah.*  
*Wahai manis, semua orang di kalangan*  
*tahu apa bahasa bulan!*

*Kabur bulan adalah muka-muka*  
*adalah hidup mereka*  
*mengelepar bayang-bayang*  
*ikan-ikan ditanggung nasibnya.*  
*Gamelan bertahta atas nestapa*  
*kuda di pandang berpacuan*  
*mengibas sepi merangkul diri,*  
*angin tak diharapkan*

*cari sarang dan tersia.  
Ditolaknya sandaran nestapa  
betapa gila ditolaknya!  
Dan bila bertumbuk ke langit  
terpantul kembali bumi.*

*Lalu si jagoan bersorak  
pada harap adalah gila yang lupa.  
Penyaplah, penyap,  
nestapa yang hitam ditolaknya.  
Balik pula.  
Pula ditolaknya.  
Dan selalu ditolaknya.*

*Wahai, Manis, semua orang di kalangan  
tahu apa derita bulan.  
(2016)*

*The Ronggeng Circle  
When the moon arrives, she arrives  
with turmeric upon her face,  
and the white tail of her gown  
dragged over the heads  
blessed by forgetting.  
Upon the eyelids of surrendering days,  
hips begin to sway  
false yet beautiful ronggengs,  
where men are born from blood.  
O Sweet One, everyone in the circle  
knows the language of the moon!*

*The dimmed moon is their faces,  
their trembling lives,  
floundering like fish  
netted by fate.  
The gamelan reigns upon sorrow,  
horses race across the field,  
whipping solitude that embraces itself.  
The wind, unwanted,  
seeks a nest and finds none.  
Sorrow's leaning post is refused  
how madly it is refused!  
And when it collides with the sky,  
it bounces back to earth.*

*Then the braggarts cheer,  
for hope is a madness that forgets.  
Sweep it away, sweep  
that black sorrow they reject.  
Back again.  
Again, rejected.  
Always rejected.*

*O Sweet One, everyone in the circle  
knows the suffering of the moon.  
(2016)*

The poem “Kalangan Ronggeng” by W.S. Rendra is densely layered with cultural narratives. The poem is rooted in the *Javanese folk art tradition* of *ronggeng*. *Ronggeng* is not merely a dance but a symbol of the tension between sacredness and profanity, between folk entertainment and the social stigma attached to female dancers. The cultural

narrative is articulated through diction rich in symbolism, reinforcing the poem's cultural dimension. The choice of diction in the title "Kalangan Ronggeng" itself embodies culture. The word "Kalangan" refers to the arena of folk performance a social and cultural space where values, entertainment, and the struggles of people's lives intertwine. The opening line */The moon comes, she comes! with turmeric on her face/*, in a hermeneutic reading, depicts the ritualization of the *ronggeng's* body as it is prepared for performance.

The word "Moon" (*bulan*) hermeneutically represents beauty, mystery, and suffering. In Javanese culture, the moon is often interpreted as a symbol of fate, distant beauty, and solitude. The line */the hips move, moving hips/ a false ronggeng that is beautiful/* illustrates the female body as a form of commodified entertainment. This line also serves as a metaphor for the people's fate being "performed." The diction "gamelan" symbolizes the harmony of the Javanese cosmos. However, this cosmic harmony exists in contradiction, as it is said to "reign over suffering." This actualizes the paradoxical dimension that the harmony of folk tradition is forced to stand upon social hardship. The line */the fish are netted by their fate/*, from a hermeneutic perspective, conveys the meaning that the people, like "fish," are resigned to being caught by fate or power.

The line */dragged above the heads/ blessed by oblivion/*, employs the word "head" as a symbol of human dignity, identity, and honor. The line */dragged above the heads/*, when read hermeneutically, carries a broader meaning representing the degradation of human worth by a higher or arbitrary power. In metaphorical terms, it can be interpreted as a form of *collective oppression*, depicting society whose heads (identities) are trampled or suppressed by structures of power be it the state, social systems, or ideology. The line */blessed by oblivion/* contains the word "blessed," which has a connotative sense of grace or divine favor, while "oblivion" evokes *loss of memory, denial, or the erasure of history*. In a broader interpretation, it also implies the forgetting of goodness, the loss of human dignity, and the neglect of divine grace even after being blessed. The juxtaposition between "oblivion" and "blessing" forms a sarcastic and satirical paradox, something sacred entwined with moral decay.

Meanwhile, the lines */horses viewed in their gallop/ flicking away solitude to embrace oneself/ winds uninvited/ seek nests but are abandoned/* contain powerful symbolism. The horse signifies vitality, strength, freedom, and unrestrained desire. The word "gallop" suggests dynamism, movement, competition, or a state of heightened energy that may also verge on chaos. Within the cultural narrative, the "horse" allegorically represents the *ronggeng* as a performer in folk art, an expression often deemed "wild," dynamic, and occasionally at odds with dominant social norms. The *ronggeng* as an artist is thus seen by society as "a horse in motion", captivating yet stigmatized. The line */flicking away solitude to embrace oneself/* conveys an attempt to resist loneliness or alienation; yet "embracing oneself" implicitly suggests acceptance of that solitude, a moment of introspection or contemplation in silence. These lines illustrate a cultural narrative of the *ronggeng* within the Javanese (and broader Nusantara) context as a liminal figure, one who occupies the center of attention while performing, yet remains marginalized socially. The *ronggeng* is accepted on stage but distanced in moral space, reflecting an existential ambivalence between alienation and self-acceptance.

The line */the wind uninvited/* uses "wind" as a symbol of an unseen force of change, disruption, and intrusion. The phrase *uninvited* indicates rejection or resistance toward an unwanted presence that nonetheless arrives. The line */seeks a nest and is abandoned/* employs *nest* as a symbol of home, safety, or community an accepting place of return. The word "abandoned" (*tersia*, meaning cast away or marginalized) expresses the failure to find protection or belonging. Together, these lines construct a cultural narrative portraying the fate of the *ronggeng* within the traditional cultural system, she seeks acceptance but is instead cast aside. As a traditional artist, the *ronggeng* faces a dilemma between her social function as an entertainer and her fragile social identity, which is vulnerable to marginalization.

The line */Then the champion cheers/* introduces the word "champion" (*jagoan*), which in Indonesian carries multiple connotations: hero, skilled fighter, or even a ruffian. The verb "cheers" (*bersorak*) may signify celebration or acclaim. Within Indonesia's cultural narrative, this figure symbolizes populist heroes, local leaders, or emblematic representations of bravery figures who can be revered yet also destructive. The cheering of the *jagoan* becomes a celebration of power, but it may also mark a hollow or temporary triumph filled with fleeting euphoria.

The line */in hope lies madness that forgets/* can be interpreted as portraying hope as "madness that forgets" a form of insanity that has lost awareness of itself. In this context, hope is being critiqued: it is not a rational aspiration but a kind of *madness*, a blind expectation of change or salvation. The phrase */madness that forgets/* signifies not only a state of insanity but also an oblivion to one's own madness, suggesting a *narcotic despair*, a cultural condition of unreflective hope.

The cultural narrative is further articulated through the line */Sweep away, sweep away/ the dark sorrow that is rejected/*. Hermeneutically, it may be read as a prayer, invocation, or command addressed to a purifying force to erase deep suffering. Within the cultural dimension, this line can be interpreted as: (1) a cry of resistance against historical suffering, (2) an appeal to spiritual or moral power to cleanse the world of evil, and (3) an attempt to restore harmony within the cosmic and social order. This idea continues in the lines */It turns back./ Rejected again./ Always rejected./* The repeated phrase "rejected" (*ditolaknya*) implies an active gesture a woman (*ronggeng*) who refuses submission. This reflects a *ronggeng* who does "not surrender" to social judgment or male desire but *instead possesses agency over her body and her choices*. In many traditional cultural representations, the *ronggeng* occupies an ambiguous position, as both a symbol of *pleasure and of moral anxiety*.

On another level, the repetition of “rejected” can also be interpreted as a critique of social *morality and patriarchy*, both of which continuously seek to control and subdue the *ronggeng* as a representation of the female body or as an art form deemed “wild.” Society wishes to *limit, regulate, or purify* the *ronggeng*. Yet the phrase “always rejected” asserts that the *ronggeng*’s body and expression remain free. The phrase “It turns back” (*Balik pula*) signifies a cyclical movement, a return akin to the motion in dance or ritual. The *ronggeng* moves in a rhythm of advance and retreat, of giving and refusing mirroring the cadence of traditional culture. The *ronggeng*, therefore, is not merely entertainment but also an integral part of social, agrarian, and spiritual ritual. Symbolically, the *ronggeng* can be read as an emblem of artistic freedom or individual liberation within a repressive society. The repetition of “rejected” reinforces the *ronggeng*’s identity as a figure of resistance against domestication, whether imposed by power, religion, or social norms.

The final stanza, consisting of two lines, reads */O Sweet One, everyone in the arena/ knows the moon’s sorrow./* The phrase “everyone knows” carries a tone of irony, it implies awareness without compassion. Society knows, yet remains indifferent; there exists a collective consciousness of suffering accompanied by collective neglect. The phrase “*the moon’s sorrow*” is a poetic and symbolically rich metaphor. In the cultural context of the Nusantara and indeed in many world traditions, the moon signifies femininity, beauty, and fidelity, but also solitude and silent suffering. This imagery suggests that the *ronggeng* as a woman and dancer, embodies physical beauty and graceful movement that remain faithful to the traditions of her community. Yet, beneath her captivating appearance lies profound inner suffering. Thus, within the context of the poem “*Kalangan Ronggeng*,” the expression “*the moon’s sorrow*” can be interpreted as *the woman’s sorrow*. It is the suffering that is both recognized and concealed, an awareness of pain that persists beneath the surface of beauty and ritual.

Based on the analysis of Afrizal Malna’s poem “*Antropologi dari Kaleng-Kaleng Coca-Cola*” and W.S. Rendra’s “*Kalangan Ronggeng*”, it can be concluded that Indonesian contemporary poetry exhibits a profoundly strong cultural narrative. The cultural narratives articulated in these poems align with Schmidt (2020), who asserts that poetry possesses the capacity to narrate culture, social issues, cultural stereotypes, and contemporary cultural experiences. This finding is also consistent with Concannon-Gibney (2023), who emphasizes that poetry conveys cultural narratives of empathy and social awareness, thus fostering social competence.

Indonesian contemporary poetry frequently embodies cultural narratives of lonely and impersonal cosmopolitanism (Wati et al., 2022). The cultural narratives also take the form of poetic traditions that preserve social and traditional values—such as maternal sacrifice in raising children, which reflect the enduring influence of familial values in shaping personal character and social identity within Indonesian society (Wati, 2025).

Cultural narratives that *emphasize spirituality, collectivity, and conventional culture* are also evident, as shown in (Kanzunudin, 2022) findings that spiritual culture in poetry reveals a deep emotional bond between mother and child, an attachment that reflects a collective belief within Indonesian society.

The theme of alienation and the impersonal nature of cosmopolitanism in Indonesian contemporary poetry resonates with the research of Matar (2024), who, in his study of Prince Abdullah Al-Faisal’s poetry, found that themes of alienation, sincerity in social bonds, and the collective nature of human experience are strongly expressed. Similarly, Aghasiyev (2024) discusses cultural narratives concerning the complexity of contemporary existence, the turbulence of postmodern life, spiritual uncertainty, and the existential dilemmas experienced by poets in a fragmented modern world.

## V. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that contemporary Indonesian poetry strongly actualizes cultural narratives. Cultural narratives are manifested across various cultural aspects with variations that are deeply embedded in the context of local, national, and global cultural traditions. This demonstrates that contemporary Indonesian poetry cannot detach itself from cultural narratives with dimensions of locality, nationality, and globality. The strength of cultural narratives in contemporary Indonesian poetry shows that Indonesian contemporary poets possess a profound awareness that their own existence is inseparable from the cultural phenomena surrounding them. Poets cannot distance themselves from the cultural frictions present in the environments where they live or reside.

Reading contemporary Indonesian poetry reveals the complexity and diversity of Indonesian cultural narratives. These cultural narratives are rooted in regional traditions, enriched with local wisdom, and narrated through distinctive and powerful symbols full of aesthetic value, as exemplified in WS Rendra’s poem “*Kalangan Ronggeng*”. Cultural narratives that intersect global and local cultures are rendered with profound symbolic depth in Afrizal Malna’s “*Antropologi dari Kaleng-Kaleng Coca-Cola*”. Thus, cultural narratives in contemporary Indonesian poetry reflect the complexity and diversity of Indonesian culture.

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