



Metaphor, Identity, and Cultural Representation in Literary Narratives: A Cognitive Stylistic Analysis

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Abstract

Metaphor links bodily experience, social categories, and cultural knowledge to the representation of identity in literary narrative. This study examines how metaphor organizes identity and cultural representation across a balanced comparative sample comprising Marah Rusli's Sitti Nurbaya, Merari Siregar's Azab dan Sengsara, Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre, and E. M. Forster's A Passage to India. A MIPVU-informed cognitive-stylistic protocol was applied to 96 high-salience metaphorical expressions, with 24 items purposively sampled from each novel. Each expression was classified according to source domain, metaphor type, identity function, and cultural frame, followed by descriptive comparison across the Indonesian and Anglophone subcorpora. Body/Heart and Nature/Force were the most frequent source domains, jointly accounting for 34.4% of the coded expressions, while structural metaphors constituted 62.5% of the sample. The Indonesian novels demonstrated broader source-domain dispersion and stronger moral-spiritual framing, with distinctive representations of gender/adat and mobility, whereas Jane Eyre concentrated strongly on agency and selfhood. A Passage to India emphasized colonial-political and cultural/communal identity, particularly through metaphors of power, place, and collective relations. The findings indicate that metaphor operates not merely as literary ornament but as a patterned cognitive-stylistic resource through which narratives construct agency, belonging, obligation, relational experience, and cultural difference.

Keywords: Cognitive Stylistics, Conceptual Metaphor, Cultural Identity, Indonesian Literature, Comparative Literature.



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INTRODUCTION

Metaphor is a central mechanism through which literary texts transform social experience into perceivable structures, enabling abstract relations of selfhood, belonging, conflict, and cultural difference to become linguistically and narratively accessible. Cognitive stylistics treats figurative language as an interaction between linguistic form, conceptual organization, textual perspective, and readerly inference rather than as an ornamental layer added to otherwise literal meaning, reflecting the field's broader movement toward integrating textual interpretation with cognitive accounts of meaning construction (Lugea & Walker, 2023). Recent metaphor scholarship has increasingly connected conceptual mapping with literary form, embodiment, neuroaesthetic response, and the distinctive interpretive conditions of literary discourse (Rizzato, 2024). In literary narrative, this approach is particularly useful because identity is rarely presented as a stable proposition but is distributed across descriptions of the body, place, movement, social relation, memory, conflict, and value. A metaphor can consequently condense several levels of representation at once, linking a character's immediate emotional state with a socially recognizable model of personhood and a historically situated cultural frame. Research on literary metaphor further indicates that figurative structures contribute to the organization of voice, atmosphere, evaluation, and embodied perspective rather than functioning as isolated lexical ornaments (Harrison, 2024). The interpretive significance of such figurative structures lies in their capacity to make culturally specific assumptions appear experiential, relational, or emotionally immediate rather than merely propositional.

Cognitive stylistics has increasingly demonstrated that recurrent figurative patterns shape the texture of literary worlds and provide conceptual structures through which readers organize abstract social and ethical experience. Studies of dystopian and war writing show that recurring metaphorical and image-schematic patterns can organize political, ethical, and embodied dimensions of fictional experience (Norledge, 2022). Image-schematic reasoning can also guide narrative deliberation by giving abstract dilemmas spatial or material form, allowing conceptual tensions to be processed through structures such as movement, containment, force, and direction (Carroll, 2023). These findings are compatible with research demonstrating that literary metaphor comprehension depends on interactions between textual cues and readers' cognitive styles rather than on a single process of figurative decoding (Kuzmíková & Kuzmík, 2024). Psycholinguistic evidence further suggests that poetic and non-literary metaphors differ in their perceived goodness and interpretive demands, indicating that literary context is consequential for the construction of metaphorical meaning (Reid et al., 2023). The implication for comparative literary analysis is methodological: metaphor inventories should be interpreted in relation to narrative function and cultural situation rather than counted as isolated lexical events. Such an approach makes it possible to connect recurring metaphorical structures with the ways literary narratives construct, negotiate, and problematize identities.

Psycholinguistic work further complicates the assumption that metaphor processing is uniform across readers, languages, and figurative forms. Research on Chinese nominal metaphors indicates that consciousness influences metaphor processing, demonstrating that figurative interpretation can involve different degrees of awareness rather than a single automatic mechanism (Cheng et al., 2024). Conventionality also affects metaphor comprehension, with familiar figurative relations producing interpretive conditions that differ from those associated with less conventional mappings (Gu et al., 2024). Research comparing monolingual and multilingual readers similarly shows that novel metaphor comprehension is sensitive to linguistic repertoire and metaphor type (Werkmann Horvat et al., 2022). These findings are particularly relevant to cross-cultural literary analysis because similar source domains cannot automatically be assumed to produce identical conceptual or cultural meanings. Literary comparison therefore requires a coding model capable of separating the linguistic trigger from the interpretive claim and distinguishing metaphor identification from subsequent claims about identity and cultural representation. The present analytical orientation responds to this requirement by treating metaphor identification as the first stage and assigning cultural or identity functions only after contextual mapping has been established. This distinction helps prevent cultural interpretation from being imposed prematurely upon individual figurative expressions.

The methodological problem becomes especially important in cross-cultural research, where the reliability of interpretation depends partly on the transparency with which metaphorical expressions are identified and classified. MIPVU remains one of the most explicit procedures for distinguishing contextual meaning from a more basic meaning and for identifying cross-domain use (Steen et al., 2010). Recent comparative research has adapted MIPVU to multilingual and culturally differentiated material, showing that a consistent identification protocol can support comparison without erasing language-specific interpretation (Bajzát & Gábor, 2024). Computational metaphor studies have likewise formalized the relationship between linguistic evidence and Conceptual Metaphor Theory, emphasizing explainable identification and transparent processing procedures (Ge et al., 2022). Computational processing models have further demonstrated the value of systematic preprocessing for metaphor research, although detection itself does not resolve questions concerning narrative function or cultural significance (Mao et al., 2022). For literary narratives with dense cultural reference, manual contextual coding remains necessary when the analytical target extends beyond metaphor detection toward interpretation of identity and representation. The methodological challenge is consequently not simply to determine whether an expression is metaphorical but to establish a defensible relationship between metaphorical form, conceptual source domain, narrative function, and culturally situated identity.

Identity provides a productive target for such analysis because it is simultaneously cognitive, relational, and socially negotiated rather than a fixed property merely possessed by characters or communities. Metaphors of family, boundary, movement, burden, conflict, and embodiment can make collective identity appear natural, contested, intimate, vulnerable, or coercive depending on the conceptual relations activated within a narrative. Empirical research demonstrates that metaphor can

participate in the reconstruction of collective identities by supplying relational models through which groups understand belonging and social connection (Theodoropoulou, 2025). Studies of metaphorical narratives further show that figurative language can become a resource for articulating professional identity and possible selves, demonstrating that identity is constructed through narrative positioning rather than simply represented as an already established category (Schellings et al., 2024). Research on metaphor and identity in organizational narratives similarly indicates that metaphor can mediate the negotiation of collective self-description and social positioning (Vogel, 2024). Literary and postcolonial research adds another dimension by demonstrating how metaphors of fragility, difference, embodiment, and displacement can connect individual experience with historically situated structures of cultural and political identity (De, 2024). Metaphorical patterning can therefore function as a bridge between textual form and cultural representation, allowing apparently personal descriptions to participate in wider narratives concerning gender, class, morality, community, colonial difference, and belonging.

Literary and postcolonial research makes clear that metaphor must be situated within histories of cultural contact, domination, mobility, and representation rather than interpreted exclusively through supposedly universal cognitive schemas. Cognitive-stylistic analysis of African literary texts has shown how metaphorical structures can expose stereotypes and unstable forms of cultural belonging, particularly when literary language intersects with historically constructed representations of identity (Ponsak, 2023). Research on South Asian Anglophone fiction likewise demonstrates that conceptual metaphor and schema disruption can participate in the representation and contestation of colonial identity (Khan, 2025). Indonesian literary scholarship has examined conceptual metaphor and cognitive-stylistic patterning across prose, song, and culturally situated discourse, establishing the relevance of metaphor to local forms of literary and cultural meaning (Nasution et al., 2024). Other studies have connected Indonesian literary metaphor with cultural identity, ecological knowledge, and culturally specific conceptual structures, indicating that figurative language can encode meanings that extend beyond individual textual expressions (Tarigan et al., 2025). Yet much of the existing scholarship remains organized around a single author, single work, or nationally bounded corpus, leaving limited space for a balanced cross-cultural examination of how metaphor organizes identity across distinct literary traditions. The present study addresses this gap through a controlled comparative analysis of *Sitti Nurbaya* and *Azab dan Sengsara* from the Indonesian corpus alongside *Jane Eyre* and *A Passage to India* from the Anglophone corpus. The study asks which source domains organize identity and cultural representation, how those domains distribute relational, communal, moral, gendered, agentive, class, and colonial-political functions, and what convergences and divergences emerge between the two literary groups, using an equal number of contextually verified metaphorical expressions from each work to ensure that comparison reflects conceptual organization rather than differences in textual length.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a non-empirical comparative, corpus-assisted cognitive-stylistic design to examine metaphor, identity, and cultural representation in four literary narratives. The primary data consisted of metaphorical expressions identified in Marah Rusli's *Sitti Nurbaya* (1922), Merari Siregar's *Azab dan Sengsara* (1920), Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), and E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924), using stable digital editions to locate and verify relevant passages. The analytical unit was a metaphorical expression whose contextual meaning could be contrasted with a more concrete, embodied, spatial, material, or otherwise basic meaning and whose interpretation required a cross-domain mapping. The identification stage was informed by MIPVU rather than an unrestricted search for figurative themes, allowing metaphorical status to be established before cultural or identity-related interpretation was assigned (Steen et al., 2010). Chapter strata were sampled across early, middle, and late narrative positions where possible, with particular attention to scenes involving identity, belonging, obligation, mobility, social relations, and cultural evaluation. Each novel contributed 24 contextually verified metaphorical expressions, resulting in a balanced coded sample of 96 items, while the Indonesian novels were coded in the original Indonesian and the English novels in the original English, with English glosses used only for tabular presentation; this purposive comparative procedure supports systematic comparison across linguistically differentiated literary materials (Bajzát & Gábor, 2024).

The analytical framework separated metaphor identification from interpretation, with each retained expression coded according to source domain, metaphor type, identity function, and cultural frame. Eleven consolidated source domains were established: body/heart, nature/force, conflict/violence, person/agency, container/boundary, light/darkness, bond/thread, journey/path, burden/weight, building/place, and text/inscription. Metaphor type was coded as structural when one conceptual organization provided relational structure for another and as ontological when an abstract state, relation, or setting was rendered as an entity, substance, person, or bounded object, while directional expressions were assigned according to their dominant structural mapping. Identity function captured the immediate narrative work of the metaphor through cultural/communal, agency/selfhood, relational/affective, colonial/political, moral/spiritual, gender/social, and social/class categories, whereas cultural frame represented the broader discourse context activated by the expression. Coding was performed in two passes, with the first pass identifying candidate metaphors and assigning provisional labels and the second pass re-evaluating all 96 items against the same contextual-basic meaning criterion while checking the compatibility of source-domain and functional classifications, consistent with approaches that emphasize explainable and theoretically grounded metaphor identification (Ge et al., 2022). Analytical results were presented descriptively through counts and percentages within each fixed 24-item novel-level sample and within the two 48-item corpus groups, while Shannon entropy was calculated as $H = -\sum p_i \log_2 p_i$ to describe the distributional evenness of source domains and identity functions without treating the measure as an inferential statistic, and the explicit coding procedures and contextual verification were used to strengthen analytical transparency in the interpretation of literary metaphor (Kuzmíková & Kuzmík, 2024).

Table 1. Comparative Corpus and Sampling Design

Work	Author / Year	Language Coded	Chapter Strata Represented	Coded Items
<i>Sitti Nurbaya</i>	Marah Rusli / 1922	Indonesian	Chs. 3, 5, 11, 15	24
<i>Azab dan Sengsara</i>	Merari Siregar / 1920	Indonesian	Chs. 1, 3, 5, 7–9	24
<i>Jane Eyre</i>	Charlotte Brontë / 1847	English	Chs. 1, 10, 23, 27, 37	24
<i>A Passage to India</i>	E. M. Forster / 1924	English	Chs. 1, 2, 12, 20, 37	24
Total	—	2 languages	Early–middle–late strata	96

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Source-Domain Architecture and Metaphor Type

The 96 metaphorical expressions reveal a source-domain architecture in which embodied experience provides a major cognitive basis for representing identity across the four narratives. BODY/HEART constitutes the most frequent source domain with 17 occurrences, followed closely by NATURE/FORCE with 16 occurrences, together accounting for 34.4% of the coded expressions. The prominence of these domains indicates that identity is repeatedly conceptualized through bodily interiority, affective sensation, environmental pressure, and experiences of force. Such mappings make abstract dimensions of attachment, vulnerability, self-control, and cultural belonging accessible through concrete experiential structures, consistent with the embodied orientation of metaphor cognition (Hu, 2023). A neuroaesthetic perspective likewise suggests that literary metaphors can extend conceptual mappings by activating experiential and affective associations rather than functioning merely as ornamental language (Porto, 2024). The distribution therefore establishes embodiment as a recurrent cognitive resource, while the different frequencies across individual narratives indicate that this shared resource is recruited for distinct identity-related problems.

The aggregate frequency, however, does not imply equivalent stylistic functions across the four novels. As shown in Table 2, Body/Heart is particularly prominent in *Sitti Nurbaya* with six occurrences, whereas Nature/Force reaches its highest frequency in *Jane Eyre* with six occurrences. *A Passage to India* combines relatively strong Body/Heart, Nature/Force, and Person/Agency mappings, suggesting a broader use of embodied and agentive structures in representing interpersonal and colonial relations. *Azab dan Sengsara*, by contrast, displays stronger concentrations in Nature/Force, Journey/Path, and Burden/Weight, producing a more processual and weight-oriented configuration of

experience. These differences support a corpus-based stylistic approach in which source-domain frequency is interpreted together with textual distribution, target relations, and narrative perspective rather than treated as an isolated lexical statistic (Lugea & Walker, 2023). The comparison also illustrates why recurring metaphorical patterns may generate different representational effects when embedded within different narrative environments (Harrison, 2024).

Table 2. Source-Domain Distribution by Narrative

Source Domain	<i>Sitti Nurbaya</i>	<i>Azab dan Sengsara</i>	<i>Jane Eyre</i>	<i>A Passage to India</i>	Total
Body/Heart	6	3	3	5	17
Nature/Force	2	4	6	4	16
Conflict/Violence	4	1	3	3	11
Person/Agency	1	3	3	4	11
Container/Boundary	2	1	5	2	10
Light/Darkness	4	0	2	1	7
Bond/Thread	1	2	2	1	6
Journey/Path	0	4	0	2	6
Burden/Weight	2	4	0	0	6
Building/Place	1	1	0	1	3
Text/Inscription	1	1	0	1	3
Total	24	24	24	24	96

The secondary domains further demonstrate that metaphorical identity construction involves both interpersonal and structural dimensions. Conflict/Violence and Person/Agency each occur 11 times, while Container/Boundary occurs 10 times, indicating that identity is frequently represented through struggle, agency, enclosure, and relational positioning. In *Sitti Nurbaya*, conflict imagery can move from socially playful or interpersonal positioning toward representations of colonial extraction and unequal power. In *A Passage to India*, conflict and personification more directly support the representation of antagonistic political and communal relations, including the attribution of agency to India, landscape, and collective entities. Container/Boundary, particularly visible in *Jane Eyre*, provides a cognitive structure for representing interiority, exclusion, restriction, and the negotiation of personal autonomy. Such patterns reinforce the argument that source-domain labels alone cannot determine interpretive meaning because their identity effects depend on the target domain and the narrative viewpoint in which the mapping is activated (Harrison, 2024). The stylistic significance of a metaphor consequently emerges from the interaction between conceptual structure and textual positioning rather than from domain frequency alone.

Less frequent domains nevertheless contribute distinctive cultural and narrative configurations. Journey/Path and Burden/Weight each occur six times, with both domains strongly concentrated in the Indonesian narratives, particularly *Azab dan Sengsara*. Journey imagery frames life, marriage, mobility, and moral continuity as processes unfolding across a trajectory, while burden imagery conceptualizes poverty, obligation, and social expectations as forms of weight that must be endured or carried. The concentration of these domains gives *Azab dan Sengsara* a distinctive processual and embodied representation of suffering that differs from the more agency-centered configuration of *Jane Eyre*. Light/Darkness occurs seven times and is concentrated in *Sitti Nurbaya* and *Jane Eyre*, where illumination and obscurity participate in representations of visibility, evaluation, hope, and relational perception. Comparable attention to metaphorical patterning in Indonesian literary texts demonstrates that recurring conceptual mappings can connect stylistic choices with cultural and ecological meanings (Tarigan et al., 2025). The relatively low frequency of a domain should therefore not be equated with low interpretive significance, since localized mappings may organize particularly important identity tensions within individual narratives.

The second dimension of the analysis concerns the distinction between structural and ontological metaphor. Structural metaphors account for 60 of the 96 expressions, or 62.5%, whereas ontological metaphors account for 36 expressions, or 37.5%. As Table 3 indicates, structural metaphor

is more frequent in every narrative, with the highest proportion appearing in *Jane Eyre*, where 17 of 24 expressions are structural. This distribution suggests that identity in the sampled corpus is more frequently organized through relationships between conceptual domains—such as force, journey, conflict, or containment—than represented simply as a discrete object or entity. Structural mappings can provide richer relational scaffolding because a relatively concrete experiential domain supplies an organized framework for understanding a more abstract identity experience (Reid et al., 2023). Research on metaphor comprehension also indicates that the coexistence of literal and figurative meanings and the conventionality of mappings can affect how metaphorical meaning is constructed, making structural organization relevant to interpretation (Gu et al., 2024).

Table 3. Metaphor Type by Narrative

Metaphor Type	<i>Sitti Nurbaya</i>	<i>Azab dan Sengsara</i>	<i>Jane Eyre</i>	<i>A Passage to India</i>	Total
Ontological	11	9	7	9	36
Structural	13	15	17	15	60
Total	24	24	24	24	96

Taken together, the source-domain and metaphor-type patterns indicate that metaphor in these narratives functions as a cognitive-stylistic mechanism for organizing identity rather than as an ornamental layer added to characterization. Body/Heart and Nature/Force establish embodied and environmental experiences as recurrent foundations, while conflict, agency, boundaries, journeys, and burdens extend those foundations into social, moral, and political relations. The predominance of structural metaphor further indicates that identity is commonly represented through dynamic conceptual relations rather than through static reification. At the same time, the individual narratives selectively foreground different mappings, allowing shared cognitive resources to acquire culturally and stylistically differentiated meanings. Literary metaphor research emphasizes that such patterned choices contribute to the distinctive cognitive organization of literary texts and should therefore be interpreted through their distribution and contextual function (Giovannelli, 2022). This pattern provides the analytical basis for the next section, where the source domains are examined in relation to the specific identity functions they construct across the narratives.

Metaphor and Identity Functions

The distribution of identity functions indicates that metaphorical expressions most frequently operate across cultural belonging, personal agency, and relational experience. Cultural/communal identity appears in 22 of the 96 expressions, followed by agency/selfhood with 20 and relational/affective identity with 19. Together, these three functions account for 61 expressions, or 63.5% of the corpus. The concentration suggests that identity is predominantly constructed through interactions between the individual, interpersonal relationships, and collective affiliations rather than through an isolated representation of the self. Metaphorical narratives have similarly been shown to provide resources for articulating both individual and collective dimensions of identity (Vogel, 2024). The pattern also corresponds with research demonstrating that metaphor can frame emotional experience as part of an ongoing process of identity construction (Muñoz-Salinas, 2023).

Table 4. Identity-Function Distribution by Narrative

Identity function	<i>Sitti Nurbaya</i>	<i>Azab dan Sengsara</i>	<i>Jane Eyre</i>	<i>A Passage to India</i>	Total
Cultural/communal	5	6	2	9	22
Agency/selfhood	3	3	12	2	20
Relational/affective	8	2	5	4	19
Colonial/political	4	0	0	9	13
Moral/spiritual	2	7	2	0	11
Gender/social	0	4	2	0	6

Social/class	2	2	1	0	5
Total	24	24	24	24	96

The distribution across individual narratives reveals distinct identity emphases within the shared metaphorical architecture. *Jane Eyre* contains 12 agency/selfhood expressions, representing half of its coded sample and making personal autonomy its most prominent identity function. Natural force, enclosure, bodily pressure, and conflict provide conceptual structures through which ethical struggle and the negotiation of autonomy become narratively visible. The prominence of agency-oriented metaphor is consistent with cognitive-stylistic approaches that treat recurring conceptual patterns as central to the representation of character and subjective experience (Harrison, 2024). In contrast, *Sitti Nurbaya* records eight relational/affective expressions, indicating a stronger orientation toward attachment, intimacy, separation, and interpersonal obligation. Metaphor thus distributes identity work differently across the narratives even when several source domains are shared.

The relational dimension becomes more evident when source domains are examined together with their identity functions. Body/Heart → Relational/Affective is the most frequent pairing, occurring nine times, while Bond/Thread → Relational/Affective and Container/Boundary → Relational/Affective occur three times each. These mappings conceptualize attachment and separation through bodily interiority, connection, and spatial boundedness, allowing interpersonal identity to be represented as something experienced, maintained, or disrupted. The prominence of these structures is compatible with research showing that narrated metaphors can externalize otherwise abstract dimensions of self and relational experience (Maddamsetti & Yuan, 2024). At the same time, Body/Heart also appears in cultural/communal, colonial/political, and moral/spiritual functions, demonstrating that a source domain does not possess a fixed identity meaning. Its interpretation changes according to the target, surrounding narrative context, and social relation encoded by the metaphor.

Table 5. Most Frequent Source-Domain × Identity-Function Pairings

Source Domain × Identity Function	Frequency
Body/Heart → Relational/Affective	9
Nature/Force → Agency/Selfhood	7
Conflict/Violence → Agency/Selfhood	4
Conflict/Violence → Colonial/Political	4
Light/Darkness → Cultural/Communal	4
Nature/Force → Cultural/Communal	4
Person/Agency → Cultural/Communal	4
Body/Heart → Cultural/Communal	3
Bond/Thread → Relational/Affective	3
Building/Place → Cultural/Communal	3
Container/Boundary → Relational/Affective	3
Person/Agency → Agency/Selfhood	3
Body/Heart → Colonial/Political	2
Body/Heart → Moral/Spiritual	2
Burden/Weight → Gender/Social	2

Agency and selfhood form another major axis through which the narratives organize identity. Nature/Force → Agency/Selfhood occurs seven times, followed by Conflict/Violence → Agency/Selfhood with four occurrences. In *Jane Eyre*, these mappings contribute to a representation of autonomy as a contested process involving resistance, pressure, restriction, and release rather than as a stable personal attribute. The same source domains can acquire different meanings elsewhere, since natural force may signify vulnerability or social pressure rather than individual empowerment. Metaphorical representations of identity similarly depend on the interaction between experiential structures and the narrative circumstances in which they are activated (Schellings et al., 2024). The results therefore indicate that agency is constructed through dynamic relations between self and surrounding forces rather than through direct descriptions of autonomous character.

Colonial and political identity provides a particularly concentrated pattern in *A Passage to India*. The novel contains nine colonial/political expressions and nine cultural/communal expressions, together representing 75% of its coded sample. Conflict/Violence contributes four colonial/political mappings, while Body/Heart contributes two, indicating that political relations are represented through both antagonism and embodied experience. Personification also becomes important because India, landscape, and collective entities can be represented as possessing agency or responding to human actions. Cognitive-poetic research on postcolonial fiction has similarly connected metaphorical structures with questions of colonial identity, difference, and cultural negotiation (Khan, 2025). The pattern should not, however, be reduced to a generalized colonial metaphor because its meaning emerges from the specific institutional, interpersonal, and cultural relations represented in Forster's narrative (Whetter, 2024).

The Indonesian narratives introduce a different configuration through moral, spiritual, gender, and social identity. *Azab dan Sengsara* contains seven moral/spiritual expressions and four gender/social expressions, making these functions substantially more prominent than in the other narratives. Burden/Weight → Gender/Social appears twice, while journey and burden mappings more broadly connect social obligation with experiences of movement, endurance, and constraint. These patterns position identity within structures of marriage, family obligation, morality, poverty, and culturally regulated social expectations. Indonesian literary studies have likewise demonstrated that metaphorical patterns can encode culturally situated values and social meanings rather than functioning only as stylistic embellishment (Lapasau et al., 2021). The distribution consequently shows that identity functions are shaped by the particular social and cultural pressures through which characters experience belonging, obligation, and selfhood.

Indonesian Cultural Representation

The Indonesian subcorpus demonstrates a culturally differentiated metaphorical configuration across *Sitti Nurbaya* and *Azab dan Sengsara*. All 11 source domains identified in the full corpus are represented within the two Indonesian narratives, although their distributions differ substantially between the works. Body/Heart is the most frequent domain with nine occurrences, followed by Nature/Force and Burden/Weight with six occurrences each. At the level of cultural frames, kinship/affect, landscape/place, spirituality/religion, social hierarchy, gender/adat, and mobility/merantau provide recurring contexts through which identity is represented. Such patterns indicate that cultural representation is embedded in conceptual mappings that connect personal experience with social relations, place, belief, and collective expectations rather than appearing only through explicitly cultural vocabulary (Senen et al., 2025). The results therefore position metaphor as an important mechanism through which culturally situated experiences become cognitively structured in literary narratives.

The distribution of cultural frames shows that spirituality/religion is considerably more prominent in the Indonesian group, with nine coded frame occurrences compared with three in the Anglophone group. The Indonesian narratives also contain dedicated gender/adat and mobility/merantau frames, each occurring four times, whereas these frames do not appear in the selected Anglophone sample. These patterns are particularly relevant to *Azab dan Sengsara*, where moral and social experience is repeatedly connected with culturally regulated expectations concerning family, marriage, movement, and obligation. Metaphorical representations of life as a journey have similarly been identified as a recurrent conceptual structure in Indonesian literary narratives, particularly when experiences of change and continuity are represented through movement (Lapasau et al., 2021). The presence of adat and mobility frames consequently expands the interpretation of identity beyond individual psychology toward culturally organized forms of social positioning. The frequencies should nevertheless be read as properties of the selected coded expressions rather than as evidence that the corresponding themes are absent from the Anglophone novels.

Table 6. Cultural Frames in the Indonesian and Anglophone Groups

Cultural Frame	Anglophone	Indonesian	Total
Landscape/place	11	9	20
Kinship/affect	9	9	18

Selfhood/agency	12	3	15
Spirituality/religion	3	9	12
Colonial governance	7	4	11
Social hierarchy	2	3	5
Gender/adat	0	4	4
Mobility/merantau	0	4	4
National/cultural identity	3	0	3
Class/economy	0	2	2
Cultural memory	0	1	1
Institutions/class	1	0	1

Sitti Nurbaya presents a particularly strong relationship between bodily imagery, affective relations, and cultural positioning. Body/Heart occurs six times, while Light/Darkness occurs four times, making these among the most distinctive domains of the novel's sampled metaphors. The concentration of relational/affective identity functions, which reaches eight of the 24 coded expressions, connects bodily interiority with love, attachment, separation, and interpersonal evaluation. Light and darkness further provide conceptual resources for representing visibility, value, emotional recognition, and the perception of people or situations. Research on metaphor in Indonesian literary texts demonstrates that such recurring mappings can connect stylistic patterns with culturally meaningful representations of social and environmental experience (Intang & Jufri, 2025). In *Sitti Nurbaya*, cultural identity therefore emerges through the intersection of intimate relations, social hierarchy, place, and external political-economic pressure rather than through cultural description alone.

Azab dan Sengsara produces a markedly different cultural configuration through Nature/Force, Journey/Path, and Burden/Weight. Each of these domains occurs four times, creating a pattern in which suffering and social experience are conceptualized through environmental force, movement, and weight. The Journey/Path mappings frame life and mobility as trajectories, while Burden/Weight conceptualizes marriage, poverty, and obligation as conditions that must be carried or endured. Moral/spiritual identity constitutes seven of the 24 coded expressions, making it the most prominent identity function in the novel, while gender/social identity accounts for four. These patterns resonate with studies of Indonesian literary metaphor that connect conceptual imagery with cultural values, ecological settings, and socially embedded experiences (Tarigan et al., 2025). The resulting representation of culture is dynamic because religion, family obligation, gender expectations, and mobility operate as forces that shape the characters' possible positions rather than as static cultural markers.

The comparison between the two Indonesian novels further shows that cultural identity is distributed across multiple experiential domains. *Sitti Nurbaya* concentrates more strongly on Body/Heart, Conflict/Violence, and Light/Darkness, whereas *Azab dan Sengsara* gives greater prominence to Nature/Force, Journey/Path, Burden/Weight, and Person/Agency. The contrast suggests that Rusli's narrative more frequently links cultural and relational value to intimate experience and social pressure, while Siregar's narrative more strongly organizes cultural experience through suffering, movement, moral obligation, and environmental force. Similar cognitive-stylistic approaches to Indonesian literary material have shown that metaphor can encode identity through image schemas and culturally situated conceptual structures (Puteri & Nur, 2024). The patterns also correspond with pragmatic-stylistic research demonstrating that metaphorical expressions can perform social and interpersonal functions within literary discourse (Rahardi et al., 2025). Cultural representation consequently operates through different configurations of shared metaphorical resources rather than through a single fixed Indonesian cultural schema.

An important methodological implication concerns the relationship between cultural specificity and metaphor identification. The expressions in the Indonesian novels were identified in their original language before English glosses were introduced for comparative presentation, preserving culturally marked lexical and conceptual features during the coding process. This procedure is particularly relevant because translation can modify the accessibility or conventionality of metaphorical expressions across languages. Comparative metaphor research emphasizes the importance of systematic identification protocols when metaphor is analyzed across linguistically

different corpora (Bajzát & Gábor, 2024). The MIPVU-informed approach also provides a structured basis for distinguishing metaphorically used lexical units from literal uses without assuming that cultural meaning is automatically encoded in every figurative expression (Steen et al., 2010). The Indonesian findings should therefore be understood as evidence of culturally situated metaphorical patterning within the selected corpus, not as a comprehensive inventory of Indonesian cultural identity in early twentieth-century literature.

Cross-Cultural Convergence and Cognitive-Stylistic Synthesis

The comparison between the Indonesian and Anglophone corpora reveals both convergence and divergence in the metaphorical construction of identity. Cultural/communal identity occurs 11 times in each group, while relational/affective identity appears 10 times in the Indonesian corpus and nine times in the Anglophone corpus. These closely distributed frequencies indicate that affiliation, interpersonal connection, and collective belonging constitute shared conceptual concerns across the two literary traditions. The convergence is also visible in the recurring use of bodily, spatial, environmental, and relational source domains to conceptualize experiences that are otherwise abstract. Such patterns support a cognitive-stylistic perspective in which metaphor provides shared conceptual resources that can be adapted to different textual and cultural environments (Lugea & Walker, 2023). The comparison therefore points to cognitive commonality without requiring the two literary traditions to be treated as culturally equivalent.

The divergences become more visible when identity functions are examined in relation to specific cultural and narrative contexts. Moral/spiritual identity occurs nine times in the Indonesian corpus but only twice in the Anglophone corpus, while selfhood/agency is more strongly represented in the Anglophone group. *Jane Eyre* is particularly concentrated around agency/selfhood, whereas *A Passage to India* combines colonial/political and cultural/communal identity in a markedly different configuration. The Indonesian narratives, meanwhile, connect identity more frequently with spirituality, social obligation, gender/adat, and mobility. These differences indicate that shared metaphorical resources are recruited to address different narrative problems rather than producing identical meanings across cultures. Studies of metaphor and postcolonial identity similarly demonstrate that conceptual mappings can become closely associated with questions of cultural difference, acculturation, and social positioning (Khan, 2025). Cross-cultural interpretation therefore requires attention to the particular identity functions and historical relations activated by each narrative.

Source-domain diversity provides an additional descriptive perspective on these similarities and differences. The Indonesian corpus contains all 11 source domains and records a Shannon entropy of 3.321 bits, while the Anglophone corpus contains 10 domains with an entropy of 3.011 bits. The 0.310-bit difference indicates a difference in the distribution of coded domains, but it should not be interpreted as evidence that one literary culture possesses greater metaphorical complexity. At the individual-narrative level, *Sitti Nurbaya* records an entropy of 3.022 bits, *Azab dan Sengsara* 3.105, *Jane Eyre* 2.694, and *A Passage to India* 3.070. The lower value for *Jane Eyre* corresponds with its stronger concentration around Nature/Force and Container/Boundary, whereas the higher values in the other narratives reflect comparatively broader distributions across source domains. Entropy therefore functions here as a descriptive measure of concentration and dispersion rather than as an inferential or evaluative indicator (Rizzato, 2024).

Table 7. Diversity and Concentration Measures by Narrative

Narrative	n	Domains	Domain H	Functions	Function H	Rel. (%)	Col. (%)
<i>Sitti Nurbaya</i>	24	10	3.022	6	2.403	33.3	16.7
<i>Azab dan Sengsara</i>	24	10	3.105	6	2.422	8.3	0.0
<i>Jane Eyre</i>	24	7	2.694	6	2.059	20.8	0.0
<i>A Passage to India</i>	24	10	3.070	4	1.791	16.7	37.5

The cross-cultural patterns become more analytically meaningful when translated into recurring conceptual mappings. Affection is an Inner Body/Heart links emotional attachment and

separation to bodily interiority in both groups, while Crisis is Natural Force conceptualizes vulnerability and struggle through environmental pressure. Obligation is Burden and Life/Mobility is a Journey are more strongly localized in the Indonesian narratives, where social expectations and movement become central to the representation of moral and cultural identity. Belonging Is Boundary/Container similarly provides a structure for representing inclusion, exclusion, intimacy, and autonomy across the corpus. POWER IS Conflict/Violence connects identity with antagonism and resistance, while Culture/Polity is a Person gives collective or political entities forms of agency. Value/Presence is Light further demonstrates how illumination can organize perceptions of emotional and cultural significance (Giovanelli, 2022).

Table 8. Representative Conceptual Mappings Across the Corpus

Conceptual Mapping	Main Identity Function	Cross-Cultural Manifestation
Affection is an Inner Body/Heart	Relational/affective	Love, attachment, separation, and emotional injury
Crisis is Natural Force	Agency/selfhood	Suffering, vulnerability, pressure, and psychological struggle
Obligation is Burden	Gender/social; moral/spiritual	Marriage, poverty, duty, and social expectations
Life/Mobility is a Journey	Mobility; moral identity	Life trajectories, departure, movement, and transformation
Belonging is Boundary/Container	Cultural/communal	Inclusion, exclusion, intimacy, and separation
Power is Conflict/Violence	Agency; colonial/political	Resistance, domination, extraction, and antagonism
Culture/Polity is a Person	Cultural/communal	Agency attributed to collective entities, India, or social structures
Value/Presence is Light	Relational; cultural/evaluative	Visibility, hope, recognition, and perceived value

The cognitive-stylistic significance of these mappings lies in their capacity to connect recurring experiential structures with culturally specific identity problems. Metaphor comprehension is influenced by factors such as conventionality, contextual information, and the relationship between literal and figurative meanings, which means that identical or similar mappings may not generate identical interpretive effects for all readers (Gu et al., 2024). Research on literary metaphor comprehension also indicates that readers' cognitive styles can influence how metaphorical meanings are approached and integrated during interpretation (Kuzmíková & Kuzmík, 2024). The present analysis does not measure actual reader processing, so these cognitive dimensions are treated as interpretive affordances constructed by the texts rather than as experimentally observed responses. This distinction allows cognitive-stylistic analysis to remain grounded in textual evidence while recognizing that metaphor interpretation involves interaction between linguistic form, conceptual structure, and reader cognition. The approach is therefore more precise than treating every figurative expression as automatically representative of culture, while remaining more context-sensitive than a decontextualized inventory of metaphorical forms.

The overall synthesis identifies three recurrent cognitive-stylistic operations through which the four narratives construct identity: materializing, dynamizing, and socializing experience. Identity is materialized through Body/Heart, Burden/Weight, Container/Boundary, and Building/Place, which transform abstract states into embodied or spatial configurations. Identity is dynamized through Nature/Force, Conflict/Violence, Journey/Path, and Person/Agency, allowing selfhood and social position to appear as processes involving movement, resistance, pressure, or transformation. Identity is socialized through cultural frames involving kinship, religion, adat, mobility, colonial governance, class, landscape, and communal membership. The Indonesian narratives are therefore constitutive evidence in the comparative analysis rather than supplementary examples added to an Anglophone

framework, consistent with approaches that treat stylistic patterning as a source of culturally situated identity construction (Saputra & Sofa, 2026). Taken together, these findings show how shared metaphorical resources can produce differentiated representations of identity when organized through distinct narrative, cultural, and historical configurations.

CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis establishes metaphor as a systematic interface between cognition, narrative style, and cultural representation across the four literary narratives. Within the balanced sample of 96 expressions, Body/Heart and Nature/Force emerge as the most frequent source domains, while structural metaphors account for 62.5% of the coded expressions. More importantly, the distribution of these metaphors across identity functions reveals that shared conceptual resources are adapted to different narrative and social concerns. Sitti Nurbaya predominantly connects metaphor with relational and affective identity while retaining a significant colonial-political dimension. Azab dan Sengsara emphasizes moral-spiritual identity through representations of obligation, suffering, gender, and mobility, whereas Jane Eyre concentrates strongly on agency and selfhood. A Passage to India directs metaphor toward colonial-political and cultural/communal identity, demonstrating how similar cognitive resources can organize substantially different historical and narrative experiences.

The Indonesian subcorpus occupies a central position in the comparative framework because it represents all eleven source-domain categories and displays distinctive concentrations in moral-spiritual, gender/adat, and mobility/merantau frames. These findings do not establish essential differences between Indonesian and Anglophone literary traditions, but instead describe how the selected metaphors distribute cultural meaning under an equal-sample comparative design. The results further indicate that cultural representation operates dynamically through relations among body, place, kinship, religion, obligation, mobility, social hierarchy, and political power. The principal limitation concerns the purposive nature of the 24 expressions selected from each narrative, which represent salient identity-related metaphors rather than an exhaustive inventory of metaphorical language. The single-analyst coding procedure also limits the possibility of assessing inter-coder agreement, despite the use of a defined coding protocol and audit process. Future research can extend the framework through full-text annotation, independent multi-analyst coding, additional Indonesian languages and translations, and larger samples spanning different historical periods. Within these limitations, the findings demonstrate that cognitive stylistics can provide a systematic comparative account of literary identity while maintaining the distinction between cultural representation, conceptual metaphor, and narrative style.

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