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Maritime eco-narratives in *Ramalan Laut Untuk Banua* and *Syair Laut Syah Alam*: A comparative study of ecological imagery

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Abstract: *The sea in literary works is not merely a geographical setting but an ecological space experienced through language. This study describes and compares the forms and functions of ecological imagery in constructing maritime eco-narratives in the Indonesian young adult novels Ramalan Laut untuk Banua and Syair Laut Syah Alam. It uses a descriptive-interpretive qualitative method that combines ecostylistics, the Blue Humanities perspective, and comparative literature. The data are words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and narrative excerpts that construct ecological imagery of the sea and coastal environments; they were collected through intensive reading, note-taking, and coding, then analyzed interpretively and comparatively by the forms, intensity, patterns, and functions of the imagery. The findings show that both novels represent the sea as a living space, a source of livelihood, a cultural space, and a dynamic ecosystem under various environmental pressures. Visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile-olfactory, and organic imagery portray spatial conditions, natural dynamics, community activities, and characters' bodily experience of the maritime environment. The comparison reveals similarities and differences in how imagery constructs atmosphere, character experience, and human–environment relationships. Imagery thus serves not only an aesthetic function but also an eco-narrative strategy for concretizing human–sea relationships and articulating ecological issues in maritime spaces.*

Keywords: *ecological imagery, maritime eco-narrative, Blue Humanities, comparative literature*

INTRODUCTION

Narrative fiction offers a pathway to environmental awareness. The events characters experience can immerse readers, open space for interpretation, and often more effectively than expository accounts, shift attitudes and beliefs toward sustainability (Andana et al., 2024; Dahlstrom, 2014; Green & Appel, 2024; Green & Brock, 2000; Sulistyorini et al., 2025). Such narratives about the human–environment relationship are often termed "eco-narratives."

This potential is especially significant in Indonesia, where the sea is an ecological space, a source of livelihood, a cultural realm, and a basis of community identity (Putri, 2022). The sea in literature is more than a setting; it is integral to environmental interaction shaped by the author's ideas, experiences, and concerns (Ilma et al., 2026). The "Blue Humanities" perspective likewise urges the humanities to move beyond land-centered orientations and treat the sea as a material, ecological, cultural, and historical space (Buell, 1995; DeLoughrey, 2019; Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996; Mentz, 2009, 2022).

The human–sea relationship is particularly relevant to Indonesia's "3T" regions (underdeveloped, frontier, and outermost), which hold rich ecological and cultural assets but face geographical, social, and infrastructural challenges. Young adult novels, which tend to be set in major cities, rarely depict either (Agustina, 2017; Dewojati, 2021;

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Hartono & Suroso, 2019; Intan, 2020; Isroyati et al., 2025; Noor, 2015; Ombudsman RI, 2023; Sumandari et al., 2023; Umardi & Haryanti, 2022; Wulan, 2013; Zahro et al., 2016).

In 2024 the government addressed this gap through a writer residency program in the 3T regions. Twenty-five selected writers were each stationed in a different region for 25 days, with the goal of producing two young adult novels that highlight local potential and reflect each area's social, natural, and cultural conditions. Such works serve not only the genre's usual entertainment function but also an educational one, introducing the diversity of Indonesia's living environments, cultures, and environmental issues (AdminSekolahTimur.com, 2024; Azzahra, 2024; Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, 2019, 2025; Pusat Pembinaan Bahasa dan Sastra, 2024). Here, the residency is the backdrop for literary texts focused on 3T regions and their specific ecological experiences.

Ramalan Laut untuk Banua (A Sea Prophecy for Banua; RLuB) by Ary Nilandari and *Syair Laut Syah Alam* (Syah Alam's Sea Verses; SLSA) by Gin Teguh are residency products centered on the maritime world. RLuB follows Banua, Alun, and Ling Ling, members of the Suku Laut (Sea People) community in Bintan Regency, Riau Islands Province, and encourages readers to preserve the environment while honoring ancestral heritage. SLSA follows Seroja and her grandfather, Syah Alam, on the coast of Dumai City, Riau Province; it weaves in sea-themed verses recited by Syah Alam, who embodies ancestral heritage, alongside Seroja's dream, as a Malay girl, of becoming a fisher. The novels share a geographical affinity, since Riau Province and Riau Islands Province were once a single province, and both translate local wisdom into narrative through the sea, coastlines, beaches, and other natural features.

Ecocritical studies show that the sea and coastal communities can be focal points for ecological issues in literature. Research on Jemmy Piran's short story *Pemanggil Kematian* reveals how the author imagines the exploitation of the sea and fish and the myths surrounding them (Ramadhan et al., 2023), and a study of Okky Madasari's *Mata dan Manusia Laut* highlights the crisis facing the marine environment and coastal lives(Juanda, 2025). On ecological imagery specifically, Altinus et al., (2024) showed how Ali Syamsudin Arsi's poetry anthology *Gemuruh Puisi* opposes environmental degradation through visual, auditory, tactile, and kinetic imagery. However, no research has yet used ecological imagery to compare maritime eco-narratives in two young adult novels produced through writers' residencies in 3T regions.

This gap defines the study's novelty, which lies in the convergence of three aspects: production through a writers' residency in 3T regions, a maritime eco-narrative perspective, and the mapping of ecological imagery by domain. Seventeen ecological keywords served as entry points for locating data and were grouped into four imagery domains: (1) maritime and coastal spaces (sea, coast, beach, sand); (2) terrestrial spaces and ecological materials (land, soil, water); (3) maritime-atmospheric natural dynamics (waves, currents, wind, storms, air); and (4) atmospheric-cosmological spaces (horizon, sky, moon, stars, sun). Together these form an imagery network representing the space, materiality, and dynamics of the maritime environment and its links to atmospheric and cosmological realms. The analysis moves from keywords to imagery, from imagery to environmental conditions, and from environmental conditions to eco-narrative functions.

The study therefore aims to describe and compare the forms and functions of ecological imagery in constructing maritime eco-narratives in RLuB and SLSA, based on usage patterns and narrative functions across these four domains. In doing so it positions both novels, as outputs of the 2024 residency, in their construction of the maritime environment and human–sea relationships, and it enriches ecocritical and Blue Humanities scholarship on Indonesian, particularly young adult, literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study uses ecocriticism as its primary basis for understanding literary works as depictions of the interaction between humans and the physical environment. The framework does not treat humans as the sole center of the narrative; it stresses the reciprocal relationship between humanity and nature (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996). This aligns withBuell, (1995) "environmental imagination," which positions literature as a medium for imagining, representing, and giving meaning to the environment.

Through the lens of the blue humanities, ecocriticism takes on a specialized dimension in maritime literature. Mentz (2009) and Huber & Brazier (2023) show that the sea is not merely a geographical space but one with rich cultural and historical significance, as active a site as the land. The approach thus suits works in which the sea is the dominant space, since attention extends to the ocean's characteristics, dynamics, and the nature of human interaction with it. James & Morel (2018) add that ecocriticism helps explain how environmental narratives are built through narrative forms and devices, so ecological elements can be examined for how they shape a novel's intrinsic elements. Combined, the two perspectives let the sea be understood as an ecological space that interacts with narrative structure and experience, not merely as a narrated object.

At the textual level, environmental representation can be examined through ecostylistics, which studies how language represents nature, the environment, and sustainability (Virdis, 2022). Here, ecological imagery is treated as the linguistic construction through which environmental elements appear visually, auditorily, olfactorily, gustatorily, tactilely, organically, and kinesthetically, following Perrine (1969) types of imagery. Images mark the textual units that shape ecological depiction, and they are analyzed by usage context, the environment represented, the sensory experience constructed, and narrative function.

Comparative literature, which develops through comparison across works, languages, cultures, and literary contexts (Bassnett, 1993), supplies the means of identifying similarities and differences. The novels are compared on usage patterns, which show how ecological elements interconnect to shape the environmental configuration, and on narrative functions, which explain imagery's role in constructing space, atmosphere, character experience, conflict, and the human–environment relationship.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive-interpretive qualitative method combining ecostylistics, the Blue Humanities perspective, and comparative literature (Bassnett, 1993; Mentz, 2009; Virdis, 2022). The data sources are RLuB and SLSA; the data are words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and narrative excerpts that construct ecological imagery. Data were gathered through intensive reading, note-taking, and coding, using the ecological keywords from the introduction as initial markers and checking each candidate in context for relevance as ecological imagery. Identified data were classified by the four ecological domains and the forms of imagery constructed.

Analysis proceeded through identification, interpretation, and comparison. Identification addressed the linguistic forms and sensory experiences in the texts; interpretation addressed the environmental conditions represented and the functions of imagery in constructing space, atmosphere, character experience, conflict, and human–environment relationships (James & Morel, 2018; Virdis, 2022). The novels were compared on the forms, intensity, patterns, and functions of imagery, and the findings were synthesized to explain how a maritime eco-narrative is constructed: a narrative that presents the sea and coast as dynamic ecological spaces tied to human experience and the socio-cultural life of coastal communities.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

In RLuB and SLSA the maritime environment is more than a passive setting: maritime and coastal spaces form dynamic ecosystems that shape coastal communities' inner landscapes and cultural forms. Findings are organized by the four ecological domains and five forms of imagery (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile-olfactory, and organic), read stylistically through diction, sensory construction, and figurative language, with the same pattern applied to both novels so the comparison is equivalent.

Ecological Imagery Based on Thematic Fields

Maritime, Sea, and Water Spaces

This domain covers seawater, water color, ocean depth, marine biodiversity, and characters' attachment to the sea. Both novels position the sea not only as a space of action but as a spatial entity of the reader's memory, while water becomes a medium of memory and identity (Mentz, 2009); the texts let readers sense the sea before interpreting it.

Visual Imagery

RLuB uses visual imagery to portray the dimming of the Dumai coast under accumulated industrial waste: *"The sea off the Dumai coast was never truly blue; it was more of a gray."* (Page 1). Denotatively, "never truly blue" describes turbid water; connotatively, "gray" operates as a metaphor of lost color that signifies not only pollution but also the fading of hope and of the Sea People's pure living space. "Never truly" marks the damage as permanent and deeply rooted. Imagery works here as ecological cognition: rather than offering pollution statistics, the text sets this gray against the clarity of the seagrass meadow.

"The boat entered the seagrass meadow, and seven dugongs swam around it."
(Page 38)

"Sunlight pierced the water down to the bottom and revealed the seagrass meadow." (Page 41)

These passages contrast with the gray Dumai sea: the industrial coast is depicted negatively, whereas the seagrass waters are transparent and inhabited. Ecostylistically, this is an argumentative strategy that sets cared-for waters against exploited ones without explicit explanation, and the dugongs show the meadow to be a place where humans encounter other living beings. SLSA, by contrast, preserves the beauty of the night and the abundance of nature's sustenance.

"The sea's surface reflected the silvery light of the full moon." (Page 10)

"O sea so deep / Full of secrets submerged / Fish, shellfish, prawns in plenty / God's bounty, never-ending." (Page 2)

Where RLuB uses visual imagery to voice environmental degradation, SLSA uses it to express gratitude. Words such as "silvery" and the gleaming gold of dawn evoke moonlight and daybreak as signs of divine generosity, showing a human–sea relationship that is reciprocal and religious.

Auditory Imagery

In SLSA, the sounds of nature become a form of poetic personification.

"Like the waves, crashing softly." (Page 1)

"The whisper of the sea breeze and the rumble of the waves that enveloped the stillness." (Page 9)

The two lines grade the sea's volume from gently breaking waves to a rumble that seems to envelop the silence, as though the sea had an expressive will. "Enveloped" turns silence into something wrapped in cloth, a sound image perceived as a tactile object, so the senses exchange functions to present the sea totally. The Malay verse tradition surfaces here through rhythm and sound.

"Shah Alam sang while gazing at the sea; they were not just stories, but like whispers from the ocean itself." (Page 96)

Here oral tradition is song, indistinguishable from the sea's sound, and "not just stories" treats ecological knowledge as a living archive of the sea; ecostylistically, it is a story the community lives by, shaping how it perceives and treats the sea. In RLuB, by contrast, the sound of the sea marks atmospheric change and inner dynamics, a silent inner dialogue.

Kinesthetic, Tactile-Olfactory, and Organic Imagery

"The sea's surface, once calm, began to toy with the boat." (Page 3)

"The swaying of the waves made the water on the planks move, spread, then meet and scatter again." (Page 82)

"Toy with" personifies the sea, giving it an actor's agency while the boat carrying humans becomes the object moved. This is not mere decoration but a statement of the novel's epistemological stance: humans do not hold power. Water that "meets and scatters again" creates a cyclical rhythm, a natural metaphor for the uncertainty of coastal life that the body must follow rather than merely comprehend. The salty smell of the sea works as a biological marker and memory trigger.

"Seroja loved to smell the scent of the sea clinging to her grandfather's body." (Page 18)

The grandfather's scent, mingled with the sea, becomes a medium of intergenerational identity transfer. Olfactory imagery works most intimately where visual and auditory imagery stay distant: the sea enters the home through the grandfather's breath and scent, extending maritime space into the domestic sphere, so maritime identity is inherited through the senses. Organic imagery reaches its greatest ontological depth when characters voice collective awareness.

"They never truly understood that the sea was Shah Alam's very breath of life." (Page 141)

"This is not just a place to earn a living. This is our soul. This is home." (Page 159)

In "breath of life," the boundary between the human body and the sea's body dissolves. Breathing is among life's most basic acts, so equating the sea with breath asserts that separating humans from the sea destroys the humans themselves. "Home" is not a building but a living relationship, what the Blue Humanities calls the sea as a fully lived space. Both passages show the eco-narratives operating at an ontological, not merely descriptive, level.

Land Spaces and Coastal Ecological Materials

This domain covers the coastal boundary, shoreline vegetation, and the transformation of ecological materials by human activity. The coast is a liminal zone where two ecosystems meet and coastal identities form, and it is also the area most vulnerable to economic encroachment; the conversion of natural space into industrial space appears as a change in imagery. SLSA presents coconut trees as the natural social shelter of Malay fishermen.

"Under the shade of the coconut tree at the edge of the pier." (Page 91)

"The rustling of coconut leaves buffeted by the night wind." (Page 133)

In Malay maritime tradition the coconut tree is a boundary marker, a shelter, and a silent witness to conversation, and "shade" signals protection that shapes social space. The visual "pier" and auditory "rustling" show the coast as a multisensory whole in which social and natural life proceed without friction. RLuB, in contrast, depicts a shift toward industrial monoculture.

"Surrounded by towering oil palms." (Page 112). Stylistically, the shift has three aspects: lush coconut trees give way to oil palms that "tower"; "surrounded" builds the claustrophobia of a character hemmed in; and the rustle of leaves is absent, because monoculture yields no rich soundscape. The ecocritical point is that when the coast turns from living space into production area, communities lose not only their livelihoods but also their way of experiencing the world. The texture of the beach is further conveyed through visual-tactile imagery.

"An expanse of black sand mixed with crumbs of acacia trunk." (Page 9)

"The boat's keel scraped the sand." (Page 42)

The first quotation combines two sensory modalities: the eyes perceive expanse and color, while the skin senses the texture of black sand mixed with acacia fragments. In the second, "scraped" presents friction between boat and land, and the collision of sound and vibration as tactile-auditory imagery shows that humans' arrival on land is not a mere logistical transaction.

Atmospheric Natural Dynamics (Waves, Wind, Storms, Air)

This domain, covering waves, wind, storms, and air, represents weather fluctuation and its physical and psychological effects on characters. In ecocriticism, weather affirms that humans live in a world they cannot wholly control; storms are constructed as sensory experience, and air quality indicates ecosystem health.

"Huge waves slammed into the hull, shaking the Layar Muda (Young Sail) violently." (Page 73)

"Waves crashed down, the storm rolled." (Page 74)

The first quotation builds nature's aggressiveness through the impact verbs "slammed" and "shaking," making the boat and its crew receivers rather than controllers. The parallel clauses of the second imitate the rhythm of a rolling storm, bringing extreme weather into the language itself. In both novels, storms test the attachment of those who truly understand the sea and survive it.

"Breathing in the cold, damp air." (Page 16)

"The air around them felt heavy, mixed with the smell of crude oil and palm-oil dregs wafting from the factories." (Page 112)

The stylistics work on three levels. First, the sensory verb is negative: air is not "breathed in" as a refreshing act but presses on the characters as a passive burden. Second, air quality is tied to its economic sources, crude oil and palm-oil residue, mapping pollution onto the structures that produce it rather than disguising it as natural disaster. Third, "wafting from the factories" indicates a continuous, large-scale flow. Against the "cold, damp" air, what the industrial coast loses is not merely beauty but the basic human right to breathe clean air, an ecocritical argument within a framework of environmental injustice.

Cosmological Atmospherics (Horizon, Sky, Moon, Stars, Sun)

This domain presents the horizon, sky, moon, stars, and sun alongside the oceanic expanse as a cosmic landscape. It moves ecological imagery from the perceptual to the cosmological scale, where sea meets sky and coastal people witness the encounter of two vast orders of the universe. The horizon appears either as an intact sacred space or as one broken by industrial artifacts.

"Stars twinkled above the vast horizon." (Page 31)

"Morning slowly rose, wrapping the sea in a golden shimmer." (Page 154)

These lines construct sea and sky as one visual unity: "vast horizon" opens vision rather than restricting it, and "twinkled" carries continuity from sea to sky. Dawn "wrapping" the sea repeats the enveloping verb used for waves and silence in the auditory field, a stylistic consistency, and places coastal people in a dignified position through orderly, beautiful scenes. In RLuB, by contrast, industrial facilities distort the horizon.

"Thick black smoke. Giant tubes stood looming like cold, soulless guardians, splitting the horizon..." (Page 111)

"Splitting the horizon" makes the tubes a symbol of anthropocentric technology imposed on the sanctity of coastal sky and sea, in three ways. Thick black contrasts antithetically with the golden glow of dawn. The tubes are coldly personified as "cold, soulless guardians," an irony, since a guardian should protect whereas this one drives away. And "splitting" shows a once-whole horizon now fractured. Ecocritically, a broken

horizon means coastal communities' cosmological order is no longer perceived as a meaningful cosmos but as a fragmented industrial site.

Discussion

Ecostylistics of Maritime Environmental Perception

Ecological imagery in both novels actively triggers readers' mental construction. Imagery is a cognitive means of concretizing abstract ideas and strengthening sensory experience (Damayanti et al., 2025; Nurgiyantoro, 2018; Saputro et al., 2021; Sutejo, 2012); this study adds that ecological imagery also constructs relationships. Activating five sensory modes moves readers beyond an anthropocentric view toward appreciating non-human capacities. Personifications such as the sea that "began to toy with the boat" (p. 3) or the sea wind that "blew a song" (p. 155) affirm the sea's agency, while humans, who are not dominant, must adapt to nature's dynamics. Ecocritically, the works' ideology is carried by grammar: the sea as subject and humans as object shape assumptions about the hierarchy of life. Garrard (2012) observes that ecocriticism helps form narratives that move beyond the binary between human culture and the natural environment, and the two novels dissolve that opposition through diction of beauty and depth. Imagery's ecological meaning also depends on its domain: the moon functions differently in the cosmological domain of contemplation than in the maritime domain.

Blue Humanities: Oceanic Memory and Coastal Ecological Injustice

Blue humanities treats the sea as a lived socio-cultural space. This study suggests that contemporary Indonesian literature offers complementary patterns of maritime representation that can enrich a blue humanities map largely drawn from Western traditions (Gillis, 2012; Helmreich, 2009; Mentz, 2009). First, the Malay poetic-spiritual mode of SLSA builds oceanic memory: waves, dawn, the full moon, and sung verse become a living archive storing memories of friendship, sorrow, and the ethics of going to sea wisely (Mentz, 2009). The scent of the sea, too, is inherited through the body rather than merely told. Second, the critical realism of RLuB turns ecological imagery into a discourse of resistance to environmental inequality (Garrard, 2012; Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996): the gray Dumai sea, thick factory smoke, and palm-oil odor voice the marginalization of the Sea People through the destruction of coastal habitat by industrial oil palm plantations. Oceanic memory and ecological injustice are thus two sides of one relationship, since narratives that record seafaring memory also testify to the wounded sea. SLSA represents a phase of harmonious encounter and RLuB a phase of clash under extractive capitalism, and together they compose a long, intact narrative of the Malay coast.

Comparative Literature and Eco-Narrative Strategy

Stylistic choices shaped by textual traditions and socio-ecological background confirm a basic principle of comparative literature: works are not read in a vacuum, and language style is part of responding to reality (Damono, 2005; Endraswara, 2011; Maelasari, 2018; Nugraha, 2021; Remak, 1990). SLSA joins classical Malay poetic form with modern storytelling, giving it a dominance of auditory and cosmological imagery; crashing, rumbling, and singing form the backbone of its eco-narrative. RLuB relies on ecological realism, using visual and olfactory-tactile imagery to stress the clash between pure natural space and modern industrial space: the crisis is seen as gray, smelled as

dregs, and felt as heavy air. The comparison is more than a juxtaposition of works that share a theme (Remak, 1990): the novels are related through the Malay maritime cultural tradition as a root theme, shared ontological assumptions about the sea's agency, and the shared function of mediating human–sea relationships. They diverge in strategic direction, shaped by socio-ecological context: one poetic-cosmological, the other critically realist (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of Forms and Functions of Ecological Imagery

Imagery Category	Novel RLuB	Novel SLSA	Ecological Function
Visual imagery	Gray Dumai sea; seagrass meadow and dugongs; thick black smoke; tubes splitting the horizon.	Moon-silvered sea; gleaming gold dawn; silver scales of shad in the nets.	Concretizes the coastal landscape and voices critical discourse on industrial pollution.
Auditory imagery	Roaring wind and waves of changing weather; the echoing whisper of the silent sea; rustling coconut leaves.	Softly crashing waves; whispering wind; sung verse blending with the ocean's whisper.	Builds an inner soundscape of, and dialogue between, humans and nature.
Kinesthetic imagery	Boat toyed with by waves; water churning on the planks; keel scraping sand.	Waves swaying the Layar Muda; water surface moving near the boat.	Represents the waves' agency and the sailors' physical adaptation.
Tactile-olfactory imagery	Smell of crude oil and palm-oil dregs; wet wind slapping; cool, fresh water.	Salty sea smell clinging to the grandfather's body; cold, damp night air.	Creates bodily intimacy and memory; conveys the impact of industrial waste.
Organic imagery	The sea as a lost or longed-for part of the inner self; Sea People identity.	The sea as "breath of life," "soul and home," silent witness to sorrow and hope.	Fuses humans ontologically with the sea and gives meaning to living space.

Both novels activate all five imagery modes, constructing the sea comprehensively and multisensorily. They differ in direction: SLSA directs imagery toward wholeness (abundance, gratitude, closeness), whereas RLuB directs the same modes toward crisis (dimming, siege, pollution). Maritime ecology in Indonesian literature can thus operate across a wide spectrum, from praise to resistance.

Main Functions of Ecological Imagery in Maritime Eco-Narratives

Three layered, mutually reinforcing functions emerge: an ontological function that concretizes living space, a cultural function that mediates memory, and a critical function that voices resistance. All three appear in both novels, with different dominance in each, and that difference is the object of comparison.

Concretizing the Sea and Coast as a Dynamic Living Space

Imagery transforms the sea from a passive background into a concrete ecological space rich in biodiversity, as in the seagrass meadows, dugongs, and shad. First, personification is consistent: the sea toys with the boat (p. 3), waves envelop silence (p. 9), and wind slaps faces (p. 4), with such verbs of will spread evenly across both novels,

reflecting both authors' ontological assumptions. Second, biological specificity: the texts do not say "there were fish" but name "seven dugongs," shad, and seagrass meadows, rejecting an abstract generalization of nature. Third, sensory integration: color, sound, motion, scent and touch, and the pulse of life make the sea "truly alive," so imagery becomes a narrative technology that turns the sea from the object of the story into a subject parallel to humans.

Mediating Collective Memory, Maritime Identity, and Malay Tradition

Auditory and olfactory imagery perpetuate sung verse and the salty scent of the sailor's body as cultural markers that bridge memory across generations: Syah Alam, Seroja, and Banua. First, auditory imagery works as an archive: Syah Alam's singing is "like whispers from the ocean itself" (p. 96). Second, olfactory imagery passes on identity: the sea's scent on the grandfather's body (p. 18) shows maritime identity inherited through body and senses. Third, figurative continuity across generations, from grandfather to Seroja and from Syah Alam to his listeners, repeats the same pattern of the sea as home and breath, showing that imagery and tradition can function as ecological knowledge.

Ecocritical Discourse on Coastal Damage from Extractive Industrialization

In RLuB, visual and olfactory imagery of the gray sea, thick factory smoke, and the smell of palm-oil dregs forms an ecocritical discourse against the pollution of Riau's coastal ecosystem, working in three layers. The evidentiary layer is concrete, measurable imagery: "gray" rather than "not very blue," "thick black smoke" rather than "there was smoke," "crude oil and palm-oil dregs" rather than "a bad smell," so crisis is never disguised in vague language. The causal layer (p. 112) ties the smell of the air directly to the factories, presenting pollution as a product of human structures rather than fate. The affective layer makes damage felt through the characters' bodies, in heavy air, a longed-for sea, and smelled sand, so readers reject the damage through empathy rather than abstract argument, moving environmental issues from the space of imagination to the space of feeling. Critical discourse works only if readers first feel the sea as a living whole and grasp that marine memory is threatened, so that loss is felt as a wound rather than a statistic. An effective maritime eco-narrative thus moves from ontology (concretizing), through affect (mediating memory), to ethics (voicing resistance).

CONCLUSION

Comparative analysis of ecological imagery in RLuB and SLSA shows that both novels build a maritime eco-narrative through visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile-olfactory, and organic imagery. This imagery makes the sea a living space, preserves the memory and oral traditions of the Malay and Sea People, and criticizes coastal pollution caused by industrialization. SLSA does so in a poetic-cosmological voice rooted in Malay spirituality, while RLuB does so through critical environmental realism. Together they show the sea as a lived socio-cultural space, extending Blue Humanities beyond its largely Western base, and they show that ecological imagery does more than illustrate ideas: it constructs human-sea relationships.

This approach could support reading literature from the 3T regions, teaching environmental literacy, and evaluating writers' residencies. Several caveats apply: some

attributions are inconsistent (the "gray Dumai sea" passage is assigned to RLuB although Dumai is SLSA's setting); the analysis is interpretive, with no frequency counts; two novels limit generalization; diction is analyzed in English renderings; and the effect on readers is assumed rather than tested.

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