
“I can still hear them weeping”:

20th Century Fiction as a Source for Indonesian Conceptualizations
of the 1965-66 Mass Killings

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SYNOPSIS

Changes in Indonesia following the downfall of Suharto’s New Order era have resulted in increased openness about the mass killings of avowed and alleged Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) members during the years 1965-66. Yet our knowledge of this topic remains limited. As such, fictional accounts of the violence are valuable sources for increased understanding of these events. An early way Indonesians were conceptualizing the killings in writing and literary works bespeak attempts to interpret the violence and lay culpability for its occurrence in light of the involvement of wider factors. In voicing negotiations of identity and of personal and psychological struggle, Indonesian fiction dealing with 1965-66 enables us to move beyond the polarized notion of binaries created in theorizations of this historical moment. An analysis of six Indonesian works of fiction written between 1966 and 1985 will show how literature, drawn together with existing analytical and theoretical frameworks, acts to enhance our understanding of the 1965-66 violence.

Introduction¹

With increasing frequency, accounts of the detentions, torture, and mass killings of communists and presumed Communist Party members in Indonesia both during 1965-66 and beyond have emerged to provide insight into the violent events that birthed the New Order regime. With diverse interpretations, numerous scholars (among them Anderson and McVey 1971; Kahin and Kahin 1995; Robinson 1995; Cribb 1990; Roosa 2006) have contributed to our historical and sociopolitical understanding of these events in works that detail the “30th September Movement” coup attempt and the human rights violations that resulted from it. This scholarship has attempted to concretize details such as the figures or organizations involved, where and when the violence took place, and the num-

ber of suspected and actual Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) members killed. These analyses furthermore have tried to address the roles and manifestations of violence in Indonesian culture as related to this case. Consequently, we are able to establish a strong analytical and theoretical approach to the series of events that took place in 1965-66 and the mass violence that occurred therein.

Yet in spite of the thorough work of these scholars, there nonetheless remain gaps in what we know. For political and other reasons, our knowledge of the violence of this period is limited. For example, the majority of Indonesians affected were, until very recently, unable or unwilling to discuss their experiences due to the realities of persecution under Suharto’s New Order government. The relatives and descendants of the ac-

cused have lived with similar fears. It is primarily for these reasons that much of the personal element is absent from the analytical works. Thus if we compare what we know about these killings with what we know of other mass killings and genocides, there are far fewer individual accounts of the violent events of 1965-66 from which to draw, and this makes for a less fully-formed picture of what actually occurred.

Therefore, it would be reasonable to turn to alternative sources of information such as literature. Literary works, I will argue, serve as a useful and helpful vantage point from which to create an increasingly well-rounded grasp of this period in Indonesian history, primarily through writers' conceptualizations of the psychological and emotional forces that propelled the violence in 1965-1966. I open with a discussion on the potential of fiction as historical source material. Following this is a brief historical contextualization of the events informing my analysis of six Indonesian fictional works written between 1966 and 1985. I also demonstrate the possible insights to be taken from these sources. The paper provides concrete examples of some overarching themes discernible in these works about the conflicts beneath the violence, which are represented by the individual personal and psychological struggle below the collective action. In conclusion, I show how these insights might be drawn together to join the existing knowledge provided in the analytical and theoretical analyses, thereby enhancing our conceptualization of the "30th September Movement" and its violent aftermath.

The Case for using Literature

When used carefully and critically, works of fiction, together with historical sources, can augment our understanding of a given historical topic. Literary sources allow us to move beyond our own viewpoint of an event to view another's interpretation of what took place. Such interpretations, however, must take into account the creativity and imagination of an author. A fictional work is thereby not an objectively verifiable document, and it should not be thought of as a mirror of actual fact. Rather, fiction can be used as a means to acquire an awareness of what is culturally meaningful to Indonesian authors writing about this period as well as a means of demonstrating underlying tensions which are often not discernible in non-fictional works.² In the field of Southeast Asian history, several scholars (An-

derson and Mendiones 1985; Foulcher 1990; Taylor 1996; Foulcher and Day 2002; Hoadley 2005) have expressed their viewpoints and provided insights about the use of fiction in historical analyses. Benedict Anderson and Ruchira Mendiones (1985) employed Thai short stories as a source of evidence to conceptualize the sociopolitical transformation of one generation in Thailand during the American Era of the 1960s and 1970s. Anderson and Mendiones demonstrate the stories to be valuable sources for understanding the contradictions of this era from the point of view of people who experienced them. In doing so, Anderson makes a strong case that fiction can "parallel, complement, and perhaps confront" perspectives found in academic writing (Anderson and Mendiones 1985: 11).

Keith Foulcher and Tony Day (2002) have posed their own suggestions as to how fiction might be used as a source to enhance historical claims or to raise new problems related to them. In considering the use of literature in critical approaches to Indonesian post-colonialism, Foulcher and Day recognize the important contribution of Indonesian literary works to form an enhanced understanding of postcolonial society. They then call attention to the position of the writer within this context. As a result, Foulcher and Day argue, we gain insight into the contexts in which authors produce their literary works and we understand more about conceptualizations such as language use and identity. Yet these scholars are also careful to note that when working with translations we are seeing the works of but a small elite whose writings have been deemed "readable" for the Western audience (Foulcher and Day 2002: 5). This is an important point since the works profiled here are all translations. Yet, as I will show, even these few select voices have inarguable value as source material.

In further testament to the role literature can play Jean Gelman Taylor (1996) has made a strong case for the use of the novel and film in academic analyses. According to Taylor, these genres serve as vehicles that "carry a community's heritage, give shape to its concerns, and may consciously convey messages urging a recasting of behavior... [to] suggest what we ought to be investigating using all the sources available to the historian" (Taylor 1996: 225-226). Finally, Foulcher (1990) and Anna-Greta Nilsson Hoadley (2005) have directly addressed the value of Indonesian literature as source material in analyses of the coup attempt and its

aftermath. Foulcher states that various Indonesian authors, especially in the 1970s, have employed popular literature “as a means of communicating to other young Indonesians issues they felt to be of serious social concern” (Foulcher 1990: 102).³ Most recently, Hoadley has claimed that New Order-era fiction written about 1965–66 challenges the “official” narrative of the post-coup violence which is promoted by the Indonesian state.⁴ Consequently, per Hoadley, the issue of social concern that authors of such fiction have attempted to address is the violence carried out by the state toward its citizens (Hoadley 2005: 115).⁵

For the following reasons Indonesian fiction can be proven to enhance our grasp of the political and social upheaval that occurred in 1965–66.⁶ Due to the climate of repression and fear under the New Order regime, it was not possible for Indonesians to write about the events of 1965–66 in many forms other than fiction. Therefore fiction represented by the variety of works featured here can first give us a sense of Indonesian conceptualizations of those events. Second, as literary sources containing social, political, and historical commentary, these stories can inform our understanding of not only the events themselves but of some Indonesian critiques of these events. Included here would be their creation of different realities as possible rejections of “official” versions of 1965–66. The writers profiled here labor to “write the unwritable, speak the unspeakable, and dramatize or fictionalize realities that many Indonesians do not want to face” (McGlynn 2000: 43).⁷ This can be understood as the authors’ attempt to communicate with their audience meaningful issues that they perceive as worthy of social concern. Third, these works may reveal themes or insights that, because they are not discernable from the analytical or theoretical scholarship, add new levels of introspection or even suggest new dilemmas to enhance future approaches to this topic. As mentioned, Indonesian fiction not only reveals the psychological and emotional forces beneath the violence but it further provides an understanding of these forces.

Situating The Violence of 1965-66

Such an understanding however, first requires an explanation of the historical moment in question. Therefore, before examining the stories themselves a brief review of the events that played out from October 1965 to the early months of 1966 is warranted. The

prelude to the violence has been commonly referred to as the Untung Coup and, as used above, the “30th September Movement” (*Gerakan Tigapuluh September*: GESTAPU, or G-30-S). As I will show, the interpretations are as varied as the nomenclature. The mass deaths themselves, sometimes called the massacre or genocide in other literature are referred to here as “the killings.” I also use the broader term of “violence” to describe the bodily and emotional torture inflicted upon alleged PKI members.

Since its occurrence, the specifics of G-30-S and the reasons behind the mass violence that followed continue to be open to debate. Some facts are uncontested; the “where” and “when” of this event have been addressed quite thoroughly. But, the “who,” the “why,” and even “how” of this event are still being contested. Most recently Roosa (2006) has provided a comprehensive analysis of G-30-S, focusing on the Indonesian armed forces as the “who” behind the organization of the killings. Roosa’s explanation of “why” is that the detention and assassination of the generals was a pretext for an already-formulated military plot to take over state power (Roosa 2006: 225). Aside from Roosa’s work, it is arguable that no definitive account of this event exists. To best summarize the contesting views, this paper references the work of two scholars, Robert Cribb (1990, 2001, 2002) and Mary Zurbuchen (2002).

In a recent review, Cribb (2002) proposed four feasible paradigmatic explanations of what took place. His analysis covers the areas of military agency, extreme political tension, local political and social tensions, and the existence of a culture of violence. Zurbuchen has subsequently suggested that the literature also shows five scenarios of these events adding to Cribb’s framework.⁸ According to Zurbuchen, the first scenario is that G-30-S was carried out by the PKI. The second is that it resulted from an internal struggle in the armed forces. In the third, Suharto is portrayed as the instigator while in the fourth, the country’s president at the time, Sukarno, was involved. In Zurbuchen’s fifth and final scenario, foreign intelligence played a key role (Zurbuchen 2002: 566).

Two related points warrant further examination to better inform the present analysis of fictional accounts that recall G-30-S and its aftermath. The first of these points as Cribb and Zurbuchen both discuss, concerns the military’s key role in the event. Namely, with the

assistance of foreign intelligence, Indonesia's military leaders who were aligned with Suharto initiated a "kill or be killed" atmosphere" (Cribb 2002: 552). According to these scholars and others (Scott 1985; Crouch 1988; Kahin and Kahin 1995; Robinson 1995), this atmosphere was accomplished through the spread of anti-PKI propaganda.⁹ As to the second of the two points, it is argued that a series of wider elements were at work, which contributed to the violent aftermath of G-30-S.¹⁰ Scholars estimate that across Indonesia death totals ranged between 78,000 and two million¹¹ killed during this period (with the heaviest concentration of deaths in Central Java, East Java, and Bali). However, any total far below 500,000 seems unreasonably conservative. The elements behind these mass-killings were varied. Economic decline, the unsteady nature of Sukarno's promotion of NASAKOM,¹² tensions arising as a result of land reform policies, intensified political affiliations and the escalation of local antagonisms likely all contributed to the massive scale of bloodshed.¹³

Taking into consideration the above points and what we now can accept as true from the current scholarship summarized above, a basic understanding of the coup attempt and its aftermath is possible. In the early morning hours of October 1, 1965, numerous conspirators affiliated with the Indonesian armed forces conducted raids at the homes of seven generals who were men not known as strong supporters of the Sukarno regime. One of these conspirators, Lieutenant Colonel Untung, the head of the presidential bodyguard regiment, acted to inform and protect Sukarno from a long awaited attempt against him by these generals backed by the CIA. (Anderson and McVey 1971: 9). Untung supposedly convinced Sukarno to publicly back his group in exchange for thwarting this alleged attempt at national security. Meanwhile, Untung's co-conspirators oversaw the murders of three remaining generals of the six that had been successfully detained at an area of the Halim airport known as *Lubang Buaya*, the crocodile hole (Anderson and McVey 1971: 12). Almost immediately, then-General Suharto took control of the armed forces as the leader of the Strategic Reserve Command of the Army (KOSTRAD).

With the provisions and backing of foreign interests, the stage was set to position the PKI as the enemy. To help incite public anger and initiate reprisals against the PKI, positioning communists as the immoral Other

was central to the propaganda that was spread therein. Such a trope was particularly though not exclusively applied to members of the PKI-affiliated Indonesian Women's Movement (*Gerakan Wanita Indonesia*, or Gerwani).¹⁴ As a result of the propaganda, popular uprising against these purported evildoers was encouraged. Supported by internal and external forces, these uprisings, led by civilian gangs, militia groups, and armed forces units, would gain momentum resulting in the detention, torture, and mass slaughter of hundreds of thousands of avowed and alleged PKI members.

Literary Representations of the Violence of 1965-66

With the above historical reference in mind, the subsequent discussion will address the ways that the featured Indonesian authors conceptualize and negotiate the events behind their fictionalized accounts of the period following the attempted coup. Six works of Indonesian fiction have been selected for this analysis. Five are short stories, which were written in the period directly following the violence. These were originally published between 1966-1970 in the Indonesian literary magazines *Horizon* and *Sastra*, and then were translated and compiled in the anthology *Gestapu: Indonesian Short Stories on the Abortive Communist Coup of 30th September 1965* (Aveling 1975). They are: "A Woman and her Children" by Gerson Poyk, "Death" by Mohammad Sjoekoer, "Star of Death" by Kipandjikusmin, "The Climax" by Satyagraha Hoerip, and "War and Humanity" by Usamah. The sixth, "Village Dancer" by Ahmad Tohari (2000), is an excerpt from *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, a 1985 novel that was the second work in a trilogy originally serialized in the Indonesian national daily, *Kompas*. The excerpt, which includes previously omitted sections,¹⁵ was translated and published in *Silenced Voices: New Writings from Indonesia*, a volume of the journal *Manoa*. All of the works were chosen both for their individual depth and their collective breadth in representing aspects of G-30-S and its aftermath. Each also show evidence of pervasive thematic elements throughout.

All of the plots save for one are situated in Java with two specifically taking place in Central Java; the remaining story takes place predominantly in Bali. These locations represent the sites that experienced the most killings.¹⁶ The settings most often are small towns or

villages. While not all the storylines occur in named locations, some of the authors do situate the events in specific places. Settings are as concrete as the actual Central Javanese town of Solo, as vague as an unnamed small harbor town, or as narrow as the fictional Dukuh Paruk, a remote Javanese hamlet. Some of the stories unfold in one location while others ask the reader to follow the characters as they travel from rural to urban spheres or from one island in the archipelago to another. In all of the works save for one, we experience the points of view of those who played a participatory role in the violence, which included the torture and killings of those known and unknown to them. Conversely in the 1966 short story “Star of Death,” the reader sees events through the eyes of Ktut Geria, a Balinese communist fleeing from Java only to be exposed and hunted to his end by his own people. Five of the six authors featured are Javanese while one, Gerson Poyk, is from Maluku. All of these authors are male. Fiction as well as non-fiction concerning G-30-S and its aftermath written by female authors are few, which is a revealing fact in its own right.¹⁷

The paper’s subsequent focus is a discussion of the information to be gleaned from an evaluation of these stories. As above for “Star of Death,” provided below are the briefest synopses of the five other chosen works in order to coherently draw out their insights. In Poyk’s “A Woman and her Children” also written in 1966, A, a civil servant who had been slandered by K, a PKI leader, and sent to prison, seeks out Hadijah, his former lover and K’s widow. Hadijah, near starvation and living in poverty with her five children begs A to help her. Embittered by the death of his own child, A struggles between his emotions and his sense of duty to Hadijah, whom he ultimately decides to help in spite of the lingering public fear and suspicion that surrounds her.

A young man recruited to participate in the execution of suspected PKI members narrates “Death,” written by Mohammed Sjoekoer in 1969. Through the unnamed protagonist’s account of his participation in one night of terror, Sjoekoer illustrates that the positions of those who carried out the killings of 1965-66 were not simply black and white. In “The Climax,” written by Satyagraha Hoerip in 1966, Soesetio, the story’s narrator must decide what path to take when confronted with a serious ideological dilemma. As a community leader, should he murder his brother-in-law, a

PKI district leader, and leave his sister a widow, or betray his community by failing to punish the enemy?

“Village Dancer” was excerpted from the 1985 novel *Lintang Kemukus Dini Hari* (A Falling Star at Dawn), the second novel in the *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* trilogy authored by Tohari. The focus of this trilogy is on the principle character, the dancer Srintil. Yet in this particular piece, Tohari turns his attentions to the experiences and dilemmas of Srintil’s childhood friend Ratus, a man who is torn between his duty as a private in the national army and the pleas of the hamlet to save Srintil who has been imprisoned as a PKI conspirator.¹⁸

Lastly, Usamah, the narrator of the 1969 story “War and Humanity,” tells of his role as a prison camp interrogator of alleged PKI members. Responsible for ordering the torture of friends and acquaintances and ultimately calling them out to be executed, Usamah’s narration discloses the agony of the individuals faced with forsaking old relationships to uphold a new political order.

The Conflicts beneath the Violence: What Literature Reveals

Satyagraha Hoerip has written that the short story in particular, “entails conflict of one sort or another and, invariably says something about the universal problems that its character or characters experience” (Hoerip 1991: viii). Accordingly, several underlying but pervasive elements of conflict emerge in these stories to help us see how some Indonesians conceptualized the events of 1965-66, including the factors that propelled the violence. This section presents some elements within themes of inner conflict and competing claims on an individual’s sense of duty. Inner conflict manifests in different ways throughout these stories. It is based upon the concept that individuals do not self-identify in an unchanging solitary way but rather through multiple modes of identification resulting in multiple allegiances. These works of fiction show how an individual’s multiple identities take shape and even vie with one another. This conflict and multiplicity of identities is further linked to the struggle caused by contradicting senses of duty. Whether the struggle results from the decision to fulfill duty to oneself or to one’s community at the expense of others, these literary representations of such struggles highlight the complexity and ambivalence that most certainly oc-

curred within many who participated in the mass violence.

As will be shown, a means to negotiate the complexity and ambivalence of the situation is to transform the enemy into the Other. Authors take pains to highlight the factors that created the climate for this Othering while reminding their readers of the underlying humanity of the perpetrators. Through discreet references to propaganda with its effect on shaping the enemy as Other, especially in regard to the role of Gerwani members, the authors of these works reference actual events in their attempts to write the unwritable. These conflicts, struggles and sociopolitical commentary provide insight into the Indonesian conceptualizations of 1965-66 in ways that compliment the existing analytical literature.

I begin with the thematic element of inner conflict, which is demonstrated by two characters that struggle with duty toward self versus that toward others. They are Rasus, and Soesetio from the respective stories, "Village Dancer" and "The Climax." These characters each feel pressured to preserve their own (and their community's) sense of self or duty by not being perceived as sympathetic to the PKI, which would carry a great personal risk. Ahmad Tohari captures this desire for self-preservation by portraying Rasus's awareness of the dilemma upon being entreated to use his position as a private in the national army to save Srintil, the dancer imprisoned for her alleged ties to the PKI:

He thought about his promise to find Srintil and bring her home. Such a task, he knew was akin to leveraging the weight of history with a palm leaf. Not only would it be difficult, but the risk to himself and his career would be great. To be accused of aiding or sympathizing with the Communists' attempted coup was enough to stigmatize a person for life (Tohari 2000: 19).

These thoughts illustrate Rasus's recognition that honoring the wishes of those in the hamlet would require that he forsake his sense of duty to self and put himself at risk. Rasus's dilemma is real because he has multiple allegiances and identities: he is at once a soldier, a lifelong member of Dukuh Paruk and a friend and one-time lover of Srintil. As the situation forces these identities to collide, he in turn is forced to choose between them.

Soesetio of "The Climax" wages a similar war within himself caused by being placed in a position to choose

between duty toward self and toward others. As a community leader he is required to take an active role in hunting down his brother-in-law Kuslan. Upon showing reticence to do so, not only is his sense of duty challenged but so is his sense of character. It is at this moment that Soesetio recognizes the difficult position he is in as he observes his friend Wimbadi's reaction:

'I'm sorry,' he spat out. 'I didn't realize that our great and mighty cultural leader was a coward.'... He was angry; his face was dark red. The veins in his arms were tightly knotted. Without a word to my wife or myself, he left. I ran after him. At the guava tree, he promised to come back again after the evening prayer hour. His face showed how much he loathed me. I knew what that could mean these days. Anything was possible (Aveling 1975: 40-41).

Fear propels Soesetio toward a climactic decision. As the story reaches its own climax, Satyagraha Hocrip repeatedly represents Soesetio's fear of being thought a coward and of possible accusations of sympathy to the PKI due to his refusal to participate in the murder of Kuslan. These and other characters' struggles between self and others often manifests as self-preservation amplifying Cribb's aforementioned reference to the "kill or be killed" atmosphere of 1965-66. Again, anti-PKI factions manufactured this state through the spread of propaganda. Seen in the struggle of identities enacted by these characters, there emerges a sense of literal self-preservation from the ramification of supposed association with the PKI. As will be further shown, a figurative sense of preservation from the alleged moral corruption of the PKI also makes an appearance.

Rasus and Soesetio are presented as individuals whose sense of duty toward community wars with duty toward those for whom each man cares. As such, these two characters must additionally deal with competing claims on their duty by their communities and those with whom they share a personal relationship. In the case of Rasus, his role as a member of the military community has become his predominant identity, but he realizes that he is still very much tied to his Dukuh Paruk neighbors and is deeply concerned for their welfare in the growing anti-PKI climate. Faced with this dilemma, he tries to negotiate between these identities, his sense of duty to those back home, and his duty as a member of the military. "Yes, he was a son of Paruk," Tohari writes, "and, as such, was sympathetic to his

people. But he was also a soldier and therefore required to see things beyond the narrow perspective of his village" (Tohari 2000: 16). Ultimately Rasus bends to the weight of this role as soldier, and though he is driven to challenge his army superior over Srintil, the story ends with his acceptance of the situation's futility. Through Rasus's return to protocol, depicted in the delivery of a salute, Tohari makes clear his reassertion of the role he must play as a member of the military engaged in suppressing the PKI. Yet in illustrating the competing claims upon him and his conflict of identity therein, Tohari moreover concretely shows in this excerpt from his novel that Rasus can hardly be considered a one-dimensional figure.

In "The Climax," Soesetio is portrayed as being at war with himself throughout his narration. While he attempts to come across as someone callously able to put duty before love of family, he is unconvincing throughout the story. In such a depiction, Hoerip illustrates a situation representative of one many Indonesians might have similarly faced. Through such an illustration Hoerip requires that the audience recognize the multiple identities within an individual and the inner conflict that occurred because of their competing presence. Furthermore, he asserts that his readers reject the notion that all perpetrators of the violence were cold-blooded killers without consciences carrying out a role as a member of a culture of violence. In the very act of the fierce struggle that defines this story, Soesetio is shown not to be a one-dimensional seeker of revenge. Rather, he is portrayed as a man of multiple dimensions and identities who is faced both with the pressure of acting in the public interest and with murdering his sister's husband. While his fear of self-preservation is strong, Soesetio never emphatically accepts nor commits to the decision to murder Kuslan. Even at the end, when he resolves to meet Wimbadi and the others pursuing Kuslan at his sister's house, Hoerip in no way indicates that Soesetio will then follow through with the murder. In Soesetio, Hoerip has created a character that perfectly embodies the very real emotional issues behind the violence when individuals' multiple identities were forced to collide.

Like Rasus and Soesetio, A, the protagonist in Gerson Poyk's "A Woman and her Children," and both the unnamed protagonist of "Death" and Usamah of "War and Humanity," equally emerge as characters that embody the inner conflict within the individual in the

midst of collective action against the PKI. The character A struggles between doing what he determines to be right in aiding Hadijah and her children versus adhering to public opinion and leaving them to starve. Forsaking hostile public opinion, A does decide to help Hadijah but encounters others who are far less willing to do so. Upon turning to several old acquaintances to ask if they will adopt the children, he is rebuffed because they fear the consequences of taking in children of ex-PKI members. Ultimately, A is arrested on suspicion of colluding with Hadijah, but prevails in the end by successfully saving the children who have by the story's conclusion been orphaned.

The young man in "Death" is depicted as a very uneasy participant in the execution and disposal of suspected PKI members in his region. Unlike other characters, he is faced with witnessing violence against those unknown to him. Yet he similarly must vie between his identity as a member of his community and that as a person sympathetic to other human beings. His fear and anxiety involves being recruited to a position where he must witness the possibly unjustified execution of others, something that physically sickens and exhausts him. His narration demonstrates this distress at the act he and his friends are required to commit in a particularly moving scene when, out of pity, he hides from a victim the truth of his impending execution.

While Mohammed Sjoekoer portrays emotional angst experienced by a protagonist who does not know his victims, in "War and Humanity," Usamah suffers such emotions to an equal if not greater degree. As a prison camp interrogator, he is confronted with betraying acquaintances and friends. Usamah quickly becomes aware through self-reflection that he has wholly accepted the anti-PKI propaganda and has become bent on crushing the Party. Yet his co-membership with those from his past and his role as their friend or acquaintance means that these two sets of identities are now forced to confront each other. In interrogating and condemning individuals such as a university classmate and his former family doctor, he realizes that his old ties and feelings are still present. Usamah's pain at calling out their names and sending them to their deaths becomes palpable to the reader. Unable to order more executions and unwilling to betray any further friends from his past, Usamah abandons his post on the interrogation team to return to his village. The title of

"War and Humanity" references his conflict between sense of duty to self and sense of duty to community during what he perceives as a time of war. "It was war," justifies Usamah, "and had the PKI won, what happened to [them] might have happened to me" (Aveling 1975: 21).

The words chosen as the title of this essay are Usamah's. Though formerly experienced as a member of the interrogation team, his present-tense expression of victims' weeping in his head memorializes these men and women and bespeaks his guilt. Though initially swept up in the propaganda against the PKI, Usamah shows that he has ultimately reasserted his multiple identities through his rejection of violence. He will no longer be used to carry out harm against others.

Within these inner conflicts of identity and competing claims on duty, many stories demonstrate how the protagonists utilize Othering when faced with the torture or killing of another human being. Through this illustration of Othering, some authors show the ways that an individual might have justified his or her participation in the violence. At multiple points in these stories, the protagonists reason, verbalize, or are told of the inhuman and immoral character of the PKI as filth and animals, as Godless beings less than human, something to be exterminated. The both the nameless young man recruited in "Death" to assist with the extermination of local PKI members and the character Soesetio exemplify individuals who attempt to use or listen to others' use of Othering as a tool to help them understand and even justify violence.

Othering also emerges in these stories in the form of the authors' historical awareness of and commentary on the external factors that propelled the violence of 1965-66. In "Star of Death," the narrator Ktut Geria, captures the climate of these times with the following words: "A communist was the lowest form of human filth, fit only for extermination. It was proclaimed throughout the land that those who did not believe in God should die" (Aveling 1975: 27). As "Star of Death" and "War and Humanity" illustrate, the act of Othering by the characters suggests the authors' recognition of the dehumanizing propaganda used to promote PKI extermination.

Among the more prominent targets of the Othering propaganda directed against the PKI were the members of Gerwani. Their role and participation, espe-

cially in the events at Lubang Buaya, are still controversial topics in Indonesian conceptualizations of G-30-S. As Saskia Wieringa (2003) has shown, Gerwani women were sexualized in an attempt to portray the immoral and dangerous Other. Such Othering thus positioned them as the embodiment of the very elements that would destroy Indonesian society should the PKI triumph. In "A Woman and her Children," Hadijah is positioned in the eyes of her enemies as both a sexual being and as a body to be sexually abused as revenge on the PKI. Once free of the burden of her children, she will then, it is reasoned, fall back on her true nature as a "first-class slut" who does what "most of the Gerwani who aren't in prison are doing now" (Aveling 1975: 66). Hadijah is not without agency however, since she embraces through her death the knowledge that A will save her children and she asserts that she does not accept society's ascription of her. She will not fulfill their hatred-fueled fantasies of seeing her body made available for sexual consumption.

In "Star of Death," Ktut Geria speculates about the deaths of his Gerwani friends whom he had sent home "six months ago... for refusing to indulge in free love after the night parades at Lubang Buaya [as] they were still dominated by bourgeois moral principles and not completely revolutionary in outlook" (Aveling 1975: 30). This reference both situates and counters the rumor of Gerwani members as the instigators of sexual abandonment at the site of the generals' murders.¹⁹

Kipandjikusmin's take on a communist leader's use of Gerwani members and the way that these women are positioned as sexual (if unwilling) bodies is both valuable as well as significant. In positioning Gerwani associates as sexualized bodies, these women's portrayal as the immoral Other is made clear. Conversely, in their rejection of Geria's attempt to offer them up for consumption, like Hadijah in "A Woman and her Children," they assert their agency over their bodies. In this way Kipandjikusmin appears to reject the rumors by establishing these women as unworthy of such invective due to their sense of morality.

As quoted in the introduction to *Gestapu*, "What is important is that true, or only partially true, or false, [the propaganda was] believed by millions of people and the army [leading to] one of the major causes of revulsion against the PKI" (Aveling 1975: iii). The thoughts and words of the characters and their interlocutors in these fictional pieces offer a representation

of the anti-PKI propaganda that spurred the violence. By reproducing its discourse and the characters' reaction to it, the authors of these works try to recreate the psychological and emotional climate in which the killings took place in order to present this picture for the audience's consumption. It very well might be that attempting to speak the unspeakable by recognizing and publicizing the persons and elements behind the anti-PKI surge presents the authors' individual perceptions of G-30-S in defiance of New Order prohibitions against addressing this topic. Moreover, through writing they might be implicating Suharto or other figures and factors by showing that the mass killings of 1965-66 happened for concrete government instigated reasons and not "just because."

As shown above, carrying out acts of violence in the "kill or be killed" atmosphere established a type of group membership motivated by preservation of self or community. In many cases however, assertion of anti-PKI group membership forced a social collision with co-membership between perpetrator and victim when the victim was known. Thus, in the climate of preservation against the moral or physical threat allegedly posed by the PKI, individuals in these stories and in historical fact enacted an Othering of the enemy that appeared to have two dimensions. On a large scale, many accepted as true the anti-PKI propaganda swirling about them, which motivated the resulting violent action to ensure their self-preservation. Yet on a more personal level, individuals might have adopted the strategy of Othering their alleged enemy to justify their participation in the violence. Othering also might have facilitated their attempt to cope with the dilemma of having to act against others including those with whom they had shared a prior history, which was often the case.

Foulcher (1990) interprets the short stories above as attempts to expunge the guilt of the authors or characters. Yet with this paper I argue in favor of the authors' attempts to bespeak a national guilt for the horrors of 1965-66 through their stories. All of the writers profiled here are attempting to show the existence of the personal element in the face of such abhorrent acts to overcome the unspeakable. Foulcher's reading assumes that the characters, authors, or even the actual perpetrators of the violence of 1965-66 possessed but one identity, that of the ruthless killer bent on revenge no matter what the outcome. However, I believe that

these authors attempt a different point of view; that even within the "kill or be killed" climate, other factors played into the resultant mass violence. While many Indonesians became killers, and some among them certainly felt no qualms about this role, not all are necessarily killers by nature or culture. The multidimensionality of these characters and their actions are a subtle rejection of this perception and show that individuals do not merely possess one identity or another. In voicing negotiations of identity and of personal and psychological struggle, these fictional works hopefully enable us to move beyond and ideally release altogether the polarized notion of being either pro-PKI or anti-communist,²⁰ soldier or neighbor, leader or follower, enemy or friend.

Conclusion

The changes of the post-Suharto era have given rise to what has been identified as a discussion providing additional insight as to what was "previously no more than speculation about the way in which contemporary Indonesians conceived of the killings" (Cribb 2002: 551). Without doubt, the current atmosphere has resulted in increased openness about the killings on behalf of Indonesian scholars and subjects alike. Yet as is noted here, fictional accounts of the violence of 1965-66 produced since its occurrence were, in fact, one of the earliest ways that contemporary Indonesians were publicly conceptualizing the killings. Despite the above quote, Cribb recognized this fact in an earlier work (1990) saying several of the very stories profiled here do enlighten us to the meaning of the violence as expressed by many Indonesians. He also argued that "their literary form and the political circumstances of their composition make them no more than a partial mirror of the events concerned" (Cribb 1990: 5). This point is certainly a valid one. Yet the main reason for a review of fiction is not to look upon these works as mirrors of what really occurred. Rather fiction is a valuable tool for examining the way some Indonesians were conceiving of, depicting, trying to interpret, and possibly even placing responsibility for the violence in light of the involvement of the wider factors and issues above. In this way, it acts to add to what we already know, not to replace it.

Taken as a valid source, works of fiction can compliment and challenge as well as augment the existing literature in a number of ways. First, until recently,

fiction was one of the sole ways Indonesians were able to publicly discuss the killings. Secondly, themes outside of the analytical and theoretical frameworks of other academic disciplines arise in the literary works profiled above and might help us understand what the authors believed to be culturally meaningful information about the killings. Thirdly, the act of writing the unwritable might further show us these authors' attempts to get at the reasons behind the events of 1965-66. Fourth, by trying to confront and memorialize an exceedingly traumatic moment from their recent history these authors can be seen as acting to reject and defy the version of these events as portrayed by Suharto's New Order. Fifth, these works reject the supposition that this violence can only be expressed as the brutality of one group against another driven by a violent culture and uncomplicated by other factors.

These stories cannot help us further determine certain things, such as the involvement of foreign intelligence, the actual role of Suharto, or the experiences of women who participated in carrying out the anti-PKI violence. The former two areas are far better addressed by looking at primary sources and historical analyses. The latter has to my knowledge not yet been comprehensively broached either in existing scholarship or in the oral histories that are now emerging. There is certainly more to be learned about these events.

However, in stories such as "Village Dancer" and "War and Humanity," we see the role of the Indonesian military and its relationship to local militias in the detention and execution of suspected PKI members. From "Death" and "The Climax" we observe the role and function of community leaders and what their responsibilities entailed during the communist purge. From "Star of Death" and "A Woman and her Children," we are granted deeper insight into issues of gender and the way gendered and sexualized identities of Gerwani women were strategically employed by PKI leaders. Finally, from several of these stories, we come to more clearly see the role of outside sources such as propaganda in inciting mass violence. In these and other ways, fiction integrated with existing analytical literature can strengthen our understanding of the forces that led to the killings of 1965-66, one of the more complicated and tragic series of events in modern Indonesian history.

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End Notes

- ¹ The quote in the title is taken from one of the short stories to be subsequently profiled. See Usamah. "War and Humanity" in *Gestapu: Indonesian Short Stories on the Abortive Communist Coup on 30th September 1965*, Southeast Asian Studies Working Paper No. 6, Ed. and trans. Harry Aveling (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1975) p. 20.

² Harry Aveling, ed. and trans. *Gestapu: Indonesian Short Stories on the Abortive Communist Coup on 30th September 1965*, Southeast Asian Studies Working Paper No. 6. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1975 p. i. Richard Hoggart states that literature serves to bear cultural meanings in that it "helps to recreate what it felt like to believe those things, to assume that experience carried and demanded those kinds of value. It dramatizes how it feels on the pulses to live out those kinds of value and, in particular, what stresses and tensions come from that living out"

³ I would suggest that such motivations are equally applicable to the authors profiled here.

⁴ Anna-Greta Nilsson Hoadley, *Indonesian Literature vs. New Order Orthodoxy: The Aftermath of 1965-1966*, NIAS Monograph No. 101. (Denmark: NIAS Press, 2005. p. 124. Hoadley's specific claim is that Indonesian literature dealing with this period "performs a negating role in refuting the official version of the events of 1965." Care must be exercised however, not to assume that the alternate interpretations offered in literary works are thereby "true" versions of events mirroring events as they historically occurred.

⁵ In her analysis, while Hoadley does include the works of Ahmad Tohari, one of the authors discussed here, she dismisses the short stories profiled in this paper for being outside of her study's framework due to their lack of "an identifiable thesis" (Hoadley, *Indonesian Literature*, p. 4). As I will show however, their thematic elements do make them highly valuable and worthy of inclusion in any analysis of Indonesian fiction dealing with the events of 1965-66.

⁶ Robert Cribb, ed. *The Indonesian Killings 1965-1966: Studies from Java and Bali*, Monash Papers on Southeast Asia, No. 21. Victoria: Monash Asia Institute, 1990. p. 111. While there are several strong fictional works at our disposal, before continuing a note of recognition should be sounded that not all works of Indonesian fiction about 1965-66 are potentially valuable across the board. The same can also be said for works that distort events to the point of fictionalizing them. One particularly noteworthy example is the 1984 docudrama *The Treason of the PKI 30 September Movement*, produced by the Indonesian government and shown to schoolchildren about the events at Lubang Buaya and the subsequent crackdown upon the PKI.

⁷ John H. McGlynn, "Silenced Voices, Muted Expressions: Indonesian Literature Today" in *Silenced Voices: New Writings from Indonesia*. Edited by Frank Steward. *Manoa*, 12 (1), 2000. p. 43. While taken from John McGlynn's description of the undertakings of other Indonesian writers and artists, this is nonetheless an equally apt description of what these writers have attempted as well.

⁸ The reader should note that both of these scholars stress that these explanations and scenarios are non-exclusive and can and have been employed in various combinations to reconstruct what happened. For more details on the four paradigmatic explanations see Robert Cribb, "Unresolved Problems in the Indonesian Killings of 1965-1966." *Asian Survey* 42 (4) (2002), p. 551-557.

⁹ For more on the Indonesian military's involvement in the creation of this atmosphere see Chapter 5 of Harold Crouch, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia*, revised ed. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988.) See also Peter Dale Scott, "The United States and the Overthrow of Sukarno, 1965-1967." *Pacific Affairs* 58(Summer 1985): 239-64.

¹⁰ <http://www.jstor.org>. The United States' growing concerns about the PKI and Sukarno as begun during the Eisenhower administration are traced in Audrey R. Kahin, and Kahin, George McT. *Subversion as Foreign Policy: The Secret Eisenhower and Dulles Debacle in Indonesia*. (New York: The New Press, 1995.) In Scott's piece referenced above, he further shows the involvement of the Central Intelligence Agency, a fact that is also noted by Robert Cribb, "Genocide in Indonesia, 1965-66." *Journal of Genocide Research*, 3(2001): 219-39., And by Geoffrey Robinson, *The Dark Side of Paradise: Political Violence in Bali*, paperback ed. Asia East by South. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995. p. 283-286.

¹¹ Scholars of 1965-66 have not always recognized these wider elements. See for example Leslie Palmier, "The 30 September Movement in Indonesia." *Modern Asian Studies*, 5 (1) (1971). p. 11. available at <http://www.jstor.org>. Palmier situates the violence as the "settlement of old scores by PNI [Indonesian Nationalist Party] and Muslim partisans against alleged PKI members in Java and Bali." Palmier's argument does not provide further analysis or elaboration including acknowledgement of wider issues such as the roles that the early-1960s land reform legislation and class played in political polarization. Robinson, Chapter 10 presents a greater analysis of this political economy of violence as it played out in Bali. For an early analysis of these issues in Java, see W.F. Wertheim, "Indonesia Before and after the Untung Coup." *Pacific Affairs* 39 nos. 1/2 (1966): 115-27. available at <http://www.jstor.org>.

¹² Robert Cribb, *The Indonesian Killings*, p. 12 provides this range of estimates in chart form.

¹³ An acronym symbolizing the uniting of nationalism, religion and communism.

¹⁴ Elizabeth Fuller Collins, "Indonesia: A Violent Culture?" *Asian Survey* 42, no. 4 (2002): 582-605. These multiple factors point away from the 'culture of violence' argument, which is inherently weak. Collins presents a far more compelling analysis in stating that the culture of violence claim is at heart a political one used by Indonesian military or social elites. Such a claim allows them to validate a need for their authoritarian leadership of people who are set up as unable to self-govern and in so doing protect their own interests.

¹⁵ This has been comprehensively shown recently by Saskia Wieringa "The Birth of the New Order State in Indonesia: Sexual Politics and Nationalism." *Journal of Women's History*, 15 (1) (2003), p. 70. available at <http://proquest.umi.com>.

¹⁶ Deemed critical of the New Order and sympathetic to the memory of the PKI, fearing government reprisals the series' publisher omitted parts of the novels, including as mentioned, material from *Lintang Kemukus Dini Hari*. See John H. McGlynn, *Silenced Voices*, p. 42.

¹⁷ As Sumatra was another major site of the mass killings I would have liked to include a story from that location but was unable to find one.

¹⁷ This fact has implications of Wieringa's assertion of the marginalization of women and the female voice in Indonesia under the patriarchal New Order. See Saskia Wieringa, *The Birth of the New Order*. The sole works of fiction by a female author of which I am aware are the 1989 novel *Jalan Bandungan* and the 1988 short story "Petilan Kehidupan" both written by Nh. Dini. As for non-fiction, Ibu Marni (1989) provides a valuable first-person account of the experiences of a former Gerwani member who survived the violence of 1965-66. Another Gerwani member also has detailed her experience as a survivor under the pseudonym Bu Yeti (See Anton Lukas, trans. "Survival: Bu Yeti's Story" in *The Indonesian Killings 1965-1966: Studies from Java and Bali*, Monash Papers on Southeast Asia, No. 21. Edited by Robert Cribb Victoria: Monash Asia Institute, (1990): 101-119).

¹⁸ For a particularly helpful analysis of this series in which to situate the excerpt see Nancy Cooper, "Tohari's Trilogy."

¹⁹ As the rumor went, the scene at Lubang Buaya culminated in their "abandoning themselves in a lustful orgy with senior communists and air force officers" after torturing and mutilating the generals (Robert Cribb, "Genocide in Indonesia, 1965-1966," 232.).

²⁰ A strong condemnation against the propensity to create binaries such as being PKI or not may be found in an essay written by an Indonesian survivor of 1965-66 who was both a victim of and participant-observer in the events (Pipit Rochijat, "Am I PKI or Non-PKI?!" Translated by Benedict Anderson. *Indonesian* 40 (October 1985): 37-56. available <http://www.muse.jhu.edu>.