WAYANG MBELING

INDONESIAN WRITERS AND THE JAVANESE SHADOW THEATRE

A thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy of The Australian National University

by

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I certify that this thesis contains no material which has been previously submitted for the award of any other degree at any university, and that, to the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously written by any other person except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.



Marshall Clark

Abstract

This thesis is a study of the ways in which a number of Indonesia's writers in the New Order - in particular, the final years of the New Order - have interacted with the Javanese wayang shadow theatre. Literary appropriations of the wayang can be usefully described as *wayang mbeling* [mischievous wayang], a common reference to parodic wayang narratives, which first appeared in the Indonesian mass media in the early 1980s. The divergent or subversive nature of *wayang mbeling* is suggested by the fact that, in Javanese, *beling* denotes a shard of glass. This meaning has also taken on the connotation of witty playfulness or mischievousness, and in terms of modern Indonesian literary studies, *mbeling* has been associated with 'anti-Establishment' poetry, or poetry that subverts the status quo.

The texts discussed in this thesis will show that even when the Javanese shadow theatre is not appropriated by Indonesian writers in a parodic manner, the notion of *wayang mbeling* – with its overt anti-Establishment connotations - is a useful form of description. This is because, through *wayang mbeling*, or literary appropriations of the wayang, Indonesian writers subverted the Javanese shadow theatre and the dominant cultural ideologies of Java, promoted the social and political aspirations of Indonesia's middle class, mocked the New Order's ruling elite, and satirised and humiliated Suharto.

Ultimately, by investigating the ways in which various Indonesian writers translated the wayang into modern literary forms of expression, this thesis reveals the various strategies of mediation that allowed the writers to appropriate the

wayang for their own social and satirical purposes, playfully manipulating it as a means to parody, criticise, and rhetorically undermine the Indonesian authorities.

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Introduction: Setting the Scene

"the word *mbeling* [...] if it is specifically used in wayang terminology, has the meaning of: *Mischievous Wayang*, wayang that diverges from the established images and forms".[1]
R.M. SETYADJI PANTJAWIDJAJA

In October 1999 the Javanese writer, cultural critic and academic, Kuntowijoyo, wrote an emotive essay in the Jakarta-based daily newspaper, *Kompas*, entitled "The Politicisation, Commercialisation and Autonomy of Culture".[2] In this essay Kuntowijoyo denounces the way in which cultural expression in Indonesia has been overly-politicised throughout the post-Independence era. Kuntowijoyo observes that during the Old Order of President Sukarno and the New Order of President Suharto, certain domains of Indonesian cultural expression were blatantly co-opted and politicised from above. One of the most obvious examples of politicising culture has been the use of the wayang shadow theatre for imparting political messages. For example, under Sukarno's presidency all political parties had been known to use the Javanese *wayang kulit* shadow puppet theatre for propaganda purposes. According to G. J. Resink each party attempted to portray itself as the righteous, victorious one and hence

[1] "kata *mbeling* [...] secara khusus bila diterapkan pada perkataan wayang, [berarti]:*Wayang Nakal*, wayang yang menyimpan dari gatra + citra yang sudah mapan". See Budi Maryono, "Wayang Mbeling: Upaya Sosialisasi Wayang," *Mutiara*, No. 504, 1990, pp. 7-10.

identified themselves with the 'righteous' Pandawas of the Mahabharata cycle of tales, using them as their mouthpiece.[3] Later, during Suharto's New Order regime, leading *dalang* openly supported the government's political party, Golkar, and wayang performances were often used to convey government propaganda. From time to time Suharto gave speeches suggesting that the wayang was to be used to convey messages such as the importance of economic development and family planning.[4] Furthermore, Laurie J. Sears observes that in the late New Order period in particular

> The government has greater control over the shadow puppet tradition than ever before, through monitoring what stories are performed, channeling the tradition into the government sponsored fine arts academies, and having the academies take an increasing role in the development of the tradition outside the academies. Wayang competitions (lomba) are frequently sponsored by city and village government organisations, and judges for these events are inevitably drawn from the fine arts academies. The government also oversees the stories that are chosen for the monthly performances that are broadcast on the national radio station.[5]

Clearly the co-optation of the wayang had much to do with the New Order's efforts to impose and retain its social and political authority. Repression,

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[2] Kuntowijoyo, "Politisasi, Komersialisasi, dan Otonomi Budaya," *Kompas*, October 28, 1999.
[3] G. J. Resink, "From the Old Mahabaharata-to the New Ramayana-Order,' *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-en Volkenkunde* 131, 2/3 (1975), pp. 214-35.
[4] Laurie J. Sears, *Shadows of Empire: Colonial Discourse and Javanese Tales* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 233-34.
[5] ibid., p. 258.

intimidation and censorship were just some of the New Order's methods of establishing and retaining power. Furthermore, John Pemberton has argued that the New Order's adoption of a cultural discourse routinely anchored in constructs like 'tradition', 'origins', and 'ritual' - and its subsequent co-optation and promotion of 'traditional' forms of cultural expressions such as the wayang - was part of an elaborate privileging of stability and order as dominant characteristics of not only Javanese culture but also the 'Indonesian culture' of the New Order.[6] In this sense the wayang became one further site for the production of new forms of state domination. Consequently, Kuntowijoyo finds it particularly galling that in the post-Suharto era, an era supposedly distinguished by a new-found degree of artistic autonomy, Indonesian cultural expression has again been hijacked for political purposes. This time, according to Kuntowijoyo, the political actor responsible is not the Indonesian state but rather the *rakyat*, the 'ordinary' people of Indonesia.

In what ways have 'ordinary' Indonesians 'politicised' cultural expression in the post-Suharto era? Assuming that a *dalang*, or shadow puppeteer, is an 'ordinary' Indonesian, Kuntowijoyo answers this by describing some of the more blatant political references emerging from the wayang shadow puppet theatre of Java. First of all, he mentions a wayang performance in Solo where a high-profile *dalang* associated Amien Rais, the Muslim politician, with Sengkuni, the cunning and evil strategist of the Kurawa faction of the Mahabharata cycle of tales. Kuntowijoyo also observes that after the resignation of Suharto, for a time it became quite fashionable to see *dalang*, performers and students alike deploying

[6] John Pemberton, *On the Subject of Java* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994).

the wayang clown-servant Gareng as a humorous parody of President Habibie. For example, Kuntowijoyo describes seeing a group of demonstrating students perform a play entitled *Gareng Jadi Presiden Transisi* [Gareng Becomes a Transitional President], a parody of the relatively obscure wayang *lakon* or tale, *Gareng Dadi Ratu* [Gareng Becomes King]. In this popular tale, Gareng becomes king of the far-off kingdom of Paranggumiwang, where he rules, like Habibie, for a short but hilarious time before his deception is uncovered. Kuntowijoyo also recounts a wayang performance where a *dalang* from the north-coast of Java held up a puppet of Gareng exclaiming "Jelek-jelek aku ini Presidenmu!" [For better or worse, I'm your President!].

In Yogyakarta, Butet Kertaredjasa's lively performance of Indra Tranggono and Agus Noor's satirical monologue, *Lidah (Masih) Pingsan* [The Tongue is (Still) Paralysed] (1998), was also distinguished by an uproarious interlude involving Gareng.[7] Mid-way through Butet's monologue, the narrator of the tale, Aji, confronts his new *lurah* [village headman], who is represented by a puppet of Gareng. This particular Gareng is wearing a presidential *peci*, and his appearance onstage is accompanied by a traditional tune from South Sulawesi, the birthplace of Habibie. Of much amusement is the way Butet's Gareng speaks in the affected speech style and accent of the new president. By using Anglicised abstractions such as "emosional" [emotional], "tendensius" [tendentious], and "kompetitif" [competitive], and by punctuating his ludicrously pompous statements with a

[7] Barbara Hatley, "Cultural expression and social transformation in Indonesia," in *Reformasi: Crisis and Change in Indonesia*, eds. Arief Budiman, Barbara Hatley and Damien Kingsbury (Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 1999), pp. 267-285; and Marshall Clark, "Star Wars: Obi-Wan Wiranto? Princess Megawati? Or Sultan Yoda?," *Inside Indonesia*, 60 (October-December 1999): 25-26.

Habibiesque "OK?", for a few short magical minutes Gareng is Habibie, and Habibie is Gareng.

Kuntowijoyo finds blatantly political references such as these demeaning to the wayang art form. Of course, such a view denies the widely-held belief that the wayang, and the figure of the *dalang* in particular, has long acted as a means of conveying social and political comment. Furthermore, so-called "vulgar" scenes such as these are also quite common in contemporary performance and literature, and are certainly not limited to the immediate post-Suharto era. Considering their broad sociopolitical implications, an in-depth study is not only important but overdue. The potential for the study of subversive literary reworkings of the wayang was confirmed to me personally when, like virtually every foreign citizen living in Indonesia in the days immediately preceding 20 May 1998, I had been told to either lie low, head to Bali, or return to my country of origin. After witnessing first-hand the riots, looting and destruction of Jakarta only days beforehand, I needed little encouragement to leave. At the time, I was in Indonesia to research the links between the Javanese wayang shadow puppet theatre and the fiction of many of Indonesia's leading writers, poets and playwrights. I had been spending the previous two months meeting and interviewing various writers, watching as many *Ruwatan Bumi '98* [Earth Exorcism '98] cultural performances as possible, and observing wayang puppeteering classes in Yogyakarta.[8] I had also been watching dozens of wayang

[8] For more on *Ruwatan Bumi '98*, see See Marshall Clark, "Cleansing the Earth," in *The last days of Suharto*, eds. Edward Aspinall, Herb Feith and Gerry van Klinken (Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 1999), pp. 37-40; Barbara Hatley, "Cultural expression"; and Michael H. Bodden, "Notes on the Culture of the Reformasi Era" (unpublished paper, 1999): 1-16.

shadow puppet theatre performances, and after travelling to-and-fro between Jakarta, Yogyakarta and Solo for two months, I was keen to call it a day.

The night before I flew out of Yogya, a Saturday night, something quite surprising happened. With a couple of friends, I decided to celebrate my last night in Yogya by watching a wayang performance. Perhaps as a result of the economic crisis, or perhaps due to the tense and politicised atmosphere throughout Indonesia, to our knowledge there was not a single wayang performance being held in or around Yogya. Nevertheless, we were not downhearted as the commercial television station Indosiar was as usual broadcasting its weekly wayang performance, which enjoys great popularity and high ratings in Java. That night the *lakon*, or wayang tale, was *Wisanggeni Lahir* [The Birth of Wisanggeni]. The tale depicts the birth of Bambang Wisanggeni, the love-child of Arjuna and a heavenly goddess, Dewi Dresanala. In the Indosiar version Batara Brahma, a heavenly god and Wisanggeni's grandfather, attempted to kill Wisanggeni when he was a baby. However, due to his powers of immortality, the baby survived, and he flees the heavens, hoping to seek his father Arjuna on earth. Later, as an adult, with an arsenal of supernatural powers, Wisanggeni stormed the heavens, seeking an explanation for his grandfather's murderous treatment. At the time, with the shootings of university students and the deaths and rapes of hundreds of people in Jakarta still heavy in our thoughts, the tale resonated with symbolism. Could it be that the students, like Wisanggeni, might just be able to withstand the might of the Indonesian military, and struggle on against the odds, ultimately challenging the 'gods', Suharto, Wiranto, Prabowo and the New Order powers-that-be?

Another reason why this televised performance was so fascinating was because it was only days previously in Jakarta that I had attended the book-launch of a novel that is loosely based on the Wisanggeni legend. The book-launch was for *Saman*, the much-discussed best-selling novel by Ayu Utami. In fact, this was the reason why at one stage I had found myself, holed up in a hotel room in Cikini, much too close to the May 13-14 riots. Nevertheless, *Saman* had taken the Indonesian literati by storm, and had sold out four or five editions in the space of a month or two, at the height of the anti-Suharto student demonstrations. The most obvious link between *Saman* and the Wisanggeni legend is that the main character of *Saman* is named Wisanggeni, who later changes his name to Saman. It goes without saying that the Wisanggeni of Ayu's novel shares many similarities with the Wisanggeni of the wayang mythology. Therefore, would it be too far-fetched to claim that a well-read Indosiar programmer decided to broadcast *Wisanggeni Lahir* in direct response to the incredible success of Ayu Utami's *Saman*? Perhaps. However, I would suggest that this subtle link between text and context, which raises a number of very important issues, demands a detailed examination.

This thesis is devoted to examining the interaction between the wayang and *sastra Indonesia*, or modern Indonesian literature. Such an interaction is by no means a marginal phenomenon, as the thriving wayang tradition - either in the form of wayang comics or performances of *wayang kulit, wayang golèk* or *wayang wong* - has played an important and ongoing inspirational role throughout the literary careers of a variety of modern Indonesian writers, poets and playwrights. Ultimately, by examining modern Indonesian literature in terms of the wayang, the workings of both mediums will be able to be better understood.

Soon after the resignation of President Suharto, I returned to Yogyakarta in order to explore in more detail the interaction between the wayang and modern Indonesian literature. However, this time I was determined not to approach this interaction quite so passively, that is, through the limited perspective of a interested bystander. Watching a wayang performance is often a mystifying activity, and this is quite apart from the sheer mental and physical exhaustion one constantly attempts to overcome during the passage of a performance. Wayang performances often take place at night from about 9 pm until 5 am the next day. For much of that time most audience members come and go, eat, chat and have a snooze, and at times it appears that it is only the *dalang* and their entourage who really understand exactly what is going on. This impression is underscored by the shadow puppeteer's usage of archaic forms of Javanese, not to mention the presentation of what often appears to be a very complex and slow-moving plot, where literally nothing significant appears to happen for hours at a stretch.

This is not to say that a wayang performance is not an enjoyable experience. Even when nothing actually is happening, the soft strains of the gamelan, the musical ensemble accompanying all wayang performances, are entrancing. Furthermore, even with very limited Javanese, or none at all, anyone can easily appreciate the beauty and artistry of the puppets themselves, not to mention the exotic mystery of their shadows and the extremely dexterous movements of the seemingly tireless *dalang*. The carefully choreographed battle-scenes are truly impressive, and the dances of the clowns, not to mention their grotesque physical features, are equally engaging. The addition of contemporary elements, such as cigarettes, motorbikes, machine-guns and synthesised sound-effects are also met with much laughter and enjoyment. Yet as an interested

Western observer, I am not the first to say that the more performances one witnesses the more one realises that the key to understanding this exotic world of the shadows is not through simply watching performance after performance.

Thus in the second half of 1998 I decided to approach my research from the perspective of a performer of the wayang tradition, a *dalang*. However, in order to become a *dalang*, I soon realised I needed to ask a simple question: what exactly does a *dalang* do? I have since been given many explanations, and perhaps Ward Keeler's concise description summarises a *dalang*'s many duties best:

> [A *dalang*] must manipulate all the puppets, and at the same time give them all their voices, imparting to each figure a distinct timbre and manner of speaking, as well as improvising all their remarks. He must fit a particular story, sometimes a very complicated one, to the constraints of a rigid dramatic structure. This structure consists of a series of required scenes and set pieces, such as the opening at a royal court [...] He must also direct the gamelan orchestra by means of subtle verbal cues and strokes of the mallet against the puppet box. At many points, while manipulating the puppets, he holds the mallet between the big and second toes of his right foot in order to strike a set of metal plates suspended from the side of the box: this creates a metallic, crashing noise with which he punctuates the action. Remarkably, the *dalang* must fulfil all these responsibilities - scriptwriter, conductor, narrator, singer, manipulator of the puppets, and impersonator of all their voices - all night, since a Javanese shadow play begins at nine in the evening and lasts until dawn - about five or six the next morning - without intermission. He does so without so much as uncrossing his legs,

since his right foot must be ready to strike the mallet against the puppet box. While the musicians and the people watching the performance from behind the screen all eat at least one meal, in some cases two, before morning, he eats nothing, taking only sweet tea and clove-scented cigarettes for refreshment. And as Javanese often remark with particular astonishment, he does not use the bathroom all night.[9]

In short, in many ways a *dalang* is not only a manipulator of puppets and a conductor of music, but also a writer, a poet and a playwright. Likewise, I hope to show that many modern Indonesian writers, poets and playwrights reveal important links and strong similarities with the *dalang*, especially when they focus their attention on appropriating wayang tales. Equally significantly, it is by focussing on the links between the performance art of the *dalang* and the literary techniques of many modern Indonesian writers that I hope to highlight the important differences. To quote one of Indonesia's leading short storywriters, Seno Gumira Ajidarma, "what the *dalang* do they do very well, however it is up to us writers to use what they do and then go and do the things that they can't".[10]

Upon my return to Yogya I was able to purchase a small *kelir* [wayang screen] and a modest collection of *wayang kulit* puppets. Under the tutelage of a patient and gifted *dalang*, Ki Parjaya, who also taught at the Habiranda school for wayang puppeteering at the Sultan's palace in Yogyakarta, I embarked on my new 'career' as a *dalang*. The following weeks and months spent grappling with the intricacies of *pedalangan*, the art of wayang puppetry, were some of the most

[9] Ward Keeler, *Javanese Shadow Puppets* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 17-19.
[10] Interview with Seno Gumira Ajidarma, Jakarta, 3 April, 1998.

enjoyable of my life. Neighbours and street sellers often stopped by to follow my progress, never holding back from giving advice and tips. In effect, I had not only opened the door to understanding the wayang world from an insider's perspective, but I had also unwittingly created an open invitation for anyone and everyone to lecture me on the rich world of the wayang mythology. Elsewhere, after my classes, I spent many a long night in roadside food stalls chatting about the various much-loved wayang heroes, with every conversation adding something extra to my understanding of each character. However, exhilarated by moving into a new dimension of understanding of the wayang world, I felt myself inexorably drifting away from my main research focus, which was, of course, modern Indonesian literature. Thus by the time I had learnt enough of the art of wayang puppetry to give short performances, it was time to return to Australia and start writing.

The true complexity and richness of the relationship between modern Indonesian literature and the wayang, and indeed the modern Indonesian writer and the *dalang*, became much clearer to me after I started writing and performing wayang plays myself. After returning to Australia, my father and I constructed a modest *kelir*, perfectly suiting my equally modest ability as a *dalang*, or rather *tukang mayang* [a poorly regarded 'wayang manipulator']. My first performance open to the general public, and accompanied by a *gamelan* ensemble, was on 11 September 1999, at the Australian National University, Canberra. The performance itself, entitled *Suteja Gugat* [Suteja Accuses], which lasted a mere one and a half hours, was just one activity amongst many organised as part of the annual ANU Open Day. Yet for many in attendance, and in particular myself, the performance will not be easily forgotten. The reason I say this is because the

particular historical context of the performance ensured that the atmosphere was tinged with as much anger, sadness and pathos as it was with surprise, joy and laughter.

The preceding ten days will be remembered as the days the rest of the world watched helplessly as so many people of East Timor suffered terribly for their decision on 30 August 1999 to reject the proposal for autonomy in the Republic of Indonesia. By choosing independence from Indonesia, many East Timorese were fully aware of the potentially violent consequences. Consequently, with the benefit of television and newspaper images and radio broadcasts, sympathetic observers throughout the world witnessed the pro-Indonesia militia unleash their vengeance on the defenceless East Timorese. As the full extent of the horror grew each day, it soon became apparent that the rest of the world had gravely misjudged the capacity and willingness of the Indonesian military command to maintain law and order in East Timor in the post-referendum period. We saw the Indonesian military standing by as the militia destroyed, burned, looted, raped and killed with apparent impunity. It was becoming painfully obvious to even the most partial observer that the Indonesian military, who had armed and trained the militia in the months preceding the referendum, was actually heavily involved in the violence. With the subsequent imposition of martial law merely allowing the militias to heighten their campaign of terror, the only glimmer of hope, if any remained, was the immediate deployment of an international peace-keeping force. Yet short of a declaration of war against Indonesia, the only way this could happen was by the invitation of the then President of Indonesia, B.J. Habibie. Despite sustained and aggressive diplomatic

pressure from various international quarters, in the days immediately preceding 11 September this invitation was not forthcoming.

As the terrible events in East Timor had unfolded, I had been teaching Indonesian at the University of Tasmania. Due to my teaching commitments, I only arrived in Canberra several days before the 11 September performance, to practise with the Canberra-based *gamelan* ensemble, the Australia-Indonesia Association *Gamelan* Group. Although the performance had been planned months in advance, in the days leading up to my departure I was plagued by a number of serious misgivings. Like many of my fellow teachers of Indonesian throughout Australia, the reign of terror in East Timor had seriously tested my faith in Indonesia's post-Suharto government. Yet if there were any time to present a wayang performance, I argued that none could be more important than the proposed date. Important not only as a medium for me to present pointed social and political comment, but also as a means of exorcising, or at least diffusing, some of the personal demons playing upon my own heavy spirit, not to mention the demons wreaking havoc over the streets of East Timor. The wayang shadow puppet theatre, with its close links with animistic beliefs, has for centuries represented a key element in Javanese exorcistic rites, and many Javanese still hold wayang performances in order to appease the local *dhanyang*, or spirits. Fully aware of the spiritual element to traditional wayang performances, and the role of the *dalang* as a medium between the world of the spirits and the gods and the human audience, I did not enter into the final preparations lightly.

In Canberra, the Indonesian embassy was being constantly picketed and surrounded by demonstrators. At the ANU, students and lecturers were voicing their anger at the violence in East Timor, leaving the campus to march on

Parliament House. However, not all anger was directed at the pro-Indonesia militia and the Indonesian powers-that-be; the front entrance of Parliament House had been daubed in red with the following message: "Shame, Australia, Shame". In the days immediately leading up to the wayang performance, security was certainly an issue I had quietly discussed with a few people. Thus my good friend and fellow postgraduate student, Nigel Little, who was ostensibly my *assisten dalang* [*dalang*'s assistant] was not only selflessly prepared to help with the writing of my script but also willing to act as a 'security guard' for the duration of the performance. In fact, by handing out a few spare *blangkon* [traditional Javanese male batik head-dress] to various friends, I had an instant crew of 'roadies', and indeed with both sets of my extended family involved in setting up the screen, chopping down and delivering fresh banana trunks, mending broken puppets, and photocopying plot summaries, my entourage had begun to resemble even those of leading Javanese *dalang* such as Ki Seno Nugroho, Ki Anom Suroto and Ki Manteb Sudharsono. The performance itself, like most wayang performances, was held with minimum drama, and security was never an issue. The audience itself consisted of a mixture of academics and students, Australians, Indonesians and others. Afterwards, the many children in attendance cautiously approached the *kelir* and began playing with the puppets, carefully jabbing them into the banana trunk.

It is now history that several days later President Habibie finally responded to international pressure and invited a peace-keeping force into East Timor. But the damage had already been done. However, this does not in any way detract from the fact that each and every expression of concern, protest and prayer over this period played a small yet significant role in the unfolding drama.

This point was brought firmly to home to me personally when several people pointed out, jokingly, that my wayang performance had succeeded where scores of diplomats and politicians had seemingly failed. Ordinarily, I wouldn't give such an off-hand observation a second thought. Yet I had in fact expended a great deal of care and energy writing and performing the *Suteja Gugat* script. The violent conflict between the two wayang knights or *ksatria*, 'Corporal' Suteja and 'Lieutenant' Gatotkaca, was a simple allegory of the power struggle unfolding in Jakarta at the time. The clown-scene, depicting Gareng, Petruk and Bagong arguing over their flea-ridden donkey, was also a simple allegory, a thinly-veiled representation of the complexities of the East Timor catastrophe. In this clown-scene, the poor donkey, clearly a representation of East Timor, had been suffering from 25 years of neglect, and all Gareng, Petruk and Bagong could do was argue over who was most at fault, and who should clean up the mess. Should the blame be laid at the feet of Gareng, who all those years ago stole the donkey, gave it a saddle, and has ever since fed it on a diet of lollipops? Or perhaps Bagong, the 'fair dinkum Aussie', who said nothing for 25 years, conveniently ignoring the donkey's problems as he sat on its back with Gareng, sipping champagne? Or is Petruk, with his red, white and blue handkerchief, the real culprit, who opened up a Pandora's Box by asking the donkey if he'd like to go free? In such a manner fingers were pointed, insults traded, and bodies pummelled. However, in keeping with the wayang tradition, ultimately no final conclusion was reached, or even expected.

I performed this clown-scene half-a-dozen times in the last few months of 1999, in front of hundreds of school-children in Tasmania, and the laughter only increased as my performances became more polished. The fact that many of the

older audience members, predominantly teachers and lecturers, have commented on the political satire is also important. Nevertheless, the main point I wish to make here is that shadow puppeteers do not perform in isolation: they are as dependent on a good script as they are dependent on an appreciative audience. Besides this, both the *dalang*, the writer and the audience are interlinked by the social and political concerns of the day. Indeed, in the case of *Suteja Gugat*, the act of writing, the act of performance, and the act of reception were inextricably linked, not only at the point of inscription but also during performance. Thus for a brief period in time, *Suteja Gugat* was simultaneously, and paradoxically, both a modern literary text and live performance art, interpenetrated not only by its writer and performer, but also by its audience and its particular sociopolitical context.

In many ways, the texts under consideration in this thesis – which can be usefully described as *wayang mbeling* [mischievous wayang] - share similarities with my *Suteja Gugat* performance. As in the first epigraph of this thesis, *wayang mbeling* can be defined as a playful form of wayang that diverges from the established images and forms.[11] Strictly speaking, as a genre of cultural expression, *wayang mbeling* refers to parodic wayang narratives, which first appeared in Indonesian newspapers such as *Suara Merdeka, Jakarta Pos, Minggu Pagi* and *Jawa Pos* in the early 1980s. The divergent or subversive nature of *wayang mbeling* is suggested by the fact that, in Javanese, 'beling' denotes a shard of broken glass. In the form of *mbeling*, this meaning has also taken on the connotation of witty playfulness or mischievousness, and in terms of the wayang

[11] See Budi Maryono, "Wayang Mbeling: Upaya Sosialisasi Wayang," and Sawali Tuhusetya, "Kritik Model Wayang Mbeling," *Suara Merdeka*, March 23, 1997.

shadow theatre itself it denotes a playful form of wayang – not unlike my *Suteja Gugat* performance - that diverges from the status quo.

It is also important to note that even when the Javanese shadow theatre is not appropriated by Indonesian writers in a parodic or playful manner, the notion of *wayang mbeling* is a useful form of description. This is partly because of the overt 'anti-Establishment' connotations associated with the word *mbeling*. In the context of modern Indonesian literature, *mbeling* is not necessarily a synonym for parody. For example, cult literary figures of the 1970s, such as Remy Sylado and Yudhistira Ardi Noegroho, referred to their poetry as *sajak mbeling* or *puisi mbeling*, which has been translated in the past as 'anti-Establishment poetry'. This genre of poetry, characterised by its facile humour, simplicity, free-flowing style and mundane subject matter, has been described as being an act of rebellion against the "moralistic" poetry of established literary figures.[12] Similarly, fictional adaptations of the wayang - whether they act as parody or not - can be classed as *wayang mbeling* simply by virtue of the fact that they rebel against 'the Establishment', which may include the tales and forms of the Javanese shadow theatre, dominant Javanese cultural ideologies, the fiction of more established literary figures, or the New Order regime.

This thesis will explore the character of *wayang mbeling*, or to be precise, the interaction between the Javanese shadow theatre and modern Indonesian literature in New Order Indonesia. In order to gain a full appreciation of the various literary appropriations of the wayang to be considered in this thesis,

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[12] See A. Teeuw, *Sastra Indonesia Modern II* (Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya, 1989), p. 165; H.B. Jassin, "Beberapa Penyair di depan Forum," in *Penyair Muda di depan Forum* (Jakarta: Dewan Kesenian Jakarta, 1976), pp. 15-35; and B. Oemaryati, "Development of Modern Indonesian Literature," in *Dynamics of Indonesian History*, ed. Soebadio (Amsterdam: North Holland, 1978), pp. 307-43.

equal emphasis will be placed on the presentation, content and social, political and historical settings of the texts to be studied. By focusing on the relationship between the form, content and context of these texts, my aim is to use fiction as a site for understanding the various strains of social and cultural resistance in the New Order, in particular the later years of the New Order.

In terms of the broader framework of modern Indonesian literature and modern Indonesian literary studies, this study is important in that it explores in depth the observation of more than one scholar that since the late 1960s modern Indonesian literature has become increasingly oriented towards regional cultural traditions. As observed by Pamela Allen, the appropriation of regional traditions

> seemed to be a [...] self-conscious and deliberate strategy on the part of the writers and artists, who are now writing within a national tradition that is largely removed from the regions. They are now able to stand back from their regional cultures and, in some cases, reinterpret and interrogate some of the premises of those traditions.[13]

The regional cultural tradition most frequently appropriated by contemporary Indonesian fiction writers in the New Order was the Javanese shadow theatre. As we shall see, literary appropriations of the wayang not only worked to reinterpet and interrogate the premises of both Javanese cultural ideologies and the wayang itself, but also contemporary issues of political power in the New Order. Chapter

[13] Pamela Allen, "Reading Matters: an Examination of Plurality of Meaning in Selected Indonesian Fiction, 1980-1995," unpublished PhD thesis (University of Sydney, 2000), p. 63.

One will attempt to explain why, and the remainder of this thesis will attempt to show how.

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Wayang and Literature in the New Order

"...at the very least there are two substantial aspects that help make these Wayang Mbeling "performances" something special. First, they introduce the art of the wayang to readers. Secondly, there is a critical function in the sense that they inculcate an atmosphere of openness in the midst of the clogging-up of any official means of criticism. This sort of condition has led to the emergence of alternative mediums of criticism [such as Wayang Mbeling]".[1]
SAWALI TUHUSETYA

Introduction: Indonesian Writers and the Wayang

This thesis is a study of the ways in which a number of Indonesia's writers in the New Order - in particular, the final years of the New Order - have interacted with the Javanese shadow theatre. The deliberate choice by these writers to use Indonesian as their medium of linguistic communication has proven to be a decision in favour of distancing themselves from their mother-tongue, Javanese, and of targeting a larger 'national' audience, thus signaling their desire to reach non-Javanese Indonesians. By the same token, the Indonesian language of literary representations of the wayang was often heavily Javanese in

[1] "...setidaknya ada dua fungsi substansial yang merupakan nilai lebih dari "pentas" Wayang Mbeling ini. Pertama, fungsi introduksi seni wayang kepada para pembaca. Kedua, fungsi kritik untuk menciptakan suasana keterbukaan di tengah-tengah mampatnya saluran kritik resmi.

its flavour and style, and the indigenised wayang characters and plots appropriated were also, naturally, very much regional in origin.

Within the 'national' audience, the target of these writers was, generally, the Indonesian middle-class. However, their allegiance was overwhelmingly with the non-elite and subordinate groups in Indonesian society. Yet, how can an appropriation of the wayang's feudal world of kings, queens, princes, princesses, demons, and servants possibly express an allegiance with Indonesia's 'non-elite'? The answer to this question lies in the feudal *kawula-gusti* [servant-lord/master] ethos, one of the most basic assumptions of traditional Javanese society, not to mention the heavily-Javanised New Order regime. A *kawula-gusti* ideology conceives society in terms of a hierarchy, in which the ruler holds sway over his kingdom unchallenged, and the achievements of his underlings are measured by their unquestioning loyalty and service to the ruler and his kingdom.[2] Furthermore, the *kawula-gusti* ideology does not just refer to the king, but to all patron-client relations within the social hierarchy. The feudal *kawula-gusti* ethos was one of the first values to be questioned by many of the writers of the New Order reworking wayang narratives and themes. For example, in novels such as Emha Ainun Nadjib's *Gerakan Punakawan atawa Arus Bawah* [The Clown-servant Movement or The Undertow][3] (1994), the menial clown-servants of the wayang hold centre-stage, and in their literary manifestations they constantly challenge their superiors, measuring their achievement not in terms of service to their ruler

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Kondisi semacam ini memicu munculnya media kritik alternatif [seperti Wayang Mbeling]". Sawali Tuhusetya, "Kritik Model Wayang Mbeling".

[2] For a full explanation, see Soemarsaid Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java: A Study of the Later Mataram Period, 16th to 19th Century* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1981), pp. 14-26.

but rather in terms of their opposition to his rule and their resourcefulness in undermining it.

In *Arus Bawah*, and other examples of Indonesian literary texts in which wayang themes were transformed - such as Agusta Wibisono's *Balada Narasoma* [The Ballad of Narasoma][4] (1990), Ki Guna Watoncarita's *Wayang Semau Gue* [Wayang as I Please][5] (1990), and Pipit Rochijat's *Baratayuda di Negeri Antah Berantah* [The Baratayuda in Never-Never Land][6] (1993) - the rulers themselves are often satirically caricatured as spoilt, nepotistic, corrupt, and power-hungry officials who are socially and politically ill-equipped to negotiate the ever-changing realities of life outside the palace walls.[7] However, these examples are extreme, and many texts, such as Sindhunata's *Anak Bajang Menggiring Angin* [The Little Runt Herding the Wind][8] (1983), Putu Wijaya's *Perang* [War][9] (1990) and Seno Gumira Ajidarma's *Wisanggeni Sang Buronan* [Wisanggeni the Outlaw][10] (2000), portrayed both the wayang rulers and their subordinates in somewhat tempered shades of grey. For example, in *Wisanggeni Sang Buronan*, the renegade *ksatria* of the Pandawa, Wisanggeni, respects the opinions of authoritative *ksatria* figures such as his father Arjuna and the advisor to the Pandawa, Kresna. However, Wisanggeni's peasant clothes, his unkempt appearance, his taste for *arak* [rice wine], his allegiance to the common people, and his opposition to the wayang gods can very easily be understood as a focus of an alternative site of

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[3] Emha Ainun Nadjib, *Gerakan Punakawan atawa Arus Bawah* (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Bentang Budaya, 1994).
[4] Agusta Wibisono, *Balada Narasoma* (Jakarta: Pustakakarya Grafikatama, 1990).
[5] Ki Guna Watoncarita, *Wayang Semau Gue* (Jakarta: Antar Kota, 1990).
[6] Pipit Rochijat, *Baratayuda di Negeri Antah Berantah* (Jakarta: Humor, 1993).
[7] For a satirical portrayal of the wayang *ksatria* by a non-Indonesian author, see Benedict Anderson's short story, "Mengharap Petruk Jadi Raja?," *Editor*, 4, 13 (December 8, 1990): 26-27.
[8] Sindhunata, *Anak Bajang Menggiring Angin* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1983).
[9] Putu Wijaya, *Perang* (Jakarta: Pustaka Utama Grafiti, 1990).

values and beliefs, a focus which could also be seen as a rallying point for moral resistance against the hegemony of the status quo. Therefore, by treating the wayang seriously, and by broaching issues such as hierarchy and feudalism in a subtle manner, Seno's novel is as much an interrogation of the *kawula-gusti* ethos as the seditious satire of Agusta Wibisono, Pipit Rochijat, Ki Guna Watoncarita and others.

For these writers one method of questioning the feudal Javanese ideology underpinning the New Order's cultural hegemony was to modernise and humanise the wayang characters. For example, the wayang characters translated into Indonesian literary form were often depicted as 'ordinary' Indonesians who performed their tasks in a routine manner. Admittedly, their tasks may have appeared glamorous to the average reader. However, the manner in which these tasks were performed was often strikingly contemporary and quite mundane. For example, rather than Gatotkaca flying off completely unaided as he does in the wayang, in one short story by Sapto Aji, Gatotkaca casually dons a jet-fighter helmet and climbs into an F-16.[11] Elsewhere, on the front cover of Ki Guna Watoncarita's *Wayang Semau Gue*, an airborne Gatotkaca is pictured tangled in a kite. The front cover of Soebadio Sastrosatomo's *Politik Dosomuko Rezim Orde Baru* [The Dosomuko Politics of the New Order Regime][12] (1998) is distinguished by the striking image of the evil Dasamuka clutching an American dollar and a fifty-thousand rupiah note (characterised by the image of a smiling Suharto), whilst

[10] Seno Gumira Ajidarma, *Wisanggeni Sang Buronan* (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Bentang Budaya, 2000).
[11] Sapto Aji, "Gatotkaca Gugur," *Suara Merdeka*, May 25, 1997.
[12] Soebadio Sastrosatomo, *Politik Dosomuko Rezim Orde Baru: Rapuh dan Sengsarakan Rakyat* (Jakarta: Pusat Dokumentasi Politik "GUNTUR 49," 1998).

standing in a sea of five-hundred rupiah notes.[13] In a story by Pipit Rochijat, Karna takes to the Kurusetra battlefield in a Toyota jeep, and he is only hit by Arjuna's arrow when his driver Salya bogs the jeep down in some mud.[14] In contrast to this, Agusta Wibisono's duel between Arjuna and Karna in *Balada Narasoma* is highlighted by the two *ksatria* embracing each other, sharing a cigarette, and entering into a discussion of Karna's soon-to-be-completed novel.[15] It is precisely because these usually glamorous characters are rendered so 'ordinary' and 'contemporary' that their message is doubly potent.

Besides emphasising the ways in which various Indonesian writers modernised and humanised the characters of the wayang, this thesis will reveal the various strategies of mediation that allowed the writers to indirectly provoke or confront the powers-that-be and undermine their symbolic authority, while at other times directly insulting them. This thesis argues that in their fictional reworkings of the wayang, or *wayang mbeling*, Indonesian writers subverted the Javanese shadow theatre and the dominant cultural ideologies of Java, promoted the social and political aspirations of Indonesia's middle class, mocked the New Order's ruling elite, and satirised and humiliated Suharto. In so doing, they appropriated the wayang for their own social and satirical purposes, manipulating it as a means to parody, criticise, and rhetorically undermine the Indonesian authorities.

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[13] Five-hundred rupiah notes are characterised by the image of an orangutan. In the context of the front cover of Soebadio's text, the publisher claims that these notes represent "ketek-ketek yang mengabdi kepada tokoh Rama" [the monkeys who serve the hero Rama]. See Soebadio, *Politik Dosomuko*, inside cover.
[14] Pipit Rochijat, *Baratayuda di Negeri Antah Berantah*, pp. 38-44.
[15] Agusta Wibisono, *Balada Narasoma*, pp. 107-111.

It should be noted that not all wayang-based texts in this thesis can be classed, technically, as *wayang mbeling*. By examining various Indonesian literary texts, not necessarily in chronological order, it will become evident that there are significant stylistic differences between essentially realist texts alluding to the wayang – such as Umar Kayam's *Para Priyayi* and Ayu Utami's *Saman* - and satirical texts – such as the *wayang mbeling* of Pipit Rochijat, Putu Wijaya or Agusta Wibisono – which reveal a parodic identification with the characters and tales of the wayang. Nevertheless, in the sense that *mbeling* can be translated as 'anti-Establishment' as well as 'mischievous', it can be suggested that any contemporary literary text adapting the Javanese shadow theatre for subversive purposes can be considered as *wayang mbeling*. As we shall see, by invoking mythical characters, themes and imagery, the vast majority of these texts simultaneously subvert the wayang, interrogate and denounce Suharto and his New Order regime, as well as becoming expressions of social and literary resistance.

Wayang and Indonesian Literary History

As discussed in the Introduction, more than one scholar has commented on the way in which modern Indonesian literature and drama since the late 1960s became oriented towards indigenous cultural images, forms, and values. Significantly, Keith Foulcher's 1978 study, "Image and Perspective in Recent Indonesian Literature", observes that predominantly regional orientations have emerged on several occasions in the history of modern Indonesian literature. Foulcher describes how the indigenous element was pervasive in the 1920s and

30s, when poets and novelists incorporated indigenous elements into their literary expression "because their consciousness, as a generation, was largely informed by traditional cultural norms".[16] Traditional images and motifs re-emerged in the 1950s when the young *Angkatan Terbaru* [Newest Generation] writers under the leadership of Sundanese author Ajip Rosidi attempted to break with the strong European cultural orientation of the *Angkatan 45* [Generation of (19)45]. Foulcher observes that although Ajip Rosidi saw this group as "asserting their regional cultural roots", it is quite possible to see them "as simply writing of their own experience as part of the first generation of Indonesian-educated youth, without foreign languages, Dutch schooling, and contact with Europe which made a European cultural orientation so much a part of the experience of the *Angkatan 45*".[17] However, in contrast to the earlier historical periods when a sense of regionalism or tradition were prevalent, the works of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and what the writers were saying about them, indicated that these writers were much more self-conscious, sophisticated and deliberate in their choice to incorporate regional cultural traditions into the sphere of the contemporary Indonesian art form.

One study which highlights the deliberate nature in the 1970s of the incorporation of indigenous tradition into modern literary expression is Savitri Scherer's 1981 examination of the literary works of Yudhistira Ardi Noegraha.[18] This paper is one of the first analyses of the way in which an Indonesian writer has drawn on and poked fun at the wayang world. Scherer's study highlighted

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[16] Keith Foulcher, "Image and Perspective in Recent Indonesian Literature," *Review of Indonesian and Malayan Affairs*, 12, 2 (December 1978): 1-16.
[17] ibid, p. 2

the manner in which Yudhistira manipulates the characters and themes of the wayang to undermine the selfish interests of the New Order elite and the *kawula-gusti* feudal ethos. The most distinguishing aspect of Yudhistira's three novels experimenting with the wayang - *Arjuna Mencari Cinta* [Arjuna Searching for Love][19] (1977), *Arjuna Drop-Out*[20] (1980) and *Arjuna Wiwahaha* [The Marriage of Arjuna, Ha-ha][21] (1981) - is the way in which Yudhistira's 'wayang characters' are humorously depicted as fully-humanised suburban Indonesians. In this sense they are no longer wayang characters as such, but rather Indonesian teenagers and adults named after various characters in the Mahabharata. The malicious irony in their naming lies in how the relationships between the literary characters differ from their wayang namesakes. For example, in wayang narratives, Aswatama, one of the worst of the Kurawa, completely violates *ksatria* ethics by treacherously murdering two women, Banowati and Srikandi, as well as attempting to kill Parikesit, who was, at the time, a mere baby in his cradle. Meanwhile, in Yudhistira's *Arjuna Drop-Out*, Aswatama is portrayed as an honest bank clerk who, "stupidly", refuses to indulge himself in corruption, despite being in the midst of "a corrupt environment and its corrupt society!"[22] (p. 113)

As Benedict Anderson observes in "*Sembah-Sumpah*: The Politics of Language and Javanese Culture", by stealing the wayang heroes and plunging them into the "*borné* bourgeois world of contemporary Jakarta", Yudhistira impudently unleashes his malice not only towards the ruling elite, "an

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[18] Savitri Scherer, "Yudhistira Ardi Noegraha: Social Attitudes in the Works of a Popular Writer," *Indonesia*, 31 (April 1981): 31-52.
[19] Yudhistira Ardi Noegraha, *Arjuna Mencari Cinta* (Cypress: Jakarta, 1977)
[20] Yudhistira Ardi Noegraha, *Arjuna Drop-Out* (Cypress: Jakarta, 1980).
[21] Yudhistira Ardi Noegraha, *Arjuna Wiwahaha* (Cypress: Jakarta, 1981).
[22] *"lingkungan dan masyarakatnya yang korup!"*

establishment still sunk in the residues of colonial Javanese culture", but also the feudalism of Javanese culture itself.[23] He also highlights Yudhistira's usage of the Indonesian language. Anderson suggests that Yudhistira's incorporation of quotes and allusions from various languages and cultures would have been virtually impossible in Javanese, and besides, the whole point of Yudhistira's use of Indonesian for his texts was "precisely to put Java in its place".[24]

In terms of Western scholarship on modern Indonesian literature, it should be noted that the studies of both Scherer and Anderson are pioneering. This form of scholarship represents a challenge to the notion that only 'serious' canonical texts, or texts deemed worthy of inclusion in an ongoing canon-forming project, are worth serious critical attention. In particular, Scherer's serious study of a *sastra pop* text marks what Foulcher terms as the "literary into cultural studies" shift in the study of modern Indonesian literature,[25] mirroring the international shift from the New Criticist focus on literature as an aesthetic object in itself to the deconstructionist tendencies of postmodern literary theory. However, Scherer's study is still very much a product of the New Critics' intellectual paradigm of literary analysis, in which, according to Terry Eagleton, a "close reading" and "practical criticism" of the words on the page is favoured over the postmodern emphasis on the contexts which produced and surrounded them.[26]

The use of "practical criticism" as a framework for analysis of literary appropriations of the wayang is by no means limited to Scherer. The only book-

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[23] Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, "*Sembah-Sumpah*: The Politics of Language and Javanese Culture," in *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), esp. pp. 227-235.
[24] ibid, p. 235.
[25] Keith Foulcher, 'Teaching Indonesian Literature in an Age of Postmodernism', *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, 28, 2 (Summer 1994): 1-25.

length study of the relationship between the wayang and modern Indonesian literature, Burhan Nurgiyantoro's *Transformasi Unsur Pewayangan dalam Fiksi Indonesia* [Transformations of Elements of the Wayang in Indonesian Fiction][27] (1998), is in fact an extended description of the differences between what Nurgiyantoro regards as the standard wayang tales of the indigenised Mahabharata and Ramayana epics and their many literary derivatives, with little attempt to search for any of the texts' sociopolitical significance. Although the adoption of such an approach elucidates the 'significance' of a literary text by revealing the complex interactions between the text's plot, tone, characters and themes, usually such an analytic framework of interpretation fails to emphasise the wider social, political and historical settings underlying both the production and consumption of the text under review.

As a means of cultural resistance, the translation of the wayang into modern literary forms of expression continued throughout the latter half of the New Order era, if anything intensifying during the 1980s and 1990s. Why was the wayang so extensively explored and exploited for political and literary reasons in the New Order? The most obvious explanations involve politics and censorship. The first kind of explanation lies in the 'dynastic' style of Suharto and his government, and in Suharto's penchant for alluding to the world of the wayang. Certainly from very early on in his political career, Suharto, like his predecessor, perceived the need to link the political and the mythological. Much has been made of Suharto's early links with Semar, the popular wayang clown-god, and in his semi-official biography, there is a photo of a youthful Suharto posing in his

[26] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, Second Edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).

presidential office in front of a large painting depicting Hanoman fighting Rahwana.[28] However, in terms of political style, Suharto's presidency was modeled more on the values of the caste of noble warriors located in the upper echelons of the wayang world, the *ksatria*, the knight-warriors who were in turn models for the rulers of the ancient Central Javanese kingdoms. Consequently, Suharto's presidency soon took on a dynastic quality, very much in the manner of his predecessor, Sukarno.

Many commentators have observed that despite the differences between Indonesia's first two presidents, the main similarity between them is an essentially hierarchical political ideology derived from the Javanese cultural tradition. Benedict Anderson's famous article, "The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture", explored the links between Sukarno and Javanese rulers,[29] and Franz Magnis-Suseno and R. William Liddle have observed that Suharto projected an image of standing alone at the apex of government, like an idealised version of a traditional Javanese king.[30] Like a king, all important political decisions, as far as outside observers such as Liddle could detect, were made by him.[31] As in the court scene of a wayang performance, Suharto received cabinet ministers and others as petitioners, rather than as colleagues. Consequently, the autocratic 'kingly' nature of Suharto's rule was a key motif of the New Order era, during which arguably the central reality of the New Order's political system of

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[27] Burhan Nurgiyantoro, *Transformasi Unsur Pewayangan Dalam Fiksi Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1998).
[28] See O.G. Roeder, *The Smiling General* (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1969), p. ii.
[29] Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, "The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture," in *Language and Power*, pp. 17-77.
[30] See Franz Magnis-Suseno, "Langsir Keprabon: New Order leadership, Javanese culture and the prospects for democracy in Indonesia," in *Post-Soeharto Indonesia: Renewal or Chaos*, ed. Geoff Forrester (Bathurst: Crawford House Publishing, 1999), pp. 214-228; and R. William Liddle, *Leadership and Culture in Indonesian Politics* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996).

governance was 'government top down', with Suharto, like a Javanese ruler of centuries past, placed firmly at the top. One could easily imagine, then, that authors critical of Suharto and his regime would focus their attention on capturing and reworking the highly-stratified social structure of the wayang world, for their own subversive purposes.

A second important reason for the popularity of the wayang in modern Indonesian literature is the impact of censorship. In a study on censorship in the New Order, Hendrik Maier argues, in a somewhat overly-pessimistic fashion, that for several decades Indonesia's literary life was made completely sterile. This was mainly because of the impact of censorship and self-censorship in the New Order, and the subsequent trend for literature, or *sastra*, to move farther and farther from everyday life into a surreal "never-never land".[32] It was here, according to Maier, that writers could reflect their fragmentary personal experiences, in tales full of self-censored innuendoes and muffled allusions to the state's authority:

> Suharto and his administrative apparatus have castrated a generation of writers, robbing them of their generative power, the power of being historical witnesses who could tell others about what is happening before their very eyes. Rejecting realism and strict moralism, the tales of the seventies and eighties were preoccupied with an experimental freedom and playfullness that confused the critics, alienated those who thought that

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[31] Liddle, *Leadership and Culture*, p. 80.
[32] Hendrik M. J. Maier, "Flying a Kite: the Crimes of Pramoedya Ananta Toer," in *Figures of Criminality in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Colonial Vietnam*, ed. Vicente L. Rafael (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1999), pp. 257-258.

> "literature" still had a role to play in the New Order, and discouraged new and young readers, who subsequently turned away from *sastra* as a crucial manifestation of national culture. The latter effect could only please the authorities who were eager to silence discussion on the literary front [...] Censorship, invisibly and facelessly operating along various patterns of power, has done an excellent job; literary life has eliminated itself as a force for vociferous dissent. Leaving only some authors and writers wandering on the savannas [...] where they run the risk of being made criminals.[33]

Admittedly, the consequences of the New Order regime's policies on freedom of expression by artists, and Indonesian society at large, were more negative than positive. Furthermore, the image of Indonesian authors and writers wandering on the savannas, an image borrowed from the man that many regard as Indonesia's greatest author, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, is apt. Nevertheless, after surveying the savannas carefully, I would conclude that literary life in the New Order was surely not as hopeless as Maier suggests. For example, despite Maier's low regard for writers "rejecting realism and strict moralism", surrealist writers such as Putu Wijaya, Danarto, and Seno Gumira Ajidarma, supposedly "preoccupied with an experimental freedom and playfullness", were in their own oblique way just as oppositional and political as their realist counterpart, Pramoedya.[34]

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[33] ibid, p. 258.

[34] See Paul Tickell, "Subversion or Escapism? The Fantastic in Recent Indonesian Fiction," *Review of Indonesian and Malayan Affairs*, 20,1 (1986): 50-76; Paul Tickell, "Writing the Past: The Limits of Realism in Contemporary Indonesian Revolution,"in *Text/Politics in Island Southeast Asia*, ed. D. M. Roskies (Ohio University: Monographs in International Studies, Southeast Asia Series, 91, 1993), pp. 257-287; Michael H. Bodden, "Seno Gumira Ajidarma and Fictional Resistance to an Authoritarian State in 1990s Indonesia," *Indonesia*, 68 (October 1999):153-156; and Marshall Clark, "Seno Gumira Ajidarma: an Indonesian Imagining East Timor," *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, 33, 2 (Summer 1999): 33-58.

Importantly, those writers seeking to critique Suharto and his regime - such as the surrealist writers mentioned above and others such as Nano Riantiarno, Y.B. Mangunwijaya and Emha Ainun Nadjib - were, at one stage or another, forced into veiling their meanings by ingeniously developing techniques that J. M. Coetzee terms "Aesopian ruses".[35] Although the New Order's system of control and censorship was not quite as well-regulated as those found within a totalitarian regime such as the Soviet Union, writers in the New Order, especially in the latter years, worked under a shadow of fear: arrests, detentions, and bannings of books and performances were common. Attempts to outwit the authorities also became quite common, and the most popular strategy was to turn to Java and its pre-eminent model of cultural expression, the wayang. This is because for centuries the *dalang* or wayang puppeteer has inserted contemporary references and social commentary into the wayang tales. Furthermore, the critical impact of the wayang as a literary form is all the more cutting because of the way wayang figured so prominently in New Order ideology as a symbol of Suharto's Java-based and Javanese-dominated governmental ties to tradition and enduring hierarchical values.[36] I would argue, therefore, that one of the most effective ways to salvage a sense of social or political relevancy in the literary life of the New Order, and the late New Order in particular, is to focus on these writers and their "Aesopian" reworkings of the wayang world.

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[35] J. M. Coetzee, *Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 11.

[36] See Michael van Langenberg, "The New Order State: Language, Ideology, Hegemony," in *State and Civil Society in Indonesia*, ed. Arief Budiman (Papers on Southeast Asia No. 22., Clayton: Monash University, 1990), p. 134; Michael H. Bodden, "Teater Koma's *Suksesi* and Indonesia's New Order," *Asian Theatre Journal*, 14, 2 (1997): 259-280; and Barbara Hatley, "Constructions of 'Tradition' in New Order Indonesian Theatre" in *Culture and Society in New Order Indonesia*, ed. Virginia Matheson Hooker (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 48-69.

Some of the most memorable scholarship to examine the social and political dimensions of modern Indonesian literature during the New Order discusses writers and texts who heavily draw upon the wayang tradition in the creation of their literary works. For example, Michael H. Bodden's analysis of Teater Koma's *Suksesi* [Succession] and Y.B. Mangunwijaya's *Durga Umayi*, two works which appeared in 1990 and 1991 respectively, explores in detail how these texts appropriate and subvert the wayang tradition while simultaneously challenging the foundations of the New Order's authority.[37] Elsewhere, Keith Foulcher comments on the role of wayang and tradition in the fiction of leading New Order writers such as Danarto, Putu Wijaya, and Leila Chudori, suggesting that their literary expression is relevant to contemporary Indonesia and its cultural development.[38] In a study written in the early 1990s, Barbara Hatley argues that from the 1970s onwards much of Indonesia's cultural expression was characterised by a vigorous reinterpretation of regional cultural traditions such as the wayang, reinterpretations which also included important critical reflections on contemporary Indonesian society.[39] In a later study of modern theatre in the New Order era, Hatley goes one step further, spelling out the key sociopolitical role and aethestic characteristics of the synthesis between traditional Javanese cultural expression and modern performance art:

> Absence of alternate channels of political expression arguably directed attention to performance as a site of socio-political critique. And the

[37] Bodden, "Teater Koma's *Suksesi*"; Michael H. Bodden, "Woman as Nation in Mangunwijaya's *Durga Umayi*," *Indonesia*, 62 (October 1996): 53-82.
[38] Keith Foulcher, "Postmodernism or the Question of History: Some Trends in Indonesian Fiction since 1965" in *Culture and Society in New Order Indonesia*, pp. 27-47.

> intimate audience connection and ideological influence of traditional, regional forms of theatre made them attractive models to follow. Theatre groups adopted the idioms of local theatre genres, but often in a satirical mode which challenged and contested their standard social meanings. Subversive renditions of traditional legends and comic caricatures of kings and courtiers undermined the discourse of contemporary power holders, seeking self-aggrandisement through association with a glorified 'Javanese tradition'.[40]

In contrast to Maier's excessive pessimism, Hatley's optimistic comments could be taken as evidence that the repressive character of the New Order regime also spurred the creativity of a significant number of Indonesia's artists. That is, many artists directed their creative energy, and undeniably oppositional tendencies, to the extremely subversive potential of traditional cultural forms. Hatley's comments underscore my rationale for launching into this study of the interaction between the wayang and modern Indonesian literature. That is, by examining "subversive renditions of traditional legends and comic caricatures of kings and courtiers", I will be drawing on the texts to show that a small segment of Indonesian writers did, in fact, express vociferous dissent, and that this dissent was primarily conveyed through the subversion of "the discourse of contemporary power holders".

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[39] Barbara Hatley, "Constructions of 'Tradition,'" pp. 48-69.
[40] Barbara Hatley, "Cultural Expression and Social Transformation in Indonesia" in *Reformasi: Crisis and Change in Indonesia*, eds. Arief Budiman, Barbara Hatley and Damien Kingsbury (Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 1999), pp. 268-269.

Methodology and Arrangement of this Thesis

Like several Indonesian novels, the structure of this thesis shares many similarities with the structural organisation of a wayang performance.[41] A *wayang kulit* performance is usually conceived of and performed in three parts: *patet nem*, which theoretically lasts from nine in the evening until midnight; *patet sanga*, which lasts from midnight until two or three in the morning; and *patet manyura*, which lasts from two or three until four or five in the morning. Therefore, in wayang terminology, the introduction of this thesis can be referred to as a *jejer sepisan*, the opening scene of *patet nem*, where the king and his ministers, which in a Mahabharata-based plot are usually members of the Kurawa clan or allies of the Pandawa, discuss the matter which will become the basis of the story. This thesis began with a discussion of the interaction between text and context in *Suteja Gugat*, a wayang tale I wrote and performed in Australia. Of course, at the time, in the eyes of many Indonesians, Australia may well have appeared as an 'evil' kingdom in the manner of the Kurawa's Astina. The concluding section of the introduction, like the concluding section of a *jejer sepisan*, provides a statement of the key dramatic 'aim' of the performance, which in this case is to investigate the relationship between the form, the content and the context of Indonesian literary appropriations of the Javanese shadow theatre.

Chapter One of this thesis mirrors the following key scene of *patet nem*, the 'Inner Palace Scene', where the king walks from the outer audience hall through to the inner chambers of the palace, where he meets his queen or queens.

[41] An Australian writer, Christopher Koch, has also framed one of his novels - *The Year Of Living Dangerously* – in terms of the three-part structural organisation of a wayang performance.

According to James Brandon, the 'Inner Palace Scene' "serves little dramatic function [...] but it has a delicate mood which serves as an interlude between the formal audience scene just ended and the boisterous one which follows".[42] As I have attempted to show, previous studies of modern Indonesian literature have proved to be excellent foundations for the social and cultural context of this thesis. Building upon the shift in the analysis of modern Indonesian literature from a New Critical 'literature'-based paradigm to a post-structuralist emphasis on the convergence between text and historical, political and social context, this thesis will attempt to allow the inner workings of the texts themselves to reveal their own particularities and undeniable sociopolitical dimensions. Although this thesis will not follow any particular theoretical path already paved, it should become evident that I have allowed previous examinations of modern Indonesian literature to set "a delicate mood" for this thesis.

In the dramatic structure of a wayang performance, following the earlier palace scenes, a *jejer sebrangan* scene, quickly followed by a *perang gagal* is guaranteed to enliven proceedings, as these scenes introduce the ogres from *sabrangan* [overseas]. Chapter Two will discuss the role of the ogres, *buto* or *raksasa,* as a representation of the spectres or underside of the New Order, "the communists," or a similar entity, the *rakyat,* or "the common people". Just as in the wayang tale of *Sumantri Ngenger,* where Sumantri becomes a hero at the expense of his younger brother Sukrasana, a dwarf-ogre, this chapter will explore the rise of the New Order regime in terms of the marginalisation of ordinary Indonesians, be they communists or members of the *rakyat.*

[42] James R. Brandon, *On Thrones of Gold* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), p. 22.

Chapter Three begins the next section of this thesis, the *patet sanga*, otherwise known as the *gara-gara*, or the clown-scene. In this section of a wayang performance, the tension of the *perang gagal* between a *ksatria* and a *raksasa* is released by the arrival of the clown-servants, Gareng, Petruk, Bagong, and later, their father, Semar. Consequently, Chapter Three will examine representations of the clown-servants in modern Indonesian literary expression, with a particular focus on what their burgeoning presence in the literary domain of the late New Order may represent, sociologically, culturally, politically and theoretically. Chapters Four and Five will continue the light-hearted tone of the *gara-gara* scene. However, as with most *patet sanga* sections, the *gara-gara* scene is also followed by several battle-scenes, such as *perang kembang* and *perang sampak sanga*, which more often than not are used as a chance for the *dalang* to show off his or her skills. Indeed, it is the extended *gara-gara* battle-scenes of the early morning that are used as a yardstick to measure the true skill and dexterity of a *dalang*. Likewise, Chapters Four and Five will pack as many punches as laughs, moving beyond a simple examination of the sociopolitical critique contained within the workings of the texts to a discussion of the unique ways in which the texts foreshadow the rise of democratisation in Indonesia, and the need to interrogate state representations of Indonesian history and reconceptualise Indonesian state and society.

In the third, and final section of a wayang performance, *patet manyura*, the performance is characterised by a relatively free play of scenes, punctuated by a major battle scene, usually resulting in the death or defeat of the king of the opposing kingdom. Similarly, Chapter Six of this thesis will examine the various ways in which Indonesian writers have reworked the tales of the Ramayana as a means of satirising, humiliating, denouncing and rhetorically undermining both

Suharto and his New Order regime. The following chapter, Chapter Seven, can be seen as a *tajungan*, a brief, exultant victory dance after the enemy has been routed. Significantly, the main character of the texts to be examined in this chapter, Wisanggeni, is also well-known for his jubilant *tajungan*. As a *ksatria* of the younger generation who is opposed to the rule of the gods, his undiminished popularity as an 'outlaw' figure during the rule of the New Order 'gods' has ensured that in the post-Suharto era his re-emergence on the pages of contemporary Indonesian literature has gained an even greater social and political relevance.

The final scene of a wayang performance, *jejer tancep kayon*, usually depicts the victorious forces offering thanks to the gods before the *kayon* is placed at the centre of the screen. A brief dance by a three-dimensional *wayang golèk* doll-puppet, alluding to the need to search within for the meaning of the performance, may precede the planting of the *kayon*. Likewise, the final 'scene' of this thesis, the conclusion, will be based on the comments and poetry of a multi-dimensional man not unlike a *wayang golèk*. This is Stephanus Kurdini, who is a Javanese teacher originating from Pekalongan, a *bonsai* specialist, a poet and a literary critic. Just as the appearance of the *wayang golèk* puppet suggests that the philosophical truth to the wayang performance must be searched within one's own heart and mind, the conclusion of this thesis will be devoted to one man's heart-felt response to the wayang 'performance' of one of the writers to be discussed in Chapter Seven, Seno Gumira Ajidarma. Significantly, Kurdini's reading of Seno's text embodies Kwame Anthony Appiah's comments about approaches to African literature, which according to Appiah must be conducted as "productive modes of reading", where the text is most "understandingly" read

in the multiple settings of the historical, political and social.[43] In one important sense, just as the final moments of a wayang performance are marked by the planting of the *kayon*, Kurdini's reading of Seno's text will bring us full circle. This is because in this thesis my own discussions of the texts will be fashioned - like Kurdini's reading - in terms of the texts' social, political and historical contexts.

The first text to be discussed is *Para Priyayi*, a realist novel by Umar Kayam. Born and bred in Java, Umar Kayam has never hidden his love for various forms of Javanese cultural expression, including the Javanese shadow theatre. Consequently, since the early 1970s Umar Kayam's fiction has played an important role in the shift towards the self-conscious incorporation of Javanese cultural traditions and images into modern Indonesian literary expression. The following reading of *Para Priyayi*, which will examine the appropriation of a well-known wayang tale, *Sumantri Ngenger*, will be informed by the historical realities of New Order Indonesia, and the social, political and cultural context which has worked to shape Umar Kayam's development as a writer.

[43] Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 69 and p. 71.

2

Sumantri, Sukrasana, and Umar Kayam's *Para Priyayi*

"Monsters," said Hykrion, winking at Bastian and stroking his huge moustache, "monsters are indispensible if a hero is to be a hero".[1]
MICHAEL ENDE

Introduction: the Wayang and Representations of Indonesian History

With hindsight it can be said that significant political developments of the New Order in the mid to late 1970s - such as the tightening of government control after the anti-government Malari riots of 1974 and the student protests of 1977-78 – influenced Indonesia's cultural and literary sphere. With the tightening of the New Order's relatively liberal political mood of the 1970s, there was also a tightening of the experimentalism, breadth of creativity and "liberality of expressions"[2] - to borrow Barbara Hatley's phrase - which characterised the literary expression of the 1970s. In line with Hendrik Maier's comments in Chapter One, Keith Foulcher and David Hill have observed that in the 1980s, the surreal, ahistorical and apolitical tendencies of *sastra* of the late 1960s and 1970s

[1] Michael Ende, *The Neverending Story* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), p. 231, quoted in Margery Hourihan, *Deconstructing the Hero: Literary Theory and Children's Literature* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 107.

hardened into a restrictive orthodoxy.[3] For example, the rich mythical and mystical leanings of Danarto's late 1960s fiction - such as "Nostalgia", his modernist representation of the last day of Abimanyu, the great wayang *ksatria* - gave way in the 1980s to what Foulcher believes is an affected and abstract "reference-free" dimension.

Barbara Hatley has observed that through the 1980s, in an alternative development to predominantly surrealist expression, there appeared several major works of realist fiction, clearly grounded in Indonesian history and social reality. These texts included Pramoedya Ananta Toer's *Bumi Manusia* [This Earth of Mankind] tetralogy, set in the Dutch East Indies at the turn of the twentieth-century, Y.B. Mangunwijaya's *Roro Mendut* trilogy, set in the courts of seventeenth-century Java, and the long prose poem of Linus Suryadi, *Pengakuan Pariyem* [The Confession of Pariyem][4] (1981), in which, according to Hatley, "traditional myths are retold, regional language expressions quoted and regional cultural values extolled".[5] This trend continued into the early 1990s, where historical novels such as Y. B. Mangunwijaya's *Durga Umayi*[6] (1991) and Umar Kayam's *Para Priyayi* [The *Priyayi*][7] (1992) invoke Javanese traditions - the wayang in particular - in a direct and enthusiastic way, whilst remaining historically grounded and socially referential.

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[2] Barbara Hatley, "Cultural Expression" in ed. Hal Hill, *Indonesia's New Order: the Dynamics of Socio-economic Transformation* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin), pp. 216-266.
[3] See Keith Foulcher, "Sastra Kontekstual (Contextual Literature), Recent Developments in Indonesian Literary Politics," *Review of Indonesian and Malayan Affairs*, 21, 1 (1987): 6-28; and David Hill, " "The Two Leading Institutions" Taman Ismail Marzuki and Horison," in *Culture and Society*, ed. Hooker, pp. 245-262.
[4] Linus Suryadi, *Pengakuan Pariyem* (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1981).
[5] Barbara Hatley, "Cultural Expression," p. 248.
[6] Y.B. Mangunwijaya, *Durga Umayi* (Jakarta: Pustaka Utama Grafiti, 1991).
[7] Umar Kayam, *Para Priyayi* (Jakarta: Pustaka Utama Grafiti, 1992).

Both Y.B. Mangunwijaya and Umar Kayam have made frequent reference to wayang characters in their fiction. For example, in his discussion of Umar Kayam's 1975 novelette, *Sri Sumarah,*[8] Foulcher observes that wayang figures are used as behavioural models for Javanese men and women, "not merely by naming the characters involved, but elaborating on their meaning in Javanese society".[9] Foulcher argues convincingly that the appropriation of wayang figures and the colour and detail of Java is an elaborately constructed backdrop against which Umar Kayam pursues a concern with character development in the specific context of the turmoil of the anti-communist massacres of the 1960s. Tineke Hellwig relates the ways in which Sri, the main character of Kayam's *Sri Sumarah,* uses her identification with wayang figures as a means of locating a sense of place and self in the often threatening "world of men".[10] For example, towards her husband she behaves like Sumbadra, the loyal wife: "obedient, patient, understanding his weaknesses and full of admiration for his strength" (p. 10). Towards her children Tun and Ginuk she is like Kunti, the exemplary mother. Thus by drawing upon more than one wayang figure, Sri indicates not only her desire to preserve some form of cultural and social continuity in times of unsettling change, but also her flexibility and ability to adapt to changing times. With the death of her husband and her sexual encounter with a young man, Sri's old world has gone, but it is the values of that world, exemplified by Sembadra's submission and Kunti's self-sacrifice, that enable Sri to adapt herself to the new values of the new world.

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[8] Umar Kayam, *Sri Sumarah dan Bawuk* (Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya, 1975).
[9] Foulcher, "Image and Perspective," p. 9.
[10] Tineke Hellwig, *In the Shadow of Change: Images of Women in Indonesian Literature* (Center for Southeast Asia Studies, Monograph No. 35, 1994), pp. 99-106.

In Y.B. Mangunwijaya's *Burung-Burung Manyar* [The Weaverbirds][11] (1981) and *Burung-Burung Rantau* [The Migratory Birds][12](1994), images of the wayang are also used as an important subtext to shadow, deliberately, the characters and events of his novel's contemporary setting.[13] The *'Prawayang'* [Prelude to a Wayang] of *Burung-Burung Manyar* - which is outside the narrative frame and contains a number of wayang figures that clearly correlate with the main characters of the novel - immediately guides the reader to view the novel from what Mangunwijaya himself terms a "spritual" perspective.[14] In his introduction to the English translation of *Burung-Burung Manyar*, Thomas M. Hunter relates the way in which Mangunwijaya attempts to incorporate the wayang as a metaphorical process, "suggesting through the names and attributes of characters a spiritual world that parallels the world of the shadow theatre and the supernatural".[15]

Ironically, it is the "spiritual" dimension of Mangunwijaya's novel that reveals the novel's greater sociopolitical significance. For example, Mangunwijaya foreshadows the troubled relationship between Larasati - who is dedicated to Indonesia's struggle for independence - and Teto- who sides with the Dutch - in terms of a conflict between the Pandawa and the Kurawa. Therefore, throughout the novel, personal and interpersonal conflict within and between the main characters can be conceived as a battle between 'light' and 'dark', 'good' and 'evil'. Such a dichotomy is can be regarded as a basic framework for

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[11] Y.B. Mangunwijaya, *Burung-Burung Manyar* (Jakarta: Penerbit Djambatan, 1981).
[12] Y.B. Mangunwijaya, *Burung-Burung Rantau* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1994).
[13] Pamela Allen, "Kebangsaan dan Pencitraan dalam Tiga Roman Mangunwijaya," *Kalam*, 8 (1996): 101-119.
[14] Y.B. Mangunwijaya, "Pengakuan Seorang Amatir," in Pamusuk Eneste, *Mengapa dan Bagaimana Saya Mengarang* (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1986), p. 106.

conceptualising the ongoing cultural identity of Indonesia as a struggle between competing elements. These elements are to be read, in Hunter's words, as "partial truths, incomplete in themselves, yet subsumed by a larger unity that confers meaning on its separate parts".[16]

As indicated in the epigraph to this chapter, goodness is best exemplified when contrasted with evil. Likewise, Suharto's New Order regime presented itself as the paragon of order and stability after the uncertainty and chaos of the years leading up to and during the anti-communist massacres of the mid-1960s. The New Order has fashioned a self-image as a 'hero' through its defeat of the Old Order's 'monster', the PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia) [Indonesian Communist Party]. Yet to remain a hero, one must face, or invent, new monsters. The massacres of the communists, and those accused of being communists, can be seen as the first use of an effective tool of governmental policy under the New Order. As noted by historian Robert Cribb, scholarship on the structural role of violence in the New Order does exist, as exemplified by titles such as *Ten Years' Military Terror* and *Indonesia: Law, Propaganda and Terror*.[17] Furthermore, the onset of the *Petrus* killings of many tens of thousands of petty criminals in the early 1980s provoked even more scholarship on the phenomenon of the New Order's pattern of systematic violence. In modern Indonesian literature, Foulcher has traced a number of texts which re-examine the massacres of the 1960s, describing them as part of the already-mentioned trend of 1980s literature, "to begin

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[15] Thomas M. Hunter, "Translator's Introduction" in Y.B. Mangunwijaya, *The Weaverbirds* (Jakarta: The Lontar Foundation, 1991), p. xv.
[16] Hunter, "Translator's Introduction," p. xvi.
[17] Robert Cribb, "Problems in the Historiography of the Killings in Indonesia" in *The Indonesian Killings 1965-1966*, ed. Robert Cribb (Clayton: Monash Papers on Southeast Asia, No. 21, Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1990), p. 38.

recording and reflecting the experience of its readers as participants in processes of social and historical change".[18] However, Foulcher observes that contemporary ideological imperatives demand that within the re-examination of history, the development of a sense of understanding and sympathy must be reserved for the *innocent* victims, such as individuals, families or communities wrongly implicated as communists. Consequently, "to a large extent these tales of innocent victims in fact reinforces the guilt of the extra-literary actors, the PKI and those who knowingly and willingly participated in its ruthless pursuit of power".[19]

Is the politically tempered resurfacing of history in the literature of the 1980s, then, transformed in any way in the 1990s? Within the deeper content of the texts themselves, no. But then again, in fiction of the early 1990s such as *Durga Umayi* and *Para Priyayi*, it is the surface, the exterior of what is described, that ensures that the text's treatment of the violence and chaos of the past is transformed from a disturbing and threatening account of widespread massacre into styles and figures that are relatively familiar, in this case the characters and tales of the wayang world. In *Durga Umayi*, for example, the ongoing conceptualisation of postcolonial Indonesia as a nation is embodied in an Indonesian woman called Iin, who is a human representation of the wayang's heavenly Umayi and her 'evil' alter-ego, the destructive demon-goddess, Durga. As explained by Michael H. Bodden, Iin as woman and Iin as Indonesian nation display the contradictory characteristics of the Durga/Umayi figure. "The transformation from the life-giving Umayi to the death-dealing Durga is certainly the central *leit motif* of the text", observes Bodden, where the pairing of 'good' and

[18] Keith Foulcher, "Making History: Recent Indonesian Literature and the Events of 1965," in *The Indonesian Killings*, ed. Cribb, p. 118.

'bad' elements in both Iin and the postcolonial Indonesian nation "is a consequence of Mangunwijaya's feeling that Indonesian nationalism has been both a blessing and a curse for Indonesians [...] Whereas idealism and love are seen as 'original', coloring the early stage of Iin's and the nation's life, corruption and destruction dominate following the end of the revolution and come to characterize independent Indonesia".[20]

Because Mangunwijaya's manipulation of the Umayi-Durga dyad has been more than adequately discussed by Bodden, and also by other scholars such as Pamela Allen[21] and Ward Keeler,[22] this chapter will turn its focus to a novel appearing soon after *Durga Umayi,* Umar Kayam's *Para Priyayi.* In this sweeping historical epic Umar Kayam draws on the wayang as a backdrop for an exploration of the Javanese cultural elements underpinning the establishment of Indonesia's military and bureaucratic elite. Particularly prominent is the *Sumantri Ngenger* tale, which describes the transformation of Sumantri from a common villager to a *ksatria,* at the cost of his younger brother Sukrasana, a *raksasa,* or dwarf-ogre. I will argue that Kayam's allusion to the *Sumantri Ngenger* tale suggests that the rise of the *priyayi* elite of the colonial era and the military and bureaucratic ruling elite of the New Order mirrors the rise of Sumantri. However, I will also attempt to reveal an aspect of the *Sumantri Ngenger* tale that is not directly addressed in *Para Priyayi*: the unfortunate role of Sukrasana. In so doing, I will discuss another facet to the rise of the New Order elite: the marginalisation or

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[19] ibid, p. 119.
[20] Bodden, 'Woman as Nation," pp. 74-75.
[21] Pamela Allen, "Kebangsaan dan Pencitraan" and "Reading Matters," pp. 103-120, pp. 167-174, pp. 224-229.

demonisation of the New Order's 'ogre-brother', in other words, ordinary Indonesians such as the communists and those accused of being communists. The fact that this latter aspect was probably not an approach deliberately intended by Umar Kayam – who, according to some, became a pillar of the New Order cultural establishment - is also important. This is because *Para Priyayi*, and Umar Kayam's use of wayang in *Para Priyayi* in particular, can be juxtaposed - both aesthetically and ideologically - to the other texts to be discussed in this thesis.

Umar Kayam and *Sumantri Ngenger*

Umar Kayam, fiction writer, essayist, sociologist and researcher, was born in Ngawi, East Java, on April 30, 1932. The son of a primary school teacher and a school inspector, Kayam revealed an early interest in drama and the arts. He wrote, acted in, and directed plays throughout high school and into his years of teacher training at Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta. After obtaining a Masters degree in education at New York University in 1963, he went on to complete a PhD in sociology at Cornell University in 1965. Upon returning to Indonesia, Kayam established himself as an arts administrator in Jakarta and, later, as a sociology lecturer at Universitas Gadjah Mada. Kayam became known as a prose writer in the 1970s with his first collection of short stories, *Seribu Kunang-kunang di Manhattan* [A Thousand Fire-flies in Manhattan] (1972), which was written while he was a student in New York. He has since published two

[22] Ward Keeler, "*Durga Umayi* and the Postcolonial Dilemma," in *Clearing a Space: Postcolonial Readings of Modern Indonesian Literature*, eds. Tony Day and Keith Foulcher (Leiden: KITLV Press, forthcoming).

novels, *Para Priyayi* and its sequel, *Jalan Menikung* [A Twisting Road][23] (1999), and several collections of short stories and newspaper columns. Of all his written expression, however, Umar Kayam's two novelettes, *Bawuk* and *Sri Sumarah*, published together as *Bawuk dan Sri Sumarah* [Bawuk and Sri Sumarah] (1975), have been the most critically acclaimed. According to William H. Frederick, "[t]hese pieces have taken their place among the most admired works of fiction in contemporary Indonesian literature. Stylistically they are in the realist tradition of Pramoedya, but they have a precision and an elegance that that author's early works lack altogether".[24]

A number of factors may well have contributed to Umar Kayam's carefully chiseled, precise, style. Kayam's enjoyment of the fiction of prominent realist writers such as Steinbeck, Hemingway, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, as well as his background in the social sciences, could well be instrumental. Frederick agrees with the importance of these influences, especially the influence of the American writers, but he gives precedence to other factors, such as "an apparently tranquil youth, spent closer to the bosom of traditional Javanese culture; a physical and ideological distance from the upheaval of 1965; and an innate, encompassing comprehension of the world-as-it-is that utterly lacks bitterness. These are the foundations of that sense of purity and balance permeating Kayam's best work".[25] Extrapolating from this, one could then argue that Kayam's tempered sense of 'Javaneseness' may well be just as influential as his Western influences, if not more so. He has long enjoyed watching Javanese wayang performances, with the

[23] Umar Kayam, *Jalan Menikung* (Jakarta: Pustaka Utama Grafiti, 1999).
[24] William H. Frederick, "Introduction" in William H. Frederick and John H. McGlynn, *Reflections on Rebellion: Stories from the Indonesian Upheavals of 1948 and 1965* (Ohio University: Center for International Studies, Papers in International Studies, Southeast Asia No. 60, 1983), p. 4.

well-known Ki Manteb Sudharsono as his favourite *dalang*.[26] As well as being a keen collector and reader of the wayang comics of R.A. Kosasih ever since his childhood,[27] Kayam has long professed to enjoy watching *ketoprak*, or traditional Javanese folk drama, even acting as a patron for Gito-Gati, a *ketoprak* troup based in Sleman, Yogyakarta.[28] Although I do not intend to underestimate the impact of Kayam's time spent overseas and his interest in American and Russian writers, not to mention his links with Javanese cultural expression, I would argue that Kayam's background in sociology has most heavily contributed to the "sense of purity and balance" that permeate his style. In fact, although each chapter of *Para Priyayi* has a different narrator and thus a different point-of-view, a technique that is perhaps transposing the *dalang*'s constant shifting of narrative voice, the mode, tone and style of delivery is unvarying, regardless of the change in narrator. Not unlike his earlier fiction, Kayam's literary style in this novel is directed more towards conveying issues related to social and political history than literary poetics. Consequently, Kayam's style in *Para Priyayi* can be considered as much functional and methodical as balanced and pure. Therefore, this discussion will focus more upon the sociological and mythological elements of the novel than its particular aesthetic qualities.

Throughout *Para Priyayi* the wayang tale *Sumantri Ngenger* [Sumantri Serves] is a recurring *leit motif*, and to draw comparisons between *Sumantri Ngenger* and *Para Priyayi* would seem natural. The lead character of *Sumantri*

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[25] ibid, p. 5
[26] "Sang Kepala Suku Yang Pemurah," *Jawa Pos*, August 8, 1993.
[27] Leila Chudori, "R.A. Kosasih: Di Tengah Pandawa dan Kurawa," *Tempo* (December 21, 1991): 41-67.
[28] "Saya Ini Ilmuwan Gadangan," in *Para Tokoh Angkat Bicara* (Jakarta: Pustaka Utama Grafiti, 1995), p. 14

Ngenger, Bambang Sumantri, was an ambitious and brave young man - the son of an ascetic priest, Suwandagni - who left his simple home to serve King Arjunasasrabahu in Maespati.[29] In order to prove his loyalty, Arjunasasrabahu requested Sumantri to enter a *sayembara* [competition] to win the hand of Dewi Citrawati, daughter of the King of Magada. He won the *sayembara* and returned in triumph, bringing with him the king's bride and her court. However, when he reached the outskirts of Maespati, his ambition prevailed over his loyalty to the king. His reasoning was that since he had demonstrated his supernatural powers to win Citrawati, he, rather than Arjunasasrabahu, should rule Maespati and marry Citrawati. He therefore challenged Arjunasasrabahu to battle. However, Sumantri was soundly beaten. Consequently, giving Sumantri a chance to redeem himself, Arjunasasrabahu ordered him to obtain for Citrawati's pleasure Batara Wisnu's heavenly garden of Taman Sriwedari.

In order to do this, Sumantri sought the help of his younger brother, Sukrasana, a dwarf-ogre who also happened to be the custodian of the Sriwedari garden. Sukrasana, who dearly loved his brother, agreed to help, on the proviso that Sumantri allow his brother to return with him to Maespati and share with him his expected reward of power and high position. The deal was struck and Sukrasana miraculously transported the Sriwedari gardens from the heavens to Maespati. However, because Sumantri was ashamed of the fact that his brother

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[29] The following version of the *Sumantri Ngenger* tale is based on David Irvine's synopsis in *Leather Gods and Wooden Heroes* (Singapore: Times Editions, 1996), pp. 35-36, 282-83 and Burhan Nurgiyantoro's synopsis in *Transformasi Unsur Pewayangan Dalam Fiksi Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1998), pp. 297-98. These versions closely resemble Ki Hasto's comic version (with pictures by B.L. Bambang Prasodjo), serialised in *Gatra* (from No.7, 1985, until No. 12, 1988). A satirical version can be found in Ki Guna Watoncarito, *Wayang Semau Gue*, 1990, entitled "Sumantri Ngenger: Taman Sriwedari Terkena Gusur," pp. 105-109. For an even more irreverent version, see Seno Gumira Ajidarma, "Segitiga Emas," in *Dilarang Menyanyi Di Kamar Mandi* (Jakarta: Subentra Citra Pustaka, 1995), pp. 105-122.

was a dwarf-ogre, he tried to scare Sukrasana off by pointing his magic bow and arrow at him. Unfortunately, an arrow from Sumantri's bow accidentally felled the little dwarf. With his dying words, Sukrasana warned his brother that this accident would have to be avenged, and prophesised that his spirit would enter into Sumantri's opponent on the battlefield and kill him.

Upon his return to Maespati, Sumantri was appointed as Chief Minister of Maespati and his name was changed to Suwanda. He then served his king, never again wavering in his loyalty. So great was his loyalty that even in death Sumantri was devoted to serving his king. Fulfilling Sukrasana's curse, he died violently when fearlessly attacking Rahwana, who had tried to abduct Arjunasasrabahu's wife Citrawati. Sumantri's death was quite horrific, as he was savagely torn apart by Rahwana's fangs, which were possessed by the vengeful Sukrasana. Sumantri's death was not in vain however, as his brave fighting lasted just long enough to allow his master's wife to escape Rahwana's clutches.

Para Priyayi: a Synopsis

Sumantri's desire to leave home in order to *ngenger* [serve] King Arjunasasrabahu parallels events in *Para Priyayi*, which is a sweeping family saga stretching from the Dutch East Indies in 1910 to the aftermath of the 1965-66 anti-communist massacres. Although the novel begins with Lantip, who recalls his early childhood under the name of Wage, the story proper begins with Sastradarsono, who, like Lantip, has a childhood name, Soedarsono. Soedarsono is the eldest son of Pak Atmokasan, a farmer from the village of Kedungsimo, East Java, who works the rice paddies of Ndoro Seten Kedungsimo, a benevolent

upper class Javanese *priyayi*, or nobleman. Through Pak Atmokasan's friendship with Ndoro Seten, Soedarsono is given the opportunity to undertake an assistant teacher's course in Madiun, also in East Java, and Ndoro Seten ensures that Soedarsono is not only given easy access to a teaching career but also the *priyayi* 'inner circle.' After having his name changed to Sastrodarsono, marking his change in status, he soon marries Siti Aisah, or Ngaisah, the house-proud daughter of an opium official. For their wedding, Ndoro Seten organises a wayang performance, *Sumantri Ngenger*. With Ndoro Seten's assistance, Sastrodarsono is soon promoted to become a teacher in his own right, and is assigned to Karangdompol village near Wanagalih, a regency centre in the Madiun district, East Java. Sastrodarsono is then encouraged to buy a house in Wanagalih, where both he and his wife associate with other *priyayi*.

In the following years, Sastrodarsono and his wife have three children, Noegroho, Hardoyo and Soemini. Noegroho eventually becomes a teacher in Yogyakarta, Hardoyo a teacher in Wonogiri and Solo, and the feisty Soemini, having graduated from the *Van de Penter* senior high school in Solo, becomes the wife of a police official. After the principal of Sastrodarsono's school, Martoatmojo, is transferred to another school, Sastrodarsono becomes his replacement. During this time, Sastrodarsono and his wife oversee the education of several relatives of the family, who also board in the house. The most troublesome of these relatives, Soenandar, is eventually entrusted to teach at a small school opened up by Sastrodarsono in an isolated village, Wanalawas. The school is soon closed down however, after Soenander impregnates a village girl, Ngadiyem, and then steals her mother's savings before disappearing. Although Soenandar joins a gang of thieves, and ultimately suffers a violent death, his son,

Wage, is 'adopted' into Sastrodarsono's family. As an indication of his new-found status as a *priyayi*, Wage's name is changed to Lantip, and he begins his education at Sastrodarsono's school, where he proves to be a bright and dedicated student.

Soon after the Japanese invade Java, Lantip is entrusted to Hardoyo's family in Solo, where he continues his education. Hardoyo, who at this stage is teaching at the Mangkunegaran palace, has a young son, Harimurti (Hari), almost the same age as Lantip, from his marriage with an educated village-girl, Sumarti. Meanwhile, during the Japanese occupation, Noegroho is enlisted to serve in the pro-Japanese *Peta* [Defenders of the Archipelago] army in Bogor, and several years later he serves in the Indonesian army in their struggle against the returning Dutch. Initially, Noegroho and his wife, Soesanti, have three children, Toni, Marie and Tomi. However, the 16-year old Toni joins the Indonesian resistance and dies in the battle to defend Yogyakarta against the returning Dutch. Despite various incidents during the Japanese occupation and the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) rebellion in Madiun in 1948, Sastrodarsono and his wife age gracefully, helping out and advising their extended family when necessary. They counsel Soemini when her husband has an affair, and after Marie becomes pregnant when her father Noegroho is overseas, a concerned Sastrodarsono sends Lantip - who is at this stage a lecturer at Universitas Gadjah Mada - to Jakarta to track down Marie's boyfriend, Maridjan. Although the rather unruly Maridjan is already married with a child, Lantip oversees not only Maridjan's divorce but also a rushed marriage with Marie. Despite the unexpected death of Sastrodarsono's wife Ngaisah, who at the time was aged well over seventy, the wedding ceremony turns out to be quite an extravagant affair.

The novel concludes several years after the anti-communist massacres of 1965. These years are particularly testing for Sastrodarsono's extended family, as Hari is heavily involved in a pro-communist *ketoprak* group. After the kidnap and murder of a number of Indonesia's military leaders in 1965, the Indonesian public turns violently against the communists, and both Hari and his girlfriend Gadis, a communist writer, spend time in prison. As a direct result of Lantip's tireless help and his uncle Noegroho's connections with key legal and military figures, Hari is eventually allowed to move to house arrest. However Gadis, who is pregnant to Hari with twins, tragically dies in prison during a premature childbirth. Several years later, at the age of 83 Sastrodarsono also passes away, and as a reflection of the key role that Lantip has played in Sastrodarsono's extended family, Lantip is entrusted to give Sastrodarsono's eulogy. Commenting upon Sastrodarsono's tireless commitment to helping the *wong cilik* improve their situation, Lantip concludes that in Sastrodarsono's life one is given a perfect example of the *priyayi* ethos: an unwavering commitment to the state and the people.

Sumantri Ngenger in the Dutch East Indies

Lantip's funeral eulogy praising Sastrodarsono's life-long efforts to work for the well-being of others is in many ways an evocation of the major themes of not only *Para Priyayi* but also *Sumantri Ngenger*. Of course, it is not coincidental that *Sumantri Ngenger* and *Para Priyayi* share the same thematic concerns. Early on in Sastrodarsono's life the *Sumantri Ngenger* tale is presented as a highly commendable moral and philosophical basis for his future life as a *priyayi*. As the

following passage shows, Ndoro Seten chooses the *Sumantri Ngenger* tale as a wedding gift to Sastrodarsono and his wife Ngaisah for specific reasons:

> "I want you to really follow closely this wayang story, *Le*.[30] It's a beautiful story and suits all levels of society. For the *wong cilik* it is mostly good also, because it teaches us the importance of humility, self-wareness and graciousness. For *wong cilik* who want to move on and become *priyayi*, and this refers to you Darsono, the best part of this tale is its role as an example. Sumantri is an example of a member of the *wong cilik* who wholeheartedly rendered his service to the king and state, even though previously he was arrogant, was able to bring himself to sacrifice his brother, and was conceited enough to show off his magical powers to the king. Even for the highest government officials in power, this tale is good. This is because it teaches how a king should be patient and wise, as well as knowing when he needs to counquer his enemies and knowing how to forgive them..."[31] (p. 43)

Clearly Ndoro Seten held high hopes for young Soedarsono, perceiving a strong correlation between Soedarsono's timid first steps as a low-ranking *priyayi* with Sumantri's headstrong desire to obtain power and fortune by entering into the

[30] *'Le'* is the usual affectionate Javanese term of address for a young boy.
[31] "Saya ingin betul-betul kamu mengikuti ceritera wayang ini, *Le*. Ini ceritera yang sangat indah dan cocok buat semua tingkatan masyarakat. Buat *wong cilik* kebanyakan juga baik, karena mengajarkan kerendahan hati, tahu diri, tahu diuntung. Buat *wong cilik* yang ingin maju menjadi priyayi, nah, ini kamu Darsono, lakon ini juga terutama baik sebagai teladan. Sumantri adalah contoh *wong cilik* yang dengan ikhlas menyerahkan baktinya buat raja dan *negoro*. Meskipun sebelumnya dia pernah sombong dan tega menyerahkan adiknya dan takabur memamerkan kesaktiannya kepada rajanya. Lha, buat para Priyagung yang memegang kekuasaan, lakon ini

service of King Arjunasasrabahu of Maespati. Ndoro Seten's words of advice are carefully heeded: long after Soedarsono changes his name to Sastrodarsono and becomes a fully fledged *priyayi*, the example provided by the *Sumantri Ngenger* tale is reflected in many aspects of his life.

According to Bakdi Sumanto, Sumantri of *Sumantri Ngenger* fame is the "spirit" of *Para Priyayi*, and it is in the figures of Sastrodarsono and Lantip that we can most easily delineate Sumantri's "spirit" at play.[32] Just as Sumantri had his name changed in the court of King Arjunasasrabahu, both Sastrodarsono and Lantip undergo highly symbolic name-changes as a part of becoming *priyayi*. Sastrodarsono and Lantip also mirror Sumantri in their move beyond agrarian roots to become figures of learning and authority. Like Sumantri, both Sastrodarsono and Lantip reflect the importance of *pengabdian*, or wholeheartedly serving the powers-that-be, be it the *priyayi* officials of the Dutch colonial state or Indonesia's postcolonial bureaucratic elite. Yet like Sumantri himself, Sastrodarsono's sense of *pengabdian* is not without its contradictions, and during the mid-1960s anti-communist massacres Lantip is forced to renegotiate his own loyalty to the state. Even more significantly for the purposes of this dicusssion, just as Sumantri achieves favour at the court of King Arjunasasrabahu only with the help and sacrifice of his brother Sukrasana, in *Para Priyayi* the rise of Indonesia's colonial and postcolonial elite, not to mention the ideological legitimacy of the New Order regime, is not achieved without the sacrifice of its own metaphorical Sukrasana, the 'ordinary' people of Indonesia.

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juga baik. Ia mengajari bagaimana raja itu mesti sabar dan bijaksana, tapi juga tahu kapan mesti menundukkan musuhnya dan tahu mengampuninya...."

[32] Bakdi Sumanto, "Sumantri dalam Para Priyayi," *Horison*, 27, 9 (September 1992), pp. 311-13. See also Burhan Nurgiyantoro, *Transformasi Wayang*, pp. 68-69, 118-20.

R. William Liddle observes that one of the defining characteristics of the pre-colonial and colonial *priyayi*, not to mention, according to Liddle, Indonesia's predominantly Javanese postcolonial bureaucrats, is the need to distinguish sharply between themselves and the *rakyat* or *wong cilik*.[33] In a "highly simplified but arguably realistic model", Laine Berman sets out this dichotomy as follows:

> In its most simplified and idealized form, Javanese society recognizes *priyayi* as the educated elite, the noble class whose high status is apparent in the refined use of the most formal styles of Javanese language and the gracious, elegant behaviour that must accompany it. At the other end of the social order, lacking the social refinements and linguistic abilities of their betters and making up most of the population of ethnic Javanese, are the *wong cilik*. These are the ordinary people, the working classes who look up to the *priyayi* as the ultimate art of refinement.[34]

In *Para Priyayi*, the consequences for those who fail to look up to the *priyayi* and support the colonial government wholeheartedly are clearly seen in the unfortunate fate of Martoatmodjo, the school principal of Sastrodarsono's first school. After becoming involved in a clandestine anti-government movement, Martoatmojo was eventually banished in disgrace to the desolate Gesing, and finally to the even more remote Besuki. The sad fate of Martoadmojo with his subversive political views can be seen as a precursor to later events in the postcolonial era. Most obviously, it is a statement on the way in which the *priyayi*

[33] Liddle, *Leadership and Culture*, p. 66.

and its postcolonial incarnations place such high regard upon *pengabdian*, or deference and obedience to the powers-that-be. Indeed, according to Liddle, during the New Order the most important political idea borrowed from the upper class *priyayi* culture of the traditional Javanese courts is that of a benevolent ruler and and an obedient populace.[35] Those who don't fit this pattern, such as Martoadmojo, are treated as dangerous lepers, and are undermined and dispensed with in the same way that Sumantri deals with the unwanted attentions of his younger brother, Sukrasana.

It is through the impact of characters such as Martoadmojo, who rebel against the benevolence-obedience ideal, that Sastrodarsono's own conception of *pengabdian* is problematised. Parallels can be drawn with Sumantri's own problematic sense of loyalty, which, due to his rash challenge against King Arjunasasrabahu, is regarded as "kesetiaan yang bergelimang cacat" [a tainted loyalty] (p. 186). Regarding Sastrodarsono's problematised loyalty, later in life Sastrodarsono surprisingly professes admiration for Martoadmojo's courage in standing up for the *wong cilik*, despite the intense pressure from colonial government officials. All along Sastrodarsono turned out to be quietly sympathetic to Martoadmojo's resistance: the most obvious indication of this was his habit of collecting and reading the *Medan Priyayi*, an anti-colonial newspaper edited by one of the 'founding-fathers' of the Indonesian nationalist movement, Tirto Adhisoerjo. Sastrodarsono's subversive leanings were more openly displayed when he set up an unofficial "sekolah liar" [illegal school] in a small village, Wanalawas. Part of the reason for the eventual failure of this effort were

[34] Laine Berman, *Speaking through the Silence: Narratives, Social Conventions and Power in Java* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 6.

the veiled threats by his superior, the regional school inspector, who feared the possibility of Sastrodarsono using the school as a vehicle for the spread of anti-government sentiments. Sastrodarsono's resistance finally crumbles after Soenander, who was entrusted to run the school, decided to forego his responsibilities by impregnating a village girl and running off to join a gang of criminals. In short, Sastrodarsono decides to close the school only after he is faced by the possibility that his family's position may be jeopardised, either by colonial officials or the wayward and shameful actions of a family member.

Ultimately, by turning away from Martoadmodjo's subversive ideals and failing to resist the colonial government's demands, Sastrodarsono's own standing, like Sumantri's upon the death of Sukrasana, is strengthened. So much so that upon his death everyone in his extended family believes that Sastrodarsono's life and works embodied the spirit of Sumantri's *pengabdian*, as he managed to serve both the Dutch government and the Javanese people for decades without incident. Later, in the post-independence era, Sastrodarsono's well-educated *priyayi* children do not betray their father's strong sense of duty. In the defining aspects of their lives, the *pengabdian* ethos remains strong, be it as soldiers, teachers or elite bureaucrats working for the greater good of an independent Indonesia, or as wives remaining loyal to their straying husbands. Allusions to the wayang, particularly the *Sumantri Ngenger* tale, are often used to underscore the importance of the *pengabdian* ethos in their everyday lives. For example, as Noegroho enters the armed forces, Hardojo becomes a *priyayi* official in the Mangkunegaran Palace in Surakarta, and Harjono moves up the local

[35] Liddle, *Leadership and Culture*, p. 66.

government ranks in Madiun, parallels are made between the strong sense of loyalty and duty of Sumantri to King Arjunasasrabahu (p. 186), Karna to King Suryudana (p. 186), and Kumbakarna to the Kingdom of Alengka (p. 187).

Sumantri and Sukrasana in the Postcolonial Era

Of the extended family portrayed in *Para Priyayi*, and especially so of the youngest generation, it is Lantip, the "anak kepala kecu, anak maling" [son of a bandit leader, son of a thief] (p. 10) who is most diligent in preserving the conservative *priyayi* ethos, standing strong through some of the most traumatic episodes in Indonesia's postcolonial history. Sastrodarsono calls upon Lantip on several occasions to *"ngenger"* in the manner of Sumantri and help resolve various family crises. For example, Lantip plays an important mediating role in organising the pregnant Maria's engagement and marriage to Maridjan. In times of crisis, such as after Sastrodarsono was beaten by the Japanese officer and just before Noegroho was sent to fight for the Japanese army, Lantip could be relied upon to calm strained nerves by reciting important verses from traditional Javanese court texts such as *Serat Wedhatama* and *Serat Tripama*. Yet the extent of Lantip's loyalty towards his adopted family became most evident in the midst of the anti-communist massacres of the mid-1960s, when Hari, Hardoyo's son, fell into serious personal danger as a result of the growing violence against communists and communist sympathisers. As noted earlier, Hari was heavily involved in a communist-leaning drama group, and he often publicly espoused pro-communist ideology. Lantip himself was often on the receiving end of a

number of Hari's ideological diatribes. However, suspicious of an ideology that could deify a tyrant such as Stalin, Lantip remained unswayed.

In the immediate aftermath of the first anti-communist massacres, Hari's first instinct is to flee. However, his parents advise him to do the opposite: "Sebaiknya kamu jangan lari. Nanti kita cari jalan yang sebaiknya agar kau selamat" ["It's best if you don't run away. Later we'll find the best way to ensure that you'll be safe"] (p. 280). Commenting on this reaction, Daniel Dhakidae observes that in contrast to the late colonial generation of *priyayi*, who fled from confrontational situations either literally or metaphorically - by turning inwards towards culture and tradition - the postcolonial generation is much more willing to deal with things laterally, through "kompromi" [compromise] and "koneksi" [connections].[36] This is shown by Lantip's suggestion to hand Hari over to the local military authorities, with whom - theoretically - he could be protected from violent mobs, and where both he and his uncle Noegroho had well-placed connections. Eventually this is the only option for Hari, and indeed he is helped behind the scenes, especially by Noegroho who by that stage was a colonel in the military with wide-ranging connections both in the Indonesian armed forces, the legal system and the bureaucracy. After four months imprisonment, Hari is released on house arrest.

After Hari's release, the ideological positions of both Lantip and Noegroho are legitimised, and indeed Lantip is once again treated like a hero. Consequently, in Noegroho's words to the newly-released Hari,

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[36] Daniel Dhakidae, "Kekuasaan dan Perlawanan dalam Novel Para Priyayi" in *Umar Kayam dan Jaring Semiotik*, ed. Aprinus Salam (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1998), pp. 14-16.

> Hari, my son. There is nothing more enjoyable for an uncle than helping his nephew. This is a family duty, a duty shared by all the members of an extended family, *Le* [...] What is important now Hari is that you need to be more self-reflective. Up until now, and I'm sorry to say this, *Le*, you were misguided in going along with communist teachings. Mad, *Le*. Now you need to stay at home in peace and quiet and begin to re-learn the Pancasila. If we didn't have this, our nation could be corrupted by all sorts of teachings such as that communist stuff, *Le*.[37] (p. 285).

Significantly, in the push to inculcate blind allegiance to the state and its Pancasila ideology, it appears that more socially-oriented - yet socially unacceptable - ideologies such as communism, and the ordinary people such as Hari who followed or were caught up in such ideologies, are presented as a debased and misguided 'Other.' Upon entering into his clean and tidy room, Hari himself confirms such a polarisation, observing that Lantip, who used to share the room with him, was always neat and ordered, "Sedang saya selalu jorok dan awut-awutan" [Wheareas I was always untidy and chaotic] (p. 286).

It is at this moment when Hari remembers his chaotic nature, and in the chapter describing the anti-communist massacres of the 1960s as a whole, that the dark shadow of the dwarf-ogre Sukrasana comes to the forefront of *Para Priyayi* once more. As I discussed earlier, Sumantri used and then sacrificed his well-

[37] "Hari, anakku. Tidak ada yang lebih menyenangkan bagi seorang *pakde* daripada dapat menolong kemenakannya. Ini kewajiban *trah*, kewajiban keturunan keluarga besar, *Le* [...] Yang penting sekarang, Hari, kau harus mawas diri. Selama ini, maaf lho, *Le*, kamu itu sudah keliru memilih ajaran komunis. *Keblinger* itu, *Le*. Sekarang kau tenang-tenang di rumah mulai mempelajari lagi Pancasila. Kalau tidak ada ini, negara kita bisa kebobolan ajaran macam-macam seperti komunisme apa itu, *Le*."

intentioned yet physically embarrasing younger brother for the sake of impressing the court of Maespati. Likewise, in its treatment of the anti-communist massacres, in *Para Priyayi* Umar Kayam appears to suggest that the massacre and victimisation of hundreds and thousands of ordinary Indonesians only served to legitimise and consolidate the rise of the New Order's heavily-militarised bureaucratic elite.

Conclusion

By using the wayang as a framework to represent the rise of the New Order elite, Umar Kayam uses the modern literary form to reinterpret the Javanese shadow theatre, a reinterpretation which also presents important reflections on contemporary Indonesian social history. Framed in terms of the *Sumantri Ngenger* tale, *Para Priyayi* depicts characters such as Sastrodarsono and Lantip as contemporary representations of Sumantri, who left behind his agrarian roots to become an aristocrat and *ksatria* in the court of Maespati. Both Sastrodarsono and Lantip are able, through the help of benefactors, education and determination, to escape the poverty of village life by becoming *priyayi*, or members of upper and middle class society. In the colonial era, Sastrodarsono's *priyayi* status was signified by his stately home, his position as a school-teacher, and his modest wages as a public-servant. In the postcolonial era, Lantip's *priyayi* background is reflected not only by his position as a university lecturer, but also in his devotion to the *pengabdian* ethos, or the belief in deferentially serving the nation, the people and powers-that-be. *Pengabdian* is a recurring *leit motif* in *Para Priyayi*. For example, just as Sumantri loyally served his king in the wayang,

Sastrodarsono served and obeyed the *priyayi* officials of the Dutch colonial state. Sastrodarsono's children also live out the *pengabdian* ethos in their chosen careers, be it in the armed forces, the Surakarta court or the local government. By helping to solve various family crises, Lantip also follows the example of the relationship between Sumantri and King Arjunasasrabahu.

In essence, the *pengabdian* ethos is closely related to the *kawula-gusti* ethos of the traditional Javanese courts, which is that of a benevolent ruler and an obedient populace. Furthermore, as explained in Chapter One, the *kawula-gusti* ideology does not just refer to the king and the peasants beneath him, but to all patron-client relations down the hierarchy. Also discussed in Chapter One, this essentially feudalistic ideology was one of the key cultural underpinnings of the New Order regime. Therefore, on the surface, Umar Kayam's use of the wayang in *Para Priyayi* does little to undermine the contemporary impact of the feudalistic beliefs of the *priyayi* upper class culture. However, Umar Kayam's reference to the *Sumantri Ngenger* tale in *Para Priyayi* also points to the underside to Sumantri's success, that is, the death of his dwarf-ogre brother, Sukrasana. In the case of *Para Priyayi*, if privileged characters such as Sastrodarsono and Lantip are associated with Sumantri, then marginal figures such as the rebellious Martoadmojo and the communist Hari can be regarded as literary representations of the unfortunate Sukrasana. Just as Sukrasana's efforts merely serve to help Sumantri, the actions of Martoadmojo and Hari only serve to consolidate the positions of their superiors, be it the *priyayi* of the colonial era or the military and bureaucratic elite of the New Order. In this sense *Para Priyayi* is subversive, in that it juxtaposes the rise of Indonesia's colonial and postcolonial elite to the downfall, or marginalisation, of its demonic 'other', the ordinary people of Indonesia.

Of course, it could be argued that Umar Kayam was not *deliberately* intending to use *Para Priyayi* as a means to highlight the role of the demonic 'other' of postcolonial Indonesia. For example, at no stage is Sukrasana mentioned by name, and he is certainly not linked with communist characters such as Hari. For this reason, the following text to be discussed, Emha Ainun Nadjib's *Arus Bawah*, which also appeared in the early 1990s, can be sharply contrasted with Umar Kayam's novel. The warm embrace of the characters of the wayang world, the playful language, the humour, the vociferous anti-government sentiments and the parodic intentions of *Arus Bawah* present a clean break from the ambiguous and mild-mannered subversion of *Para Priyayi*. Unlike *Para Priyayi*, from an ideological standpoint Emha's text is vehemently opposed to the *kawula-gusti* ethos, in all its contemporary expressions. The wayang's idealisation of a benevolent ruler and a deferential populace is overturned, and the New Order is savagely criticised. Emha's deliberate appropriation of the lowly characters of the wayang, the clown-servants in particular, reveals a close affinity with the large section of society essentially left without a voice in *Para Priyayi*: Indonesia's non-elite.

3

Smells of Something Like Postmodernism:

Emha Ainun Nadjib's Rewriting of the Mahabharata[1]

"Not every theory that you buy from Overseas can be used to understand the history and people of Karang Kedempel. At the very least there are certain aspects that are occasionally better explained if they are approached with The Wayang Method!"[2]
EMHA AINUN NADJIB

Introduction: Emha Ainun Nadjib

Emha Ainun Nadjib, born in East Java in 1953, is an Islamic activist, poet, essayist, playwright and writer. Emha, as he is most commonly known, is one of the most prominent figures in the cultural landscape of contemporary Indonesia. His literary texts and performances are characterised by a high level of social and political commitment, and he has often emphasised the importance of appropriating religious motifs and traditional cultural expression in order to

[1] The title of this chapter was suggested by the phrase "berbau keposmo-posmoan", from the publisher's introduction to Emha, *Arus Bawah*. This chapter is a revised version of my essay, "Smells of Something Like Postmodernism: Emha Ainun Nadjib's Rewriting of the Mahabharata" which is to appear in *Clearing a Space*, eds. Tony Day and Keith Foulcher.

express his sociopolitical message. Emha's poetry is well-known for its strongly Islamic orientation, and his written expression, although largely concerned with contemporary social and political issues in Indonesia, is peppered with quotes in Arabic and references to Islamic theology. Modeling himself on the enigmatic Umbu Wulang Landu Paranggi, a poet and mentor of numerous younger poets and writers in Yogyakarta in the early 1970s, Emha has expressed himself through various cultural media. Receiving most acclaim for his poetry performances, which are usually accompanied by a gamelan ensemble, Emha has been extremely prolific over the last two decades as a writer of essays, short stories and dramatic works. He has over thirty publications to his name.[3]

Emha's first novel, *Gerakan Punakawan atawa Arus Bawah* [The Clown-servant Movement or The Undertow] (1994), first appeared in serialised form over several months in 1991 in the Jakarta newspaper *Berita Buana*. Although the pontifical nature of *Arus Bawah* clearly reflects Emha's polemical and didactic tendencies - a style he has no doubt developed over the years in his adopted role as a *'kiai mbeling'* [an informal teacher of Islam] - this novel is unusual, in that unlike the majority of Emha's literary expression, it barely touches upon Islam. Instead, it reflects another facet of Emha Ainun Nadjib's cultural background: a deep understanding of the characters, plots and philosophy of the Javanese

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[2] "Tidak semua teori yang kalian beli dari Mancanegara bisa dipakai untuk memahami sejarah dan manusia Karang Kedempel. Setidak-tidaknya ada bagian-bagian tertentu yang terkadang menjadi lebih jelas ketika didekati dengan metode Wayang!"(p. 87)

[3] For more on Emha, see Eugëne Van Erven, *The Playful Revolution: Theatre and Liberation in Southeast Asia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,1992), pp. 186-206; and Savitri Scherer, "Literary Expression of 'Kiai' Emha A. Nadjib: The Poetic Expression of an Indonesian Polemicist," an unpublished paper delivered at the international workshop, 'Postcoloniality and the Question of Modern Indonesian Literature' (University of Sydney, 28-30 May,1998).

wayang theatre.[4] Of course, it will be the latter characteristic of Emha's literary expression that will serve as the focus of this chapter.

Unlike Umar Kayam's *Para Priyayi,* Emha's *Arus Bawah* highlights the way in which Indonesia's postcolonial state authority has failed to deal with questions such as economic disparity and social justice. Its plot turns on a decision by the popular clown-servants of the wayang, Semar and his three sons, Gareng, Petruk and Bagong, to reject the Javanese court culture's traditional hierarchical principles, and promote a more democratic social and political system. By this rewriting of the clown-servants' traditional role as loyal subjects of the Pandawa brothers of the Mahabharata, Emha stresses the importance of an imaginative reconceptualisation of Indonesia's postcolonial society and culture.

Emha's novel, which is labelled a "novel-essay" by its publisher, is highly didactic, and he makes little effort to hide the fact that *Arus Bawah* is not so much a novel, but more a literary manifesto for social and political reform. Yet what makes Emha's treatise so readable is his no-holds-barred depiction of Semar, Gareng, Petruk, and Bagong and their refusal to play the roles traditionally assigned to them. As in Tom Stoppard's humorous depiction of Hamlet's servants in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1967),[5] in *Arus Bawah* the clown-servants are thrust into the limelight and promoted to lead characters. However, unlike Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who remain disaffected and bemused by their master's erratic behaviour, the clown-servants of *Arus Bawah* unguardedly

[4] For other examples, see Emha Ainun Nadjib, "Semar Mbalela," *TIRAS*, 1, 6, March 9 (1995): 69-71; "Gelombang Jual-Beli Etos Punakawan," *Titik Nadir Demokrasi* (Yogyakarta: Zaituna, 1996), pp. 10-32; and "Ketoprak Plesetan dan Irama Transformasi," *Ketoprak Orde Baru,* eds. Lephen Purwarahardja and Bondan Nusantara (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Bentang Budaya, 1997), pp. 119-124.
[5] Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967).

criticise their power-hungry superiors. In the process, they launch a brash interrogation of the ideological basis of Indonesia's New Order regime.

The Disappearance of Semar

The plot of *Arus Bawah* is structured around the disappearance of Semar from the village of Karang Kedempel, a thinly-veiled microcosm of New Order Indonesia. In the novel, Emha conflates the obese figure of Semar with the spirit of democracy – "The appearance and disappearance of Kiai Semar in Karang Kedempel actually reflects the ebb and flow of democracy"[6] (p. 91) - building on the common belief that Semar, and the other clown-servants, represent the Javanese people in the wayang world. For centuries Semar and his three sons, not unlike the Javanese people they represent, have been depicted as menial servants to a succession of rulers, often good-naturedly criticising and challenging their superiors, yet never openly opposing them. Usually appearing on the wayang screen in the early hours of the morning, they immediately reduce tension, not to mention sleepiness, with their lewd humour, pranks, jokes, jigs and cutting political references. Physically, Semar's sons are as peculiar as Semar himself: Gareng is short with cross-eyes, and has a bulbous nose shaped like an egg, a limp and a crippled arm; Petruk is tall and gangly with a long pointy nose, a goitre, a pot-belly, and a flashy pony-tail; Bagong, who is said to be the shadow of Semar, is a smaller, yet equally podgy, version of his father. Although Semar and his three sons may provide lucid insight into the moral dilemmas faced by their

[6] "Muncul dan hilangnya Kiai Semar di Karang Kedempel sebenarnya mencerminkan pasang surut demokrasi."

masters, they are far more admired for their outrageous behaviour and slapstick comedy. In short, with their simple cunning of the common people, their crude behaviour and their odd looks, they are happy to serve their noble rulers at the bottom of the social rung.

However, unlike the ever-patient clown-servant prototypes of the wayang, Emha's clown-servants have a limit to their patience. Provoked by the disappearance of Semar, Gareng expresses a few of his concerns in the following way:

> This drama performance in Marcapada, thought Gareng, is monotonous. It hasn't improved over time. Of course there have been improvements in matters such as motorised vehicles, the shift from using your brain to using calculators, ballpoint pens, and computerisation [...] But the themes are just much of a muchness. The only things that have changed are the *modus operandi* and implements used. I've been 'Gareng-ing' for more than fifty centuries, Gareng complained, but all I find is the same old things: the viciousness of power, exploitation, slavery, oppression, stupidity, lack of foresight and ignorance. What bastards they all are.[7] (p. 28)

Evidently, despite economic improvements, the standard evils in Gareng's world have remained the same. However, the latest development - the disappearance of

[7] "Pentas drama di Marcapada ini, pikir Gareng, monoton. Tidak berkembang lebih bermutu. Memang ada peningkatan dalam soal mode kendaraan bermotor, soal pengalihan fungsi otak ke kalkulator, model-model pulpen dan persaingan komputer [...] Tapi temanya, kan ke itu ke itu saja. Modus dan peralatannya saja yang berbeda. Aku ini, celetuk Gareng, sudah menggareng lebih dari lima puluh abad, tapi ketemunya ya sama itu-itu juga: keganasan kekuasaan, penghisapan, perbudakan, penindasan, pembodohan, pembutaan, penulian. Bajingan betul."

Semar - is a symbolic watershed, as it suggests that the people's King (who is also referred to interchangeably as Kresna, "the Village Headman" and "the Father of Mahabharata Development", a blatant reference to Suharto's title as 'Father of Development') has lost whatever popular support or legitimacy he may have enjoyed in the past. Reasons for this include his corruption, nepotism, and increasingly tyrannical and authoritarian rule, all of which are commented upon throughout *Arus Bawah*. To quote just one tirade, which is a thinly-veiled reference to the way in which the Indonesian state ideology, the *Pancasila*, was used by the New Order as a weapon against its critics:

> "If Gareng or Mbilung or whoever lets fly with something which opposes the Village Headman's interests, they will be accused of being anti-*Pancasila*. This is in order to falsify the truth, which is that Gareng is actually against the opinion of the Village Headman."[8] (p. 116)

One could safely assume then that Semar's silence serves as an emphatic vote of no-confidence in the state authority. Nevertheless, Gareng sees the return of Semar as imperative, as he believes that it is only Semar who can represent a popular alternative to the powers-that-be, a constellation of "the gods", "the Pandawa-Kurawa elite", "the King", "the Village Head", and "the village bureaucrats".

What does Semar offer that the gods, the princes and the bureaucrats do not? First and foremost, he is widely considered as "a commoner and a god at the

same time. He's even the God of all Gods"[9] (p. 58), and Gareng argues that Semar is so intertwined with the ordinary people that he has become a synonym for genuine democracy, as opposed to the sham democracy that has been promoted in the past by the politically ruthless Village Headman. In Gareng's words,

> "Amongst the clown-servants themselves there is a democratic atmosphere, a freedom of opinion, and a maturity in respecting other people as equals."[10] (p. 195)

Basing the legitimacy of their movement on the strength of their egalitarian credentials, Emha's clown-servants argue strenuously that the key to the people's escape from the vicissitudes of state authority is a movement away from the Mahabharata as Karang Kedempel's sole ideological and ethical foundation. According to Semar's sons, it is the Mahabharata and associated formulations such as "Asas Lima" [Pancasila], "Asas Lima Demokrasi" [Pancasila Democracy], along with "Kromoisasi" ["High-Javanese-isation," or the standardisation and euphemisation of Indonesian], that have legitimised the feudalistic attitudes and oppressive social and political machinations of the Mahabharata gods, princes and bureaucrats, at the expense of the villagers of Karang Kedempel. As a result, in an effort to revitalise the people's downtrodden spirits, the clown-servants suggest the need to develop a "budaya carangan" [*carangan* culture], which

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[8] "Kalau Gareng atau Mbilung atau siapa saja melontarkan sesuatu yang bertentangan dengan kemauan Pak Kades, ia akan dituduh Anti-Lima Asas. Itu untuk memalsukan kebenaran di mana Gareng sebenarnya bersikap anti-pendapat Pak Kades."
[9] "rakyat kecil dan Dewa sekaligus."
[10] "Di antara kaum Punakawan sendiri terdapat atmosfir demokrasi, kemerdekaan berpendapat, kedewasaan untuk saling menghargai secara sejajar di antara manusia."

involves realising the liberating potential of 'indigenous' rewritings of the ideological status quo.

According to Emha's clown-servants, the development of this "*carangan* culture" would necessarily involve a concerted effort, led by the clown servants themselves as the symbol of the people, to question the Mahabharata and the hierarchical and paternalistic significations of power and authority inscribed in it. From this interrogation, or "de-Mahabharata-isation," would rise the possibility of a post-Mahabharata era, where the clown-servants could use their social and historical links to the people and to the indigenous culture to promote a more democratic political system. Reminding themselves that the Mahabharata is an imported foreign product, they exhort the other villagers to turn to their own kind, the clown-servants, and to their very own indigenous 'micronarratives': *lakon carangan*, or 'branch stories'.

With this reference to the Mahabharata and the *lakon carangan*, Emha is drawing on the distinction which Javanese puppeteers themselves make between *pakem* [trunk] and *carangan* [branch] stories. Although the boundary between the two types of stories is hazy and there is much disagreement over which stories can be defined as trunk or branch,[11] *pakem* stories are generally regarded as those which closely follow the relatively fixed outlines of the Indian Mahabharata and Ramayana cycles of tales which lead up to and recount the events of the Baratayuda War. The *lakon carangan* are derived from the *pakem* stories, but they lead away from the Baratayuda War, giving shadow puppeteers greater opportunity to incorporate new material into the wayang tradition. Based on this

[11] Sears, *Shadows of Empire*, pp. 205-11.

widely accepted understanding of the division between the two types of stories, in Emha's novel *carangan* plots are taken to mean "communal story-books for the people", a sort of "mass media where they survey their own situation"[12] (p. 196).

By this identification of the Mahabharata with *pakem* plots and the *lakon carangan* with indigeneity and the ordinary people, Emha's political allegory links the Mahabharata with Indonesia's postcolonial 'master narrative,' the Indonesian nation as it was conceived by Suharto's New Order regime. In Emha's novel, the Mahabharata era, an era that should have ushered in peace and prosperity for all, began once the "Raksasa Putih" [White Giants] - a clear reference to the Dutch colonisers - returned to their homeland. (The post-independence years leading up to the rise of the New Order seem to have been overlooked.) However, it appears that the majority of the inhabitants of Karang Kedempel have yet to enjoy any peace or prosperity. In one memorable tirade in the novel, a little boy wise beyond his years accuses the "rezim Mahabharata" [Mahabharata regime] of repeating injustices of colonialism with its "Tanam Paksa Kontemporer" [Contemporary Forced Cultivation], "hijrah paksa" [forced transmigration], "mobilisasi budak" [slave mobilization] and a "kontinuisasi politik dan ekonomi kolonial" [continuation of colonial politics and economics] (p. 52). By his coining of these terms, Emha hints that the New Order may well have turned out to be an ideological structure that has not only failed to bring national liberation in the wake of national independence, but in character has become just as oppressive as Dutch colonialism itself.

[12] "Carangan adalah media massa tempat mereka meniti keadaan mereka sendiri."

What, then, of indigenous *carangan* understandings of liberty and people power? It appears that they too are in danger of being just as foreign and just as totalising as *pakem* plots. It is no coincidence that at one stage Semar scoffs at his idealistic sons, who, despite their claim that they are the embodiment of an indigenous "*carangan* culture", are minor deities "imported" from the heavens. As such, Semar sternly reminds them that they are in fact just as foreign as the Mahabharata itself (p. 185). Indeed, despite their interrogative character, *carangan* micronarratives do not necessarily attempt to completely deny *pakem* plots, as they are in fact an imaginative extension of them, just as the semantic definition of the Javanese term *carangan* would suggest. *Carangan* contains the root *cang*, meaning "slanting, awry, protruding", so *carang* means "little protruding branches from a tree, where the leaves grow", and *carangan* means "branching, a thin outgrowth from the main branch".[13]

In the sense that *carangan* plots simultaneously reproduce and challenge the emphases of their ideological forebears, one could argue that Emha's "*caranganisasi*" [*carangan*-isation] bears some affinities with the tendencies that elsewhere have been grouped under the general rubric of postmodernism. In the next section, I aim to explore this suggestion by showing how Emha's *carangan* thought reflects postmodernism's concern with plurality over unity, especially in relation to the concept of the multiple and fractured self.

[13] Sears, *Shadows of Empire*, p. 75.

Semar as a Postmodern Icon

By breaking with wayang tradition and giving the clown-servants lead roles in his novel, Emha's text itself can be seen as a contemporary exemplar of *carangan* thought. As we have seen, his "de-Mahabharata-isation" and commensurate "*carangan*-isation" is clearly designed as a framework to advance the novel's didactic purpose. For example, Emha's clown-servants praise the original puppeteers for "slipping" Semar into their *carangan* plots, as a brave expression of their desire for liberty and democracy. They mourn their subsequent loss of potency as a direct result of "political repression and cultural manipulation" in the Mahabharata era (p. 91). However Emha is not alone in his focus on the clown-servants as a means of developing a critical counter-discourse in New Order cultural expression. Perhaps the best way to discover this is to briefly discuss a number of literary texts, all appearing in the 1990s, depicting Semar as the main character.

Beginning with Putu Wijaya's wayang novel, *Perang* [War] (1990), which according to Sears is a blend of "Balinese, Javanese, and even Indian tellings of Mahabharata tales in postmodern ways",[14] Semar can be seen to play an interrogative role, not shying away from making provocative statements and questioning sacrosanct beliefs. For example, in *Perang*, Semar sets off a comic chain of events when he suggests to the Pandawa brothers that the supposedly "evil" Kurawa faction, the traditional arch-enemies of the Pandawa, are not necessarily the real enemy. He upsets expectations elsewhere as well, such as

[14] ibid, p. 288.

when he refuses to pucker up his famous bottom lip in the family photo. Quite simply, he refuses to follow the ideological status quo, no matter how dominant its associated social and cultural norms may be.

The Semar of Durmogati's "Wawancara dengan Semar, Wayang of the Year 1995" [Interview with Semar, Wayang of the Year 1995] (1996) is also distinguished by a suspicion of previously-held beliefs, especially those regarding himself.[15] In this "exclusive interview", Semar appears quite bemused by his larger-than-life persona, and shies away from his popular media image of "symbol of the people", "environmental activist", and "defender of human rights". As it turns out, Semar is revealed to be a simple villager, possessing a humanitarian concern for his fellow man, a pragmatic sense of respect for the land, and a traditional Javanese philosophy of life. Nevertheless, the irony hidden in Semar's title as "Wayang of the Year 1995" is accentuated by the fact that the interviewer remains overawed by Semar's presence. The accompanying cartoon, which portrays Semar as a people's advocate "standing by in the margins", repeats another journalistic cliche.

Yet even when Semar is unashamedly presented as a cultural and spiritual rallying point for the agrarian poor, as in Sindhunata's *Semar Mencari Raga* [Semar in Search of a Body] (1995), his potency is by no means a certainty. Tired of social and economic manipulation at the hands of the state authority, the villagers of Klampis Ireng bathe themselves in holy "Semar water", carry Semar wayang puppets, ride "Semar horses", pray to Semar for protection, and go to battle to defend their land and independence. However, they are defeated, and in

[15] Durmogati, "Wawancara dengan Semar, Wayang of the Year 1995," *Suara Merdeka*, January 14, 1996.

the following centuries their descendants believe that Semar has truly deserted them. As it turns out, Semar disappeared in order to search for a deeper sense of identity, a quest which he mistakenly believed could only be successful if he left behind earthly suffering and his grotesque human body and reverted to his pure spiritual form. Although he claimed that his spirit was present amongst all those who suffered, his physical presence was sorely missed. Finally, order is restored only when Semar returns to his human form. As explained by Sang Hyang Tunggal, the supreme wayang deity,

> "Semar, you are formless. It is only suffering that can make your self formless. As soon as you challenge your suffering Semar, you lose your formlessness. You want clarity and certainty. Suffering never gives you clarity and certainty. But suffering gives you hope [...] and only if you courageously endure suffering, Semar, then you will be able to live in formlessness, which will bring you happiness."[16]

Evidently, it is from the very contradictions, complexities and ambiguities epitomised and symbolised by Semar's grotesque physical form that he draws his strength.

Similarly, Goenawan Mohamad discusses in his "Semar" (1994) the way in which the one-dimensional Semar that has been gracing Indonesia's television

[16] "Semar, kau adalah samar. Hanya penderitaanlah yang dapat membuat dirimu samar. Begitu kaugugat penderitaanmu Semar, hilanglah kesamaranmu. Kau menginginkan kejelasan dan kepastian. Penderitaan tak pernah memberimu kepastian dan kejelasan. Namun penderitaan memberimu harapan [...] dan hanya jika kamu berani menanggung penderitaan, Semar, maka kamu dapat hidup dalam samar, yang membahagiakan." Sindhunata, *Semar Mencari Raga*, pp. 49-50.

screens is an emasculated Semar, lacking the mystery and paradox of the ever-changing and undefinable "100% alive" Semar of the wayang.[17] The problem with the "TV Semar" is that he lacks the very *kesamaran* or formlessness - signified by Semar's Javanese semantic root, *samar* - that refuses homogenisation, definition, or explanation. The discussion concludes with a plea to readers to reconsider the way in which Indonesian society in the New Order era prefers to gloss over difference, mystery and complexity - the essence of Semar - in favour of conformity, simplicity, and practicality. In short, the link between Sindhunata's novel and Goenawan Mohamad's essay is the notion that in the very attempt to formulate a cohesive identity for Semar, his 'true' identity - which is closer to a non-identity approaching a sense of oscillating otherness - is lost.

In Nano Riantiarno's *Semar Gugat* [Semar Accuses] (1995) the emasculation of Semar's 'true' identity is also a key issue. In this play, which was first performed in late 1995, Semar's forelock is cut off as a wedding present for his master Arjuna's wife-to-be, Srikandi, who has become possessed by the evil Durga. In great shame, Semar retreats to the heavens and, in the hope of some respite from his earthly sufferings and indignities, demands to be returned to his original form as a handsome prince. Unable to deny Semar's request, the gods grant his wish, and with the use of their plastic surgery clinic, he is transformed into Prabu Sanggadonya Lukanurani. However, when he attempts to thwart Durga's plans to take over the world, he finds that in his 'new and improved' form he no longer has his magic weapon, his extremely potent flatulence. Again, it appears that Semar's potency is drawn from his crude earthiness, his proximity

[17] Goenawan Mohamad, "Semar," *Catatan Pinggir 4* (Jakarta: Grafiti Pers,1994), pp. 414-416.

to suffering, his imperfections; paradoxically, it is in his state of powerlessness and intangibility that Semar's strength lies.

Yet Semar's acceptance of his marginality has its limits. For example, in Danarto's short story of 1995 entitled "Semar Mabuk" [Drunk Semar], Semar goes on a drunken rampage with a bazooka, taking pot-shots at the palaces of the gods and the Pandawa aristocrats.[18] In a pointed comment on the vacuousness of New Order rhetoric in the face of increasing social unrest, eventually it turns out that Semar is merely trying to get the powers-that-be to stop their inane chatter-boxing. A similar theme is explored in Seno Gumira Ajidarma's "Sembilan Semar" [Nine Semars] (1996).[19] In this story various Semar clones briefly create havoc and tension on Jakarta's streets - dancing, skateboarding, bungee-jumping, playing basketball, demonstrating, meditating - apparently as a warning sign of things to come.

Clearly not all portrayals of Semar present a cowed figure seemingly unable or unwilling to influence his surrounding environment. Indeed, in a complete departure from the stories discussed above, in Bonari Nabonenar's "Semar Super" (1998) the popular characterisation of Semar as embodiment of the people is turned on its head.[20] This story is a savage criticism of the New Order regime, in particular President Suharto who came to power in 1966 with his "Letter of Instruction of 11 March" or "Supersemar", which evokes the images of Superman and Semar. Nabonenar's Semar is portrayed as a thoroughly corrupt, nepotistic and power-hungry tyrant who is directly responsible for much of the social and political injustices perpetrated upon the people of Karang Kedempel

[18] Danarto, "Semar Mabuk," *Republika*, May 28, 1995.
[19] Seno Gumira Ajidarma, "Sembilan Semar," *Kompas*, December 15, 1996.

(read: Indonesia) for the last thirty-two years. However, in a surprising twist to the story, this Semar, who was supposedly "super" for those three decades, was merely a false Semar, and the narrator suggests that the reader should ask various well-known shadow puppeteers in order to discover the identity of the 'real' Semar. Evidently the ambiguity embedded in Semar's complex figure and symbolism can be moulded and manipulated to suit any number of purposes. Indeed, this is perhaps his enduring strength.

Not surprisingly then, in one of the many seminars and conferences held to discuss postmodernism in the middle of what came to be called the Indonesian "*posmo* plague" of 1993 and 1994, P.M. Laksono stated that in the ambiguous character of Semar, Indonesia had its very own "postmodern" icon.[21] Certainly, on the basis of these texts, the figure of Semar can well be claimed, at least in a playful sense, as a postmodern icon. In Sindhunata's *Semar Mencari Raga*, for example, Semar is presented as a male, however he is also portrayed as having a unique relationship with women and femininity. Among other things, he is labelled as the god of fertility, he is termed as "not a woman [...] yet like a woman", and his large breasts are said to express "the milk of women's suffering".[22] Semar's ambiguous sexual identity can be read traditionally as a symbolic reflection of his links with all members of the *rakyat*, male and female. Yet in the context of Sindhunata's text, it can also be read not only as a reflection of postmodernism's disavowal of stable form and identity, but also its celebration of heterogeneity and plurality. Similarly, his grotesque physical features, his

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[20] Bonari Nabonenar, "Semar Super," *Jawa Pos*, September 6, 1998.
[21] See Goenawan, "Semar"; Nirwan Dewanto, "Carut-Marut Yang Bikin Kagum dan Cemas," *Kalam*, 1 (1994): 4-11.
[22] Sindhunata, *Semar Mencari Raga*, p. 39.

penchant for buffoonery and his rustic homilies recall postmodernism's concern for the fallen, contingent nature of language and experience, as opposed to the modernist (and, in the Indonesian case, New Order) concern for remaking or purifying language and existence. As such, in Sindhunata's novel and Riantiarno's play, Semar loses his power the moment he eschews his fallen warts and all human form for his "pure" spiritual form. Similarly, Durmogati's Semar prefers to shy away from trendy modern catchphrases in favour of traditional Javanese homilies.

Semar's simultaneous status as god of all gods and menial clown-servant representing the *rakyat* easily lends itself to an association with postmodernism's convergence of 'high' culture and mass or popular culture. Of course, in Indonesia, a strict modernist dichotomy between 'high' and 'low' culture has never been clear-cut. For example, many contemporary wayang performances, despite a traditional and courtly air about them, are very popular in tone, with sexual innuendo, rock music, electronic sound effects, dazzling light displays, comedians and other innovations matching the audience's changing tastes. More important, however, is the question of whether Semar is an appropriate icon for postmodernism. Although the texts discussed above present Semar as an embodiment of formlessness, ambiguity, uncertainty, irony, oppositionality and relativity - notions close to the postmodern heart - they do not necessarily present him as postmodern in the sense that postmodernism is understood in the West. At the same time, however, the burgeoning corpus of parodic rewritings of the wayang, to which Emha's *Arus Bawah* belongs, may legitimately be seen as an Indonesian manifestation of a global phenomenon: the rise of postmodern

'micronarratives' constituted by an eclectic mixture of tradition and modernity, simultaneously continuing and transcending modernism.

Indonesia and the Smell of Postmodernism

On the face of it, Emha's promotion of localised meanings and narratives as a way of understanding and rehabilitating contemporary Indonesia on its own terms and according to its own concepts, certainly "smells", in the words of *Arus Bawah*'s cover blurb, "of something like postmodernism". Firstly, by synthesising, juxtaposing and ironically commenting upon the hierarchy that originates from the wayang world and finds its modern counterpart in the institutions of the New Order era, Emha's return to tradition as a way of moulding the future neatly sidesteps the rival of both tradition and postmodernism: modernity. Secondly, the dialectic encountered in *Arus Bawah* between *pakem* and *carangan* plots has much in common with postmodernism's foregrounding of the conflict between new and old modes of understanding, both cultural and economic, and the interests vested in those modes. It parallels Jean-François Lyotard's identification of an "incredulity toward metanarratives" that marks the end of the modern era, and the fragmenting and autonomous "new modernisms" or "micronarratives" that characterise the postmodern era.[23]

The rise and manifestation of postmodern micronarratives has in turn forced a redefinition of the idea of "culture". Walter Truett Anderson observes

[23] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, first published in 1979, Trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

that although people customarily talk about "culture" as if it were a single tangible object somewhere "out there on the landscape", in reality there is no such thing.[24] Quoting Jim Collins, Anderson argues that the postmodern era is distinguished in particular by the way in which 'high' culture no longer holds its privileged place:

> We need to see popular culture and Post-Modernism as a continuum because both reflect and produce the same cultural perspective - that "culture" no longer can be conceived as a Grand Hotel, as a totalizable system that somehow orchestrates all cultural production and reception according to one master system.[25]

What we have instead, in the view of postmodern theorists, is a *carangan*-esque array of discourses constructing reality in conflicting, often contradictory ways. What we also find - or in the case of Emha's clown-servants, desire - in the postmodern era is an active role for people in the making of culture, where we make informed choices about it, sampling and improvising with a new sense of agency.

In Indonesia, as we have seen with the clown-servants in *Arus Bawah*, the desire for a sense of cultural agency cannot be disassociated from the wider political realm. For example, during the heated debates on postmodernism in 1993 and 1994 in the Indonesian mass media, postmodernism was perceived by many to contain the potential for politically subversive discourse. In the context of

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[24] Walter Truett Anderson, *The Truth About the Truth: De-confusing and Re-constructing the Postmodern World* (New York: Tarcher/Putnam, 1995), p. 16

the New Order regime's history of cultural and political totalitarianism in the name of 'construction' or 'development,' 'stability' and 'modernisation,' postmodernism - with its attack on authoritarianism, elitism and hierarchy - promised to be an intellectual movement with clear political undertones. Yet significantly, any dreams of a seamless transition from intellectual debate to cultural practice and then to political action failed to materialise in any tangible way. This was perhaps as much due to the problematic nature of defining postmodernism itself as it was due to postmodernism's perceived political ambivalence. Ariel Heryanto observes that postmodernism has the potential for both politically liberating and self-defeating tendencies:

> On the one hand, post-modernism can help radicalise the growing number of dissidents in challenging an authoritarian regime. On the other hand, post-modernism also has the strong potential to endorse a liberal consumerism ("anything goes") which fails to accomodate a progressive agenda, let alone empower the underclass in a Utopian struggle to undermine the foundations of an existing social order...[26]

Although Heryanto stresses that these contradictory tendencies exist at the level of potential conflicts, the critical response towards various "kantung-kantung budaya" [cultural pockets] appearing around the same time as the postmodern debate reflected the ideological ambivalence that attaches to postmodern cultural practice.

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[25] ibid.

What initially appeared to be instances of postmodern practice were first seen in the fields of art, poetry, and regional fiction. For example, the sudden vogue of *seni instalasi* [installation art], the *puisi gelap* [dark poetry] polemic and the *sastra pedalaman* [literature from the hinterland] debates in 1993 and 1994 appeared to be deconstructive challenges to the homogenising tendencies of a closed, monolithic cultural centre. However, the young installation artists, who were perceived to be hitching a ride on the postmodern bandwagon, were soon deconstructed themselves. They were roundly accused of cynically setting out to cash in on the latest intellectual trend. Perhaps as a wary response to this critical reaction, the main exponent of *puisi gelap*, poet Sutardji Calzoum Bachri, claimed that the recent trend of *sajak gelap*, or poetry that defied comprehension or rational explanation as a reflection of existential alienation, was relatively uninfluenced by the "*posmo* plague".[27] Sutardji suggested that although *puisi gelap* - in particular his own *puisi gelap* - could be labelled as postmodern, if one wanted to fully understand its postmodern character, the "existentialism plague" of the 1960s might be a better place to start than the "*posmo* plague" of the 1990s. Meanwhile, the *sastra pedalaman* polemic, which attempted to revitalise the activity of regional writers and poets by opposing and challenging the cultural hegemony of the metropolitan centres, was emphatically rejected by the literary establishment.[28] Their main objection was, ironically, that the writers and poets of such disparate places as Tasikmalaya, Tegal and Malang merely intended to establish a

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[26] Ariel Heryanto, "What Does Postmodernism Do in Contemporary Indonesia?," *SOJOURN*,10, 1 (1995), p. 38.
[27] Sutardji Calzoum Bachri, "Trend Puisi Mutakhir: "Sajak Gelap"," *Republika*, January 2, 1994a; "Sekilas Jawaban oleh Sutardji Calzoum Bachri," *Republika*, March 20, 1994b.
[28] See Will Derks, "'If not to Anything Else': Some Reflections on Modern Indonesian Literature," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-en Volkenkunde*, 152, 3 (1996): 341-352.

multitude of cultural centres, just as monolithic and closed as their own! While the ultimate results of the postmodern debates have yet to be seen, postmodernism as an intellectual and artistic vogue seems to have slunk back into the collective subconscious from which it emerged, in much the same way as the preceding *sastra kontekstual* [contextual literature] debates of the mid-1980s have given way to new definitions of the nexus between aesthetic practice and social reform.

I would argue that the perceived lack of an enduring response to the postmodern debates lies in the fact that a potentially revolutionising ideological vehicle such as postmodernism, with its inevitable commensurate artistic practice, does not emerge from within a cultural and economic vacuum. A genuinely Indonesian postmodern artistic practice must emerge, as elsewhere, over a considerable timespan, with a preceding transformation of the social and economic realms. Just as Fredric Jameson argued that postmodernism was an historical description of a particular stage in the development of modern capitalism,[29] so too Ariel Heryanto and others have examined the way in which the rise of postmodernism in Indonesia was not independent of the early 1990s boom in its economy.[30] Heryanto observes that Indonesia's economic growth during the New Order period led to the emergence of a highly-educated Western-oriented middle class, most of whom read at least one foreign language and were quite familiar with the global explosion of information and communications technologies, computerisation, the global economy, consumerism and the

[29] Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and consumer society," *Postmodern Culture*, ed. H. Foster (London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1985), pp. 111-25.

dominant power of the mass media. To borrow a phrase from Terry Eagleton, it is clear that during the New Order period, Indonesia was "dragged into the orbit of a postmodern West".[31] Yet as the aftermath of the 1997 financial crisis in Indonesia has made clear, Indonesia's incorporation into the economic and cultural domain of global capital in no way represented a thoroughgoing transformation of the bases of Indonesian social and economic life. As such, it should come as no surprise to find that the similarities between Western postmodernism and late New Order cultural practice are often partial and incomplete. In returning to Emha's parodic rewriting of the wayang mythology in the concluding section of this chapter, I want to explore the ways in which postmodern characteristics both appeared and were given a distinctive form in the literature of the New Order years.

Postmodern or Postcolonial?

In Jameson's view, the cultural expression of the postmodern period is characterised by a preference for pastiche, endless reinterpretation and schizophrenia.[32] Pastiche thrives in a condition where the idea that only texts matter is combined with the post-structuralist devaluing of the unified subject - or the end of individualism as such - and the fading of a sense of history. In short, the explosion of pastiche, collage and mimicry reflects postmodernism's retreat from the modernist idea of a unified self. In its place, postmodernism sees a loss

[30] Ariel Heryanto, "What Does Postmodernism Do"; *Postmodernisme dan Masa Depan Peradaban*, eds. Syamsul Arifin Suyoto, Agus Purwadi, Ajang Budiman, Khozin, A. Faridi (Yogyakarta: Aditya Media, 1994).
[31] Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, p. 205.

of self and historical sense of place, an existence in a perpetual present without depth, definition or identity. Furthermore, as Jameson puts it,

> There is another sense in which the writers and artists of the present day will no longer be able to invent new styles and worlds - they've already been invented; only a limited number of combinations are possible; the most unique ones have been thought of already.[33]

Wayang mbeling shares much in common with Jameson's cultural aesthetic of late capitalism. There is no doubt that, in particular, the humorous *wayang mbeling* columns appearing in the Sunday newspapers represent a conflation of one of the most well known 'high' art forms of Indonesia with what could be considered as the lowest common denominator of modern Indonesian literary representation, *sastra pop*. The aesthetic result, epitomised by Emha's *Arus Bawah*, is a 'user-friendly' literary genre, parodying past history by juxtaposing it with the contemporary. Yet just as significantly, the ironic, playful and depthless appropriation of the wayang world in novels such as *Arus Bawah* may be seen also as a response to the problems of contemporary Indonesian society, and a critical engagement with the cultural ideology of the late New Order period. Farcical parody in forms like *Arus Bawah* and *wayang mbeling* is often arbitrary, eclectic, discontinuous and pastiche-like, self-consciously revelling in its own playfulness and pejorative nature. At the same time, however, it represents an assault on the highly idealised world of the wayang mythology, and as such, a

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[32] Jameson, "Postmodernism and consumer society," pp. 114-23.
[33] ibid, p. 115.

pointed subversion of the New Order's developmentalist-minded modernity. As I have already discussed, this is because the wayang world became one of the major cultural legitimations of the New Order regime. The elitist norms of the wayang underpinned not only the hierarchical structure of the New Order regime but also the autocratic presidential style of Suharto himself.

Thus it is possible to see parodic literary reinterpretations of the wayang as a highly politicised form of cultural resistance encoding strong similarities - in both style and spirit - with international postmodern fiction. In this sense, what we are witnessing here is another example of the politically-charged, distinctively Indonesian postmodernism which Michael H. Bodden, in his study of the fiction of Seno Gumira Ajidarma and Afrizal Malna, identifies as a manifestation of middle-class dissatisfaction with the authoritarianism of the New Order regime.[34] However, it should be noted that texts such as Emha's *Arus Bawah* merge the oppositional momentum of postmodernism in Indonesia with the sociocultural resistance of postcolonialism. Examining the links and differences between postmodernism and postcolonialism, Linda Hutcheon suggests that there is considerable formal, thematic and strategic overlap between the two.[35] Both attempt to deconstruct existing orthodoxies, and both are inevitably implicated and informed by their ideological predecessors. However, Hutcheon also underlines the major difference between them. That is, the postmodern challenges to the coherent, autonomous subject must be put on hold in postcolonial

[34] Michael H. Bodden, "Satuan-Satuan Kecil and Uncomfortable Improvizations in the Late Night of the New Order: Democratization, Postmodernism, and Postcoloniality," in *Clearing a Space*, eds. Tony Day and Keith Foulcher.

[35] Linda Hutcheon, "Circling the Downspout of Empire," in *Past the Last Post: Theorising Postcolonialism and Post-modernism*, eds. Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), pp. 167-90.

discourse, for the postcolonial subject "must work first to assert and affirm a denied or alienated subjectivity: those radical post-modern challenges are in many ways the luxury of the dominant order which can afford to challenge that which it securely possesses".[36]

Arus Bawah fails to distinguish between a postmodern embrace of personal and cultural fragmentation, dislocation and decentredness (that is, "*carangan*-isation") and a postcolonial challenge to the social, cultural and political hegemony of the ruling hierarchy (that is, "de-Mahabharata-isation"). One aspect of this ambivalence is that despite enduring centuries of repression at the hands of the imperialist "white giants" and the authoritarian Kresnas and Arjunas who have succeeded them, the clown-servants do not appear especially distressed at their condition. Indeed, at one stage Gareng claims that even if state oppression were to be suddenly wiped off the face of the earth, the long-suffering *rakyat* would actually regret its disappearance (p. 28). Clearly Gareng has found it easy to disassociate himself from what is said to be the very essence of his and his brothers' identity, the *rakyat* of Karang Kedempel. This leads to another factor in explaining the ambivalence between "*carangan*-isation" and "de-Mahabharata-isation", in that the clown-servants thrive in being both fractured and fractious. They can't stand each other and don't mind resorting to physical violence to settle their problems. What is more, Gareng even questions his father's loyalty to their cause. In a metafictional pose, he quietly accuses his father of failing to use his considerable influence (as director of the play no less!) in determining a more meaningful role for the *rakyat* (p. 29). Bagong is even more outspoken, exclaiming

[36] ibid, p. 168.

that despite all the clown-servants' efforts to defend and support the *rakyat*, all Semar ever does is break wind (p. 175). Nevertheless, as detailed earlier, in their father's absence the clown-servants refuse to remain marginalised any longer, and work towards overturning the established order. A major part of this project is the need to uncover and rediscover their "true" function, essense and identity, which appears to simultaneously consist of both representing and championing the heart, mind and soul of the *rakyat* of Karang Kedempel (p. 58). Consider the following exhortation:

> The clown-servant culture must rediscover itself, because for so long - due to extended political repression and cultural manipulation - its true meaning has been supplanted with an ethic of subordination wholly lacking in any sense of authority.[37](p. 195)

This passage suggests that the clown-servants' ultimate response to the all-pervasive cultural, social and political manifestations of the Mahabharata regime is to embrace the postcolonial urge to recover some previously-existing sense of agency and communal identity. However somewhat paradoxically, the clown-servants are themselves embedded in the Mahabharata world. Initially, it appears that they can only work to rescue and reinvent themselves within their familiar boundaries of understanding. In this sense the clown-servants' move towards "*carangan*-isation" only serves to highlight and increase the power of the Mahabharata - along with all its trappings such as its internal colonialism,

feudalism, corruption, militarism, bureaucratism, euphemisation of language - by directing attention towards it, for it is the wayang and the Mahabharata that provides the clown-servants' *raison d'être*. Nevertheless, the clown-servants are determined that through "*carangan*-isation" they will be able to slip through the cracks of their familiar wayang world and begin to build an autonomous "non-Mahabharata" Karang Kedempel. As such, the "clown-servant movement" becomes a case of postcolonial recovery of the long-alienated subject, within and in opposition to the ruling authoritarian regime, which in the context of Emha's novel is Suharto's internally colonising New Order.

In another paradox, it is through their desire to deconstruct and reach beyond the strictures of the Mahabharata regime in order to establish an autonomous and coherent sense of agency that the clown-servants will enter further and further into the postmodern uncertainty of the *carangan* world, where their familiar boundaries of understanding will become radically violated. Brian McHale argues that many critics have characterised postmodernism in terms of just such a scenario of ontological instability, a grey state of indeterminacy caused by "the loss of a world that could be accepted, 'willy-nilly' as a given of experience".[38] The difference between this conception of postmodernism and the postmodernism depicted in *Arus Bawah* is that it is precisely through the loss of their previous world that the clown-servants hope to join the postcolonial quest for agency and authenticity. Only in this way will they be able to recover their own true selves and reconnect the people they represent with their rightful place

[37] "Budaya Punakawan harus menemukan dirinya kembali setelah demikian lama - oleh represi politik dan manipulasi kultural yang berkepanjangan - digeser maknanya menjadi etos kekawulaan yang tanpa otoritas."
[38] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (New York: Methuen, 1987), p. 25.

in society, that is, on a horizontal axis side-by-side with the powers-that-be (p. 185).

Conclusion

The burgeoning number of *wayang mbeling* narratives – or parodic rewritings of the wayang - in the late 1980s and early 1990s, epitomised by novels such as Emha Ainun Nadjib's *Arus Bawah,* are an attempt to not only rework and transform the 'standard' wayang mythology, but also an attempt to provide alternative visions for the state and individual of postcolonial Indonesia. The efforts of these characters to branch out from the usual wayang strictures, and the inexorable pressure to deflate their fragile identites and force them back into line, provides an allegory of unequal power relations in Indonesian society under Suharto's New Order regime. In Emha's novel the key to escaping this shadow is clearly by challenging and subverting the Mahabharata and all it stands for, both literally and symbolically.

By allegorising the tensions between state and society in New Order Indonesia as a tension between the totalitarian Mahabharata and the liberating potential of pluralistic *carangan* micronarratives - the spirit of which is embodied by Semar and his sons - novels such as *Arus Bawah* illustrate the way in which postmodernist parody can take on the character of postcolonial resistance in Indonesian literary texts. Certainly texts such as *Arus Bawah* parallel the postcolonial urge to liberate subjectivities defined and constricted by colonial-type master narratives, whatever the state formation in which they are enacted. However, on the other hand, betraying strong similarities with the decentred,

dislocated and hybridised postmodern subject, the characters given birth in these texts remain keenly self-conscious of their own contingent nature, their intertextuality, their marginality, and, ultimately, their entirely facile existence at the whim of playwrights, writers and shadow puppeteers. Nevertheless, despite this potentially paralysing ambiguity, as we have seen with the clown-servants in *Arus Bawah* their outlook is optimistic and their attitude pro-active.

Although *wayang mbeling* narratives such as *Arus Bawah* reveal the Indonesian *rakyat* as a long-repressed marginal force, they also suggest, both in their textual and thematic challenge to the underlying generic and structural modes of the Mahabharata, a key to social and political liberation. The next text to be discussed, Pipit Rochijat's *Baratayuda di Negeri Antah Berantah*, also uses the wayang as a medium for parody and satire. However, in comparison with *Arus Bawah*, Pipit's *wayang mbeling* is not concerned at all with challenging and subverting the ideological structures underpinning the wayang world. Instead, Pipit's humorous use of the wayang is intended to present an unrelenting interrogation of the New Order regime's monolithic version of history.

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Pipit Rochijat's *Baratayuda di Negeri Antah Berantah*: Resurrecting the Kurawa, Exorcising the New Order

"The contents of [*Baratayuda di Negeri Antah Berantah*], on the whole, can be regarded as a "plesetan" [pun] on various parts of the Baratayuda tales [sic]. What it does is not merely invite us to laugh, but rather it tends to reflect the sociopolitical conditions of Indonesia since the 1960s to the present day".[1]
GAUNG

Introduction: "Madmen and Clowns"

As discussed in Chapter One, in the late 1990s Hendrik Maier expressed his concern at the sterility of literary life in New Order Indonesia. It is worth adding here that so complete and pervasive was the state's emphasis on censorship and self-censorship that, according to Maier, the authors themselves were no longer aware of how much they had been muffled,[2] "leaving the writing of explicitly offensive and confrontational poetry and prose to madmen and clowns who should not be surprised when sooner or later they are arrested, punished, and

[1] "Isi [*Baratayuda di Negeri Antah Berantah*] secara umum boleh dikatakan "plesetan" dari berbagai bagian cerita Baratayuda. Tendensi yang dibangunkannya bukan sekadar mengajak kita tertawa, tapi condong merefleksikan kondisi sosial-politik di Indonesia semenjak tahun 1960-an sampai sekarang". "Wayang Pun Bisa Menyindir Kita", *Gaung*, 2, 15 (1994), p. 33.
[2] They were probably very well aware but could do little about it without risking their livelihoods and their families also.

shoveled away under the epitaph: "Communist". Like Wiji Thukul.[3] Like Pramoedya Ananta Toer".[4] This chapter will explore the prose of another writer that Maier could easily add to his list of so-called communists: Pipit R.K, or Pipit Rochijat Kartawidjaja, an Indonesian writer, émigré and activist based in West Berlin.[5]

The discussion in this chapter will be based on Pipit's one and only literary publication, a collection of brilliantly satirical wayang parodies entitled *Baratayuda di Negeri Antah Berantah* (1993) which was first written in the early 1980s. With the exception of an unpublished paper by Amrih Widodo, as far as I am aware Pipit's extremely humorous collection appears to have failed so far to attract any major scholarly attention.[6] One explanation for this is that in an aesthetic sense Pipit's stories are little more than seditious parody. Another explanation for the lack of critical attention could be that when compared to the richness of the wayang's theatrical effect in performance, the presentation of wayang plot, themes and characterisation through written words alone may seem to be but a pale imitation of the real thing.[7] According to Widodo,

> In writing these stories, the author does not seem to think about wayang

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[3] During the late New Order period, Wiji Thukul was widely regarded as one of Indonesia's leading poets, and he was also an outspoken critic of the authoritarianism of the New Order regime. The fact that in 1998 Wiji mysteriously disappeared reflects the serious, and dangerous, nature of expressing anti-government sentiment in the New Order period. See Richard Curtis, "Where is Wiji Thukul?" *Inside Indonesia*, 63 (2000), p. 12.

[4] Maier, "Flying a Kite," p. 257.

[5] For more on Pipit's colorful background, see Pipit Rochijat (translated with an afterword by Ben Anderson), "Am I PKI or Non-PKI?," *Indonesia*, 40 (1985): 37-56.

[6] See Amrih Widodo, " 'Wayang' Revisited: The Politics of Language of a New Order Student," (unpublished manuscript, 1988), pp. 1-27. Pipit and his writing is briefly discussed in Benedict Anderson's *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (Verso: London and New York, 1998), pp. 293-295.

[7] Of course, this could be said of *wayang mbeling* in in general.

> performance - the night long presentations accompanied by the gamelan ensemble. Gamelan - the Javanese music orchestra - is never mentioned. There is no indication that Pipit's wayang stories are to be performed, or are in any way related to ceremonies or rituals of which wayang is usually a part. This is wayang without a stage, without spectators, without musical accompaniment and without ritual significance in the conventional sense.[8]

After spending much of the last three decades in West Berlin, with a number of those years without his Indonesian passport,[9] it would be an understatement to say that Pipit has not seen very many wayang performances recently. Furthermore, Pipit's style of wayang story-telling derives from the wayang comics of R. A. Kosasih, of which Pipit is an avid reader, and the comics of Kho Peng Ho, based on the "Tales of the Three Kingdoms".[10]

Nevertheless, in many respects Pipit's collection symbolically draws on some of the most common assumptions regarding the wayang. For example, many observers argue that the original purpose or function of the wayang shadow theatre was as an animistic rite in honour of the spirits of the Javanese ancestors. With its close links with ancestor or spirit worship, the wayang shadow theatre has for centuries represented a key element in Javanese exorcistic rites, and many Javanese still hold wayang performances in order to appease the local *danyang*, or spirits. In recognition of the presence of the local spirits and the belief that the souls of ancestors are brought to life as the puppet's shadows, before a performance has begun offerings and incense are always placed under the screen

[8] Widodo, "'Wayang' Revisited," p.14.
[9] See "Ditawari Suaka Politik, Masih Cinta Indonesia," *Jawa Pos*, July 19, 1998.

and banana log. Consequently, the image of the *dalang* as a medium between the world of the spirits and the gods and the human audience shares significant similarities with the popular image of the shaman or, in the Indonesian context, the *dukun*.[11]

Just as the *dukun* has the ability to call back the spirits of the deceased to ask for advice or help in overcoming problems related to disharmony in the spirit world, sections of Pipit's *Baratayuda di Negeri Antah Berantah* also resurrect the spirits of the deceased, primarily as a means of giving rise to the various spectres of the New Order regime. Therefore, this chapter will argue that through the literary medium, Pipit synthesises the aesthetics of the *dalang* with the world of the shaman in, one could argue, a far more deliberate manner than the typical *dalang*, who would be aware that the majority of the Javanese spectators at a wayang performance today do not look upon the shadows cast upon the screen as the spirits of their ancestors. The first section of this chapter will examine the ways in which Pipit draws upon the *dalang* figure, with a particular emphasis on his shamanistic potential. By examining the ways in which Pipit synthesises the figure of the *dalang* with the figure of the shaman, it will become increasingly evident that Pipit's *wayang mbeling* can be conceived not only as a rhetorical wayang 'performance', but also as a symbolic *ruwatan*, or wayang-based exorcism.

As in Emha's *Arus Bawah*, Pipit's *Baratayuda di Negeri Antah Berantah* synthesises the indeterminacy and pastiche of the postmodern sensibility with the postcolonial project's drive for social and political justice. So strong is the link

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[10] My thanks to Benedict Anderson for pointing this out to me.
[11] Sears, *Shadows of Empire*, pp. 235-240; and Edward C. Van Ness & Shita Prawirohardjo, *Javanese*

between these texts that where the clown-servants' "*carangan*-isation" and "de-Mahabharata-isation" in *Arus Bawah* is best understood as representing a postcolonial blueprint for progressive social and political reform, Pipit's unconventional appropriation of the wayang - through a series of short and interconnected wayang tales - can be seen as a literal actualisation of the "*carangan*-isation" process. However, unlike Emha, Pipit's contestation of the New Order 'master narrative' is not so much a means to foreground and challenge the marginalisation of Indonesia's disenfranchised non-elite, but rather as a means to cast the shadows of the spectres of the past onto the screen of New Order discourse. In short, by setting a significant percentage of his wayang narratives in "nerakaloka" [hell-ville], the Kurawa's hellish eternal resting place, Pipit brings to life the souls of the Kurawa of contemporary Indonesia, in this case, the massacred Indonesians of the 1960s. That is, the many hundreds of thousands of murdered communists and those accused of being communists.

Significantly, Sears observes that in *ruwatan* performances, which are held for exorcistic purposes, the ancient connections between aesthetics and shamanism are emphasised, "as it is the aesthetic power of the shadow puppeteer expressed through his art that enables him to heal the psychic imbalances that prompt families to hold exorcistic performances".[12] One aesthetic characteristic of a *ruwatan* performance is that the puppets in a *ruwatan* are disconnected from their usual roles, all the usual associations are displaced, and any linearity of plot development is even more uncertain and the meanings are even more complex than normal. Similarly, Pipit's *wayang mbeling* also favours disconnection and

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Wayang Kulit (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 11.
[12] Sears, *Shadows of Empire*, p. 238.

spontaneity over structure and stability, allowing the writer to creatively weave any number of threads between the wayang world and the world of contemporary Indonesia. Furthermore, just as the *dalang* of an exorcistic *ruwatan* performance attempts to heal the psychic or spiritual imbalances of the context in which he is performing, Pipit's text can also be considered as a rhetorical attempt to rebalance the social and spiritual disharmony engendered by the New Order regime's violent rise to power.

Throughout the narratives set in the afterlife, Pipit also exploits another common assumption of the wayang: that the *dalang* uses every opportunity available to engage in sociopolitical commentary. This assumption is based on a belief, held by some, that much of the wayang's true 'meaning' lies in its potential to act as a medium for the expression of social criticism in a society that has otherwise severely restricted political comment. Consequently, many observers claim that *dalang* commonly make covert political references, either by thinly-veiled allusions in the story-line or by both sly and explicit comments through the mouths of the clown-servants. Nevertheless, Ward Keeler tempers such observations by arguing that

> it would be an exaggeration to think that most *dalang* engage in the risks of political controversy today, that they did so routinely in the past, or that spectators expect to find examples of such resistance to established authority in many performances they attend. To treat *wayang* as a form of political expression would also be unduly reductionist, since it would explain a complex art form with reference to only one kind of meaning [...] More central to the *wayang* tradition than any essential 'meaning' is the

> aesthetic pleasure it affords its spectators by means of the compelling quality of its images, the beauty of its music, the complexity of its stories, and the enveloping atmosphere of a night-long, deliberately paced entertainment.[13]

In Pipit's *wayang mbeling* - which is unashamedly stripped bare of the atmosphere, sound and quality of images of a typical wayang performance - political criticism is virtually its *raison d'être.* For example, as we shall see in Chapter Six, with Pipit's thinly-veiled representation of former President Suharto as the Ramayana's King of Alengka, 'President Dosomuko', Pipit launches a savage indictment of Suharto and the New Order ruling elite. Both in this chapter and Chapter Six we will see that Pipit's appropriation of the performance techniques of the *dalang* is radically imaginative, totally unconventional, and blatantly political. After briefly presenting a few background details on Pipit himself, this chapter will argue that by drawing upon, exploring and expanding the shamanistic and socially engaged tendencies of the *dalang* figure, Pipit's rhetorical 'exorcism' of the New Order ensures that his fiction can be ranked alongside the "explicitly offensive and confrontational" fiction of subversive "madmen and clowns" such as writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer and poet Wiji Thukul.

Pipit Rochijat Kartawidjadja: Emigré, Activist and Writer

Before discussing the content and implications of Pipit's fiction in more

[13] Keeler, *Javanese Shadow Puppets*, p. 65.

detail, it should be noted that Pipit is regarded as a man of some complexity. For example, Amrih Widodo observes that "[Pipit] is notoriously difficult to classify, and [he] never lets himself be grouped into any 'ism'".[14] Perhaps it is no coincidence that Pipit is most well-known for his essay, "Am I PKI or Non-PKI?", which was translated with an afterword by Benedict Anderson in the mid-1980s. Through this essay, one of the few public Indonesian accounts of the anti-communist massacres of the 1960s, Pipit explores the question of whether he truly deserves to be labelled as a member of the PKI, or in other words, a "communist". In his response to this question, Pipit takes great care in recounting his childhood, which was spent in the environs of various sugar plantations in East Java, where his father worked. After his transfer in 1959 from a sugar factory in Jember, Pipit's father, M. Kartawidjaja, served as the director of the Ngadirejo sugar factory in Kediri until 1967. In the following year, Kartawidjaja became an inspector of sugar factories in Semarang, before relocating to Surabaya where he was appointed Director-in-Chief of a sugar plantation and factory in Situbondo. As a child, Pipit experienced the full benefits of his father's high position, which included luxurious residences with the full complement of servants, cooks and chauffeurs. As employees of the sugar factory in Ngadirejo, Pipit's family also enjoyed membership of a former Dutch club, complete with a swimming pool, tennis courts, ping-pong tables and movie nights. Other 'perks' included free transportation to the state senior high school in Kediri, free transportation to the sugar factory's hospital, and occasional visits by 'top' entertainers. They also benefited from the extravagant 'gifts' that their father received from Chinese

[14] Widodo, "'Wayang' Revisited," p. 13.

businessmen, who were keen to monopolise either the sugar trade or the right to sell car parts, rice and cloth to the sugar factory's workers.

Pipit fully recognised the difference in treatment between himself and the children of the factory workers, who often needed to ride long distances to school or had to pay for their own transportation. The factory workers were also very much aware of this difference in treatment. Furthermore, in the early 1960s the formation and politicisation of various labor unions became strongly evident, with polarities divided between PKI-aligned unions and their Islamic and Sukarnoist counterparts. Not long afterwards, simmering tensions arising from the obvious socio-economic differences between the factory employees and the PKI-aligned hired workers came to a head. In 1962 Pipit's father invoked the wrath of the PKI along with its mass organisations when the Department of Agriculture's plan for unifying separate plantation land-holdings involved the relocation of some local residents. When their demonstrations had no effect, a PKI-aligned crowd buried a bulldozer and killed a policeman. In turn, troops were brought in, firing upon the crowd. The conflict between the PKI and Pipit's father was heightened when Kartawidjaja dealt harshly with the increasingly strident demands of PKI-aligned workers. For example, when pro-communist workers went on strike, Kartawidjaja reacted by cutting their wages and giving bonuses to the workers who did not strike, who were 'naturally' workers associated with Islamic and Sukarnoist groups. Consequently rallies and demonstrations were often held in the lead-up to the abortive military coup of 1965, and slogans criticising Pipit's father always appeared. These slogans included "Retool Karta", "Karta Kabir", "Karta Ex-Masyumi", "Karta Tujuh Setan

Desa", all communist terms popular at the time.[15]

Both Pipit and his four brothers and sisters all encountered abuse at school, and not surprisingly Pipit developed a strong sense of antipathy for the PKI. Partly as a reflection of this, and partly as a show of admiration and support for his father and for President Sukarno, Pipit actively participated in the activities of a youth group affiliated with the pro-Sukarno PNI (Partai Nasional Indonesia) [Indonesian Nationalist Party]. Later, between 1965-67 he was an observer of the destruction of the PKI with the accompanying anti-communist massacres. But in the ensuing destruction of the PNI, of which Pipit was still an active member, he in turn became a victim. Partly due to the fact that in the New Order era Sukarno and the PNI were perceived to be too left-wing in their ideological leanings, Pipit eventually found himself in gaol. However, Pipit's father, who was once the PKI's local "Enemy No. 1", had long received the sympathy of the local military and Islamic leaders, and Pipit was soon released. Several years later, disillusioned and distrustful, in 1971 Pipit left Indonesia for West Berlin, where he studied electrical engineering at the Technische Universitaet.

In his afterword to Pipit's "Am I PKI or Non-PKI?", Benedict Anderson provides an excellent social and historical overview of post-war West Berlin, which goes some way to explaining the attraction this city may have held for Pipit:

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[15] These terms refer to the official and Communist terminology of the Guided Democracy period (1959-65). "Retool" meant dismissing or transferring a politically unsatisfactory official; *"Kabir"* is an acronym to denote "capitalist bureaucrat," referring to army officers who had become the managers of confiscated and nationalised Dutch and British properties, and who had as a result amassed great wealth; Masyumi was a large political party of Islamic reform, founded in 1945 and banned by Sukarno in 1960 on the grounds that many of its leaders had been involved in the

> For well-known reasons postwar West Berlin has been an unusual city, haven of students and spies, artists and tourists, radicals, refugees, and *gastarbeiters*. Because of its physical separation from the rest of the Federal Republic of Germany, its status under the Four Power Agreement of 1945, and its would-be status as a beacon of Western freedom in a sea of Communist tyranny, it enjoyed a good deal of political autonomy from early on. Even in the heyday of Konrad Adenauer's Christian Democratic Party, the city's long-standing leftwing traditions assured that it was a bastion of the Social Democratic Party, and it remained so right up until the early 1980s. Since the Federal Republic was by treaty barred from deploying troops or enforcing conscription there, West Berlin rather quickly became an asylum for radical and pacifist German youths anxious to escape the draft. In the 1970s, moreover, many survivors of the radical student movements of the late 1960s found refuge within its environs. This political ambience made it an attractive place for Third World leftists exiled from their homelands and out of favour with the various ruling groups in the Eastern bloc. This attraction was further enhanced by the relative powerlessness of local consulates and by the Bonn government's generous support for and subsidization of foreign students.[16]

Accordingly, in the mid-1970s in West Berlin there was a significant group of Old Left Indonesian exiles who were very critical of Suharto's New Order regime, as well as increasing numbers of young Indonesian students. The Old Left

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regional rebellions of 1958-59; "Tujuh Setan Desa" [Seven Village Devils] was a PKI phrase denoting the seven different types of village-level exploiters.

Indonesian exiles were people who had earlier been stranded in China, the former Soviet Union, and the states of Eastern Europe. The Indonesian students were either on government scholarships, or, more often, private funds. According to Anderson, "in the aftermath of the massive student protests of 1977-78 in Indonesia, and the Suharto government's violent, and eventually successful, suppression of these protests, youthful opposition sentiment found its freest outlet overseas, in Western Europe generally, but especially in West Berlin and the Netherlands".[17] Pipit's outspoken presence amongst the Old Left exiles and the radical students, who were united in their antagonism towards the New Order, was reason enough for Indonesian diplomats based in Germany to view Pipit with extreme suspicion. Unconcerned, Pipit also became highly involved in student political activism in West Berlin, working with various international student organisations thoughout the former West Germany.

Widodo has observed that Pipit seems to have an "obsession" with writing, and he traces the way in which Pipit became the instigator of a variety of publications in West Germany - news bulletins and ephemeral magazines - which discussed the Indonesian students' own problems as well as Indonesia's.[18] After serving as an editor-in-chief in 1978-79 for *Gotong-Royong,* issued by the West Berlin branch of the *Perhimpunan Pelajar Indonesia* [Indonesian Student's Association] of the Federal Republic of Germany, Pipit participated in the founding of a number of news bulletins and magazines. These included *Dialog* (1978), *Berita Tanpa Analisa* (1979), *Berita Dan Analisa* (1979), *Berita Tanpa Sensor* (1980), *Berita* (1980), *Berita Organisasi* (1980), the German-language *Uber Indonesien*

[16] Ben Anderson, "Afterword," in Pipit Rochijat, "Am I PKI," p. 54.
[17] Anderson, "Afterword," pp. 54-56.

(1982), and *Berita Tanah Air* (1982). Widodo observes that in these publications Pipit covered a great variety of subjects, often controversially, distributing his photocopied or printed material personally among his fellow students. Apparently, Pipit became so active and influential that the term "pipitism" was coined by the Indonesian students and Old Left exiles to refer to behaviour or writing styles considered to have originated from or been influenced by him. Because of Pipit's outspoken attitude, and in particular his consistently critical attitude towards the New Order regime, the Indonesian government viewed him as such a threat that after 1983 they required that he seek an extension on his passport every three months rather than giving him the normal extension of two years. Eventually, in 1987 the Indonesian Embassy in West Germany withheld Pipit's passport altogether. Consequently, regardless of whether he was a communist or not, for almost three decades Pipit did not return to Indonesia. However, after 10 years Pipit's passport was returned, and soon after the resignation of President Suharto, Pipit briefly returned to his homeland.[19]

One of Pipit's defining characteristics is his penchant for writing, and, in particular, the writing and publication of *Baratayuda di Negeri Antah Berantah.* Since its first appearance as an unpublished manuscript in the early-1980s, *Baratayuda di Negeri Antah Berantah* has become a cult classic amongst Indonesian political activists and left-wing intellectuals. As noted earlier, this collection consists of a number of wayang parodies typical of the *wayang mbeling* genre, each of them extremely humorous, characterised by subversive allusions, puns and innuendoes. Consequently, just as the epiphet *'dalang edan'* [crazy shadow

[18] Widodo, "'Wayang' Revisited."
[19] "Ditawari Suaka Politik, Masih Cinta Indonesia," *Jawa Pos*, July 19, 1998.

puppeteer] has now become a common description of young *dalang* distinguished by their radical innovations in defiance of 'traditional' wayang performance conventions, so too can Pipit be seen as a *'pengarang edan,'* a 'crazy writer' who has both lived and written radically and mythically, in defiance of convention. By analysing the style, structure and content of a number of the narratives in *Baratayuda di Negeri Antah Berantah* – in particular, the series of tales based in the wayang afterlife – the remainder of this chapter will show the ways in which Pipit has attempted to cast out the demons of New Order Indonesia.

Communists and Kurawas

Baratayuda di Negeri Antah Berantah is a collection of interconnected narratives that operates primarily as a playful appropriation of the characters and plots of the indigenised Ramayana and the Mahabharata tales. Pipit's appropriations of these epic tales are rich in content and vision, parodying the originals in a variety of imaginative ways. For example, in Pipit's version of the climax of the Mahabharata, the Baratayuda, the great duel between Arjuna and Karna is fought, not from chariots, but rather from rally-cars. Karna loses the upper hand in the duel when his driver, Salya, manages to get their car bogged in the mud. In another revamped tale, one of the greatest Pandawa knights, Bima - usually revered for his fearlesss nature and his highly developed combat skills - betrays a scholarly leaning. In fact, Pipit's Bima has written a thesis entitled "Negara dan Penguasa di Negeri Kerajaan dan Republik" ["State and Ruler in Kingdoms and Republics"](p. 23). Pipit's stories are characterised by colourful caricatures, complex and intriguing plots, word games and puns, particularly

black humour and a keen awareness of the absurdity of Indonesia's social and political realities. Thus the tales of the Ramayana and Mahabharata act as a kind of screen onto which Pipit projects his own concerns. These concerns seem to be numerous, yet they undoubtedly revolve around an explicit attack upon the foibles of Indonesia's ruling elite.

Despite the highly confrontational aspect of a large number of Pipit's *wayang mbeling* narratives, many would agree that the most amusing chapters, and for that matter the most powerful in terms of their sociocultural implications, are the chapters depicting the fate of the wayang *ksatria* in the afterlife. It is these chapters above all that highlight the techniques, and the aims, of Pipit's adoption of the *dalang* persona. As mentioned, many Javanese believe that the shadows of wayang puppets embody the spirits of the ancestors, and by broaching the topic of the afterlife, in particular the afterlife of the evil Kurawa, Pipit is in a sense lighting a *blencong,* arranging the incense offering, dusting off and lining up the puppets and allowing the ancestral spirits to come to life once again. Their 'new' lives, however, are far from pleasant. In the case of the deceased Kurawa, as depicted in "Kapan Revolusi Bisa Selesai, Kalow Mulainya Saja Sudah Susah?" [When Can The Revolution Be Finished If Just Starting It Is Difficult?], "Seri Kurawa Protes (I): Tingkatkan Taraf Penderitaan" [The 'Kurawa Protest' Series (I): Increase the Suffering Level] and "Seri Kurawa Protes (II): Sial Betul Menjabat Sebagai Kurawa" [The 'Kurawa Protest' Series (II): What a Bummer Serving as a Kurawa], their fate is to spend eternity in "nerakaloka" [hell-ville]. In the case of the deceased Baladewa and Kumbakarna in "Aku Sengaja Tidur Melulu, Karena Aku Pengen Netral" [I Deliberately Spend All My Time Sleeping, Because I Want to be Neutral] and "Katanya Keliru Melihat Manusia Los dari Masyarakatnya"

[They Say I Was Mistaken Viewing People As Being Free From Their Society], their fate is to spend eternity in the pigsty of *kayangan* [wayang heaven].

The most outrageous aspect of these chapters is the absurd reactions to the suffering and indignity of life in hell-ville and the heavenly pigsty. Initially, in "Kapan Revolusi Bisa Selesai, Kalow Mulainya Saja Sudah Susah?", the deceased Kurawa despair at their inhumane treatment. In hell-ville they live in shabby huts made out of old newspapers and cardboard beside a filthy river, overflowing with the excrement of the "elite kayangan" [heavenly elite]. Apart from the intense heat of the sea of fire, the Kawah Candradimuka, the Kurawa also suffer from an inability to buy anything to quench their thirst, as they don't have any money. Revealing a certain intimacy with his audience in the manner of a typical *dalang*, the narrator notes that the Kurawa did try to smuggle some rupiah into the afterlife: "dasar namanya juga Kurawa" [what else would you expect from Kurawas?] (p. 10). However, in one of the many absurd cruelties of life in hell-ville, all the bars, restaurants and food stalls only trade in dollars. Soon the Kurawa petition the gods, threatening revolution and begging for more humane treatment. The gods give no response whatsoever. Then the Kurawa appeal to the Pandawa heroes, who normally detest suffering in any form. However the Pandawa also ignore the Kurawa's pleas, as they are too busy enjoying the pleasures of heaven: women, whisky, marijuana and extravagant holiday resorts. Thus the juxtaposition between the Pandawa's endless heavenly pleasure and the Kurawa's eternal angst in hell-ville is acute.

At this point it becomes overwhelmingly apparent that Pipit is developing much more than an extremely imaginative *carangan* plot. In fact, Pipit's focus on the Kurawa in the afterlife brings to life and humanises the 'non-humans' of

contemporary Indonesia, the spirits of the tens of thousands of the massacred communists of the 1960s, the suppressed and demonised 'Other' of New Order Indonesia. This is not the first time that the Kurawa have been associated with the communists of the 1960s. G.J. Resink describes the ways in which both before and during the sociopolitical chaos and anti-communist massacres accompanying the change of power from Sukarno to Suharto, the Indonesian political world was often associated with the characters and events of the Mahabharata, the violent fratricidal conflict between the warring Pandawa and Kurawa cousins.[20] When placed alongside the Indonesian political milieu of the mid-1960s, the predominant interpretation was that the 'leftist' communists - mostly lower-class Javanese - were represented as the greedy and arrogant Kurawa, the side usually arranged to the left-hand side of the *dalang*. In contrast to this, the 'right wing' nationalists and the traditionalist Muslims were represented as the heroic Pandawa, who are usually arranged to the right of the *dalang*. This interpretation is supported by Pipit. In Sears' *Shadows of Empire,* Pipit is quoted as follows:

> Referring to the chaos of *'65-'66,* my parents had some maidservants who believed that the Bharatayuda had truly begun - only there was no gamelan. And it was clear that the Communists were the Kurawa, and we nonCommunists were the Pandawa. They told me, and I was still a kid, that the behavior of the Kurawa was exactly like that of the Communists: they grabbed things, they were coarse, they didn't know the rules, etc. (demonstrations, demands, uproar, boycotts, etc). This was pretty much

[20] Resink, "From the Old Mahabaharata."

the public perception among the people in the villages around the Sugar Factory of Ngadirejo, fourteen kilometres south of Kediri (East Java). You may know that at that time we Pandawa were continually harrassed by the Communist Kurawa. They liked to grab land, just like the Kurawa took the land of the Pandawa. Thus it was fitting or "normal" to kill the Kurawa, even to slaughter them in brutal ways (remember the story of Sangkuni's mouth being ripped apart, Duryudana alias Suyudana's head being smashed or Dursasana's throat being slashed and his blood gulped down a wide-open mouth and then pissed out until it was all gone, just like Johnny Walker).[21]

In similar fashion other scholars have observed that Sukarno's Foreign Minister, Dr. Subandrio, who maintained a reputation of being supportive of policies favourable to Communist China and the PKI, was associated with Durna, a sly and two-faced mentor to the leaders of both the Pandawa and the Kurawa.[22] Yet communists or pro-communist figures were not always represented as Kurawas, especially when communist leaders were representing themselves. For example, Ruth McVey presents the testimony of Sudisman, one of the five leaders of the PKI, who as late as 1967 described the communist leaders as the five heroic Pandawa brothers.[23]

Sukarno himself had long used the wayang as a powerful political

[21] Sears, *Shadows of Empire*, p. 228.
[22] See Resink, "From the Old Mahabaharata," p. 222; Anderson, *Language and Power*, p. 149; John Hughes, *The End of Sukarno* (London: Angus & Robertson, 1968), p. 211; and Roger Long, "Introduction" in Ki Gaib Widapandaya, *Gatotkaca on Trial* (Jakarta: Lontar, 1999), p. xiv.
[23] Ruth McVey, "The Wayang Controversy in Indonesian Communism," in *Meaning and Power in Southeast Asia*, eds. M. Hobart and R. Taylor (Ithaca: CSEAP, 1986), pp. 21-37.

metaphor, and his speeches often refer to Mahabharata characters or contain phrases common to wayang narratives. As a boy, Sukarno was named after the great *ksatria* of the Kurawa, Karno:

> My name at birth was Kusno. I started life as an unhealthy child. I had malaria, dysentry, anything and everything. Father thought, "His name is not good. We must give him another so that he may start afresh."... Father was a devotee of the *Mahabharata,* the ancient Hindu classics. I had not yet reached puberty when father said, "We shall name you Karna. Karna is one of the greatest heroes in *Mahabharata*... It has always been my prayer," he declared, "for my son to be a patriot and great hero of his people. You shall be a second Karno."[24]

Nevertheless, Sukarno rarely identified himself with his namesake, who was, after all, born out of wedlock to Dewi Kunti and Batara Surya, abandoned at birth, and then went on to fight on the side of the Kurawa in the Baratayuda. Instead, Sukarno chose to associate himself with Pandawa heroes such as the swarthy Bima, the ladies' man Arjuna, or the flying Gatotkaca. However, Sukarno was never able to completely shake off the enigmatic association with his Kurawa namesake, Karna. Through his keen interest in a socialist world-view, and his government's land reform promises which eventually resulted in what Sears describes as "a land-hungry, war-weary, and starving peasantry receptive to

[24] See Cindy Adams, *Sukarno: An Autobiography as Told to Cindy Adams* (New York: Gunung Agung, 1965), p. 26; Bernhard Dahm, *Sukarno and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), pp. 27-28; J. D. Legge, *Sukarno: A Political Biography* (London: The Penguin Press, 1972), p. 17; C.L.M. Penders, *The Life and Times of Sukarno* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford

Marxist rhetoric that promised land, food, and clothing in abundance", by the mid-1960s Sukarno was perceived to be highly supportive of the PKI.[25] As a result, in the aftermath of the violent backlash against the communists inititiated by General Suharto in October of 1965, Sukarno found himself on the wrong side of the political fence. Furthermore, Resink argues (somewhat tenuously) that many communists may have submitted to being killed so easily because

> after all, they had aligned themselves with the "left", and taken the side of Karno, and, by inference, that of the Korawas and hence the *raja sebrang*, that is, the inevitably losing side. It was no use fighting against the tragedy of fate.[26]

Likewise, Sukarno's eventual compliance with the wishes of Suharto and his supporters betrayed a much greater similarity to the stoic heroism and fierce loyalty of the doomed Karna than the head-strong bluster of a vengeful Bima. Like the communists as described by Resink, perhaps Sukarno had quietly come to the realisation that he too, like Karna, had been fighting on "the inevitably losing side". Just as Karna was defeated by Arjuna in the Mahabharata, Sukarno was forced into gradual withdrawal from political activities and eventually house arrest. Suharto and the army, meanwhile, who claimed that they had put an end to the massacres, represented themselves as the saviours of the Indonesian nation. It is therefore no coincidence that in one of Pipit's *wayang mbeling* narratives, the narrator refers to the transition from the "Orde Laloe" [Past Order] to the "Orde

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University Press, 1974), pp. 5-6.
[25] Sears, *Shadows of Empire*, p. 230.

Barusan" [Brand-New Order] as a shift from the "kekurangwarasan" [insanity] of the "Kurawa era" to the "kebijaksanaan" [wisdom] of the "Pandawa era".[27]

Although Pipit never states specifically that the purpose of his narratives set in hell-ville is to resurrect the spectres of the past as a means of contesting the New Order's conception of itself as the wise, fair and just "Pandawa era" of contemporary Indonesia, the following discussion will reveal a number of the literary devices that Pipit utilises to make this intention beyond doubt. For example, in terms of structure alone, Pipit's conflict between the Pandawa and the Kurawa does not appear to be structured as a horizontal conflict between left and right in the manner of a typical wayang dramatic arrangement. Instead, it appears to be much more along the lines of a vertical conflict between the agrarian proletariat - the Kurawa - roasting in hell-ville, and the bourgeoisie - the gods and the Pandawa - enjoying women, whisky and wine in Heaven. Not only are the Kurawa representative of the masses, but their ideological leanings, as expressed in their world-view and language, are decidedly socialist. For example, Citrayuda, one of the unfortunate Kurawa heroes, observes that the Kurawa should never have hoped that the "middle-class" Pandawa would bother to help the Kurawa in hell-ville, "sebab, hidup kelas menengahnya tergantung sama birokrat-birokrat kayangan" [because their middle-class lives are dependent on the heavenly bureaucrats] (p.12). Consequently, the narrator observes that with no hope of re-igniting the tensions between the classes, the members of the Kurawa promptly lose their group solidarity, and beginning "the revolution" for greater class mobility seems an impossibility. Considering that some in the past

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[26] Resink, "From the Old Mahabaharata,"p.220.
[27] See Pipit, "Pokoknya Bukan Semua, Tapi Tatanan Kayangan," in *Baratayuda Di Negeri Antah*

have seen a synthesis between the Marxist world-view and the 'feudal' characters of the wayang as contradictory,[28] it could be argued that a wayang puppet's invocation of the Marxist discourse of the struggle between mass political organisation on the one hand and an oppressive state power on the other is mere humorous parody. Certainly it is humorous, but as with all the humour throughout his collection, it is also deadly serious.

The serious nature of Pipit's humour becomes most evident when one considers the language style of Citrayuda and his fellow Kurawa. The fact that their vocal delivery is highly reminiscent of the communist jargon of 1960s Indonesia is both humorous and sinister. For example, Citrayuda expresses his hope in the formation of "kader-kader baru" [new cadres] (p. 12) to rescue the Kurawa, where 'cadres' commonly refer to small groups of communist activists or officials. As mentioned earlier, the Kurawa also send petitions to the gods, demanding better treatment. Their petitions, accompanied by frenzied crowds much like the communist crowds that demonstrated against Pipit's father in the 1960s, carry demands such as "Hancurkan Rezim Dewata antek Koboi" [Down With the Regime of the Gods, Cowboy Cronies] (p. 11), a phrase highly reminiscent of the anti-Sukarno language and demands of the 1960s communists. Furthermore, the governing body of the gods, the "Politbiro Dewata" [Politburo of the Gods], is clearly a throwback to the Politburo of Stalinist Russia.

Like their communist forebears, the Kurawa spend a great deal of time citicising the ruling elite. The Kurawa subvert the gods by using narrative

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Berantah, pp. 117-124.

[28] McVey, 'The Wayang Controversy in Indonesian Communism."

techniques common to wayang narratives such as *djarwa dhosok* or *kérata basa*,[29] 'word play', or in the words of A. L. Becker, "etymologising as an explanatory strategy".[30] In the wayang, by etymologising, or explicating the etymology of a word, the *dalang* uses *kérata basa* to relate the words of the text or performance to the current context. Ward Keeler observes that the mechanics of *kérata basa* involve "dividing a word into syllables, then fitting together other words containing those syllables in a phrase that illustrates or is otherwise connected to the meaning of the original word".[31] In Pipit's wayang set in the afterlife, by explicating the 'intrinsic' meaning of the gods' names, *kérata basa* is used to satirise and undermine the authorities. For example, Batara Guru, the supreme god, is said to be a shortened version of the Javanese words, "Gu-yune Sa-ru", that is, a dirty joke, or the laughter one hears after a dirty joke. Batara Guru's wife, Batari Uma, is a shortening of "U-ang Ma-kannya jangan lupa lho!" [Don't forget my shopping money!] (p. 64), which humorously suggests that the supreme god and his wife are just like any other married Indonesian couple on a single-income, where the husband is harassed for more spending money. Meanwhile, Batara Guru's girlfriend, Sri Laksmi, is said to mean "Sri Lak-inya S-etengah M-iring" [Sri's Man is Half-Mad] (p. 64), which further debases the wayang ruler. Just as the deceased Kurawa are brought to life and humanised in hell-ville, their acts of linguistic resistance ensure that the gods are 'de-deified' and rudely placed, symbolically, on an equal level to the Kurawa.

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[29] For more on *kérata basa*, see Ward Keeler, *Javanese Shadow Plays, Javanese Selves* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 223, 248, 250, 251-53.

[30] A.L. Becker, "Text-Building, Epistemology, and Aesthetics in Javanese Shadow Theatre,"in *The Imagination of Reality*, eds. A. L. Becker and A. A. Yengoyan (Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex, 1979), pp. 236-37.

Elsewhere, linguistic tools of the *dalang*'s trade such as *plesetan* [puns] are used to synthesise the wayang world with the world of communism, once again simultaneously highlighting the socialist tendencies of the Kurawa.[32] For example, the narrator observes that the Kurawa entertain themselves in hell-ville by reading comics - entitled *Proletar Wiwaha* [Proletarian Wedding Parties] - characterised by stories depicting "mighty warriors" and "writers of the revolution", that is, Batara or 'gods' such as Batara Mareg, Batara Engsel, Batara Lenong and Batara Maut (p. 10). These "warriors" and "writers" are a sly reference to the "gods" of the communist movement. For example, "Mareg" may refer to a combination of the Javanese word, *wareg* [full], and the Indonesian word for indigestion, *maag*. However, in the context of a "mighty warrior" of the proletariat, Batara Mareg can be read as an ironic reference to Karl *Marx*, who of course was very much concerned with filling the stomachs of the masses, despite the often 'upsetting' consequences. In a similar vein, *engsel* may mean 'hinge' in Indonesian, but in the context of a "writer of the revolution", Batara Engsel obviously refers to Marx's counterpart, Friedrich *Engels*, who can be seen as the unheralded intellectual 'hinge' of Marx's social theory of dialectical materialism. Furthermore, one could add that Marxism itself revolves around a 'hinge', in the sense that according to Marxism all forms of human society in any given era are 'hinged' by the prevailing methods of production. Likewise, although *lenong* is a form of traditional drama of the Betawi region in West Java, Batara Lenong is

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[31] Ward Keeler, "On Javanese Interpretation: a Scene From a Wayang," in *Writing on the Tongue*, ed. A.L. Becker (Michigan Papers on South and Southeast Asia, No. 33, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, 1989), p. 158.

[32] For more on the subversive role of *plesetan*, see Ariel Heryanto, "Bahasa dan Kuasa: Tatapan Postmodernisme," in *Bahasa dan Kekuasaan*, eds. Yudi Latif and Idi Subandy Ibrahim (Bandung: Mizan, 1996), pp. 94-103.

clearly a pun on Vladimir *Lenin*, who can be seen not so much as a man of literature but as a primary 'actor' of the Marxist cause, an organiser and activist. Finally, Batara Maut can be seen as an extremely dark reference to Chairman *Mao* of China, where the use of *maut* [death] reminds the reader that as a result of communism, many have been dispatched by the Grim Reaper, especially in China, not to mention Indonesia. Again, just as the Kurawa challenge the gods and bring them down to their own level, the fact that the Kurawa read comic versions of the tomes of Engels *et al* also pokes fun at the so-called 'gods' of Marxism, who also appear quite human and mundane when read as comic-book heroes and related to *lenong* drama, door hinges, indigestion, and the spectre of death.

The reference to Marxist comics can also be seen as a sly reference to Pipit himself, whose knowledge of the wayang world is based largely on the wayang comics of R. A. Kosasih.[33] As evidence of this, consider the following passage, which displays a keen sense of self-consciousness, a metafictional[34] narrative device often adopted by the more progressive *dalang* of contemporary Indonesia:

> [...]Baladewa's position is a bit of a problem. His wife is the sister of the wife of Duryudana, the ring-leader of the Kurawa. Meanwhile, according to the comic book version by R. A. Kosasih, Baladewa is neutral. However, in the tales of the Javanese wayang shadow theatre, Baladewa sides with the Kurawa. Now, in order to fit in with our story, we'll just take our version of

[33] Widodo, "'Wayang' Revisited," p. 14.
[34] For more on metafiction, see Chapter Five of this thesis.

Baladewa from the Javanese wayang tales.[35] (p. 33-4)

Here we find the narrator deliberating over which version of Baladewa to draw upon, and significantly, he chooses the Javanese shadow theatre version. This is more as a means of sending himself up than indicating any great respect for the wayang itself. Of course, the very mention of the comic book version further emphasises the self-conscious humour of Pipit's *wayang mbeling*, not to mention its constant interaction with contemporary Indonesia. Such an emphasis on humour also reminds the reader that Pipit's aim is as much to parody the wayang as to appropriate it for social commentary.

The playful nature of Pipit's wayang world extends to Pipit's idiosyncratic style of contemporary Indonesian. It is peppered with what the publisher terms as "Bahasa Indonesia tempo doeloe" [colonial era Indonesian] (p. v-vi). That is, words with unusual spellings such as "naek", "keok", "kalow", "walowpun", "rame", "mow", "sowak", "aer", and "laen", to mention just a few. These spellings could possibly be seen as an attempt to mirror the archaic, obscure and esoteric language of much of the wayang, a particular form of Javanese language drawing upon Sanskrit and Kawi.[36] However, I would argue that Pipit's version of Indonesian, which adopts the Sino-Malay spelling of the colonial era, is not based on an attempt to mirror the wayang at all, let alone a sense of nostalgia for the colonial era. Instead, Pipit's idiosyncratic language reveals an attempt to rescue the Indonesian language from the New Order bureaucrats and return it to

[35] "[...]posisi Baladewa cukup repot. Istrinya masih kakak kandung istri Duryudana, gembong Kurawa. Lalu, menurut cerita R. A. Kosasih, Baladewa itu tak berpihak. Sedangkan dalam cerita wayang Jawa, Baladewa itu memihak Kurawa. Nah, supaya cocok dengan jalan cerita di sini, maka yang diambil adalah posisi Baladewa dalam cerita wayang Jawa saja."

the colourful and gritty language of the common people. As sometimes seen in the informal communication of contemporary Indonesian activists such as Amrih Widodo, Ariel Heryanto and Halim HD, these spellings indicate a desire to make the bland and sterilised Indonesian language more 'real' than is possible in its official form.

Pipit also plays with concepts or 'reality' by placing a tongue-in-cheek emphasis on history and authenticity. At one point the narrator, in another metafictional moment, breaks the narrative frame to explain his choice of words:

> [...]the concept of the ruler and the people of Astinapura has remained as authentic as possible, just like in their ancestors' era, even more so since they've became obsessed with digging up the ground of Astinapura. Therefore, this concept was labelled as "the digging concept"(*konsep galian*) from the word "digging"(*menggali*). (Note: just now I wanted to call it the "excavation"(*ngebor*) concept, but excavation sounds too modern, inauthentic).[37](p. 121)

This emphasis on the authenticity of the past certainly emphasises the image of Pipit's wayang characters as ironic representations of ancestral spirits. Furthermore, like the subversive presence of the larger-than-life Kurawa in hell-ville, an ironic emphasis on the past is very much a means of rhetorically contesting the unquestioned present of the New Order. As an example of what

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[36] Brandon, *On Thrones of Gold*, pp. 31-33.

[37] "[...] konsep hubungan penguasa dan warga Astinapura dibiarkan asli seperti pada zaman nenek moyang mereka, apalagi sehabis mereka gila-gilaan menggali bumi Astinapura. Makanya, itu dikenal sebagai "konsep galian", dari "menggali." (Catatan: tadinya mau dibilang konsep

Ariel Heryanto terms as the politically subversive qualities of some *plesetan*,[38] Pipit's use of "menggali" [digging] in the passage above is a pun on *gali* [criminal], which when combined together refers to the *Petrus* killings of the early 1980s, where the Indonesian military, under the orders of Suharto himself, killed thousands of *gali*, which is actually an acronym for "gabungan anak-anak liar" [gangs of undisciplined youths].[39] Ironically, it was these very same *gali* that the Indonesian government had previously used, that is, "menggali", as an intimidatory presence during earlier election campaigns. Meanwhile, the argument that the "menggali" model for the relationship between state and society is more "authentic" is a sly reminder that from the very beginning of its tenure the New Order was established upon bloodshed and burial, that is, the anti-communist massacres of the 1960s. James Siegel explores a similar point in "A New Criminal Type in Jakarta: The Nationalization of 'Death'", where he argues that the Indonesian government launched the *Petrus* killings as a means of setting itself apart from not only criminals, but also the *rakyat* and a closely related term, "communists".[40] However, in killing these criminals, the agents of the state made it a point to stab the victims repeatedly and then display their corpses. In so doing, argues Siegel, the state became as criminal as the criminals themselves, creating what Siegal refers to as the 'nationalisation' of death. Or, to use Pipit's wayang metaphor, by adopting "menggali" as a basis for the state's authority, the state becomes little more than a petty criminal, and the gods and

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"ngebor", tapi ngebor berbau modern, tidak asli)."

[38] Ariel, "Bahasa dan Kuasa," pp. 102-103.

[39] For more on *Petrus*, see Justus M. van der Kroef, "Petrus': Patterns of Prophylactic Murder in Indonesia," *Asian Survey*, 25 (1985): 745-759; Pemberton, *On the Subject of "Java,"* pp. 311-318; and James Siegel, "A New Criminal Type in Jakarta: The Nationalization of 'Death'" in *Figures of Criminality*, ed. Rafael, pp. 210-230.

the Pandawa become as deserving of eternal damnation as the Kurawa.

Pipit explores this concept further in a number of the latter narratives set in the afterlife, the "Seri Kurawa Protes" [The Kurawa Protest Series], where the gods find that life in paradise, or as torturers of the Kurawa in hell-ville, can be even more painful than life in hell-ville itself. The gods experience this anguish when the Kurawa decide to undermine the gods by taking pleasure in the heat, starvation, thirst, deprivation and torture of hell-ville. For example, as a technique of psychological torture, the gods periodically offload trucks full of rotting corpses. However, the Kurawa, who are busy drinking beer and molesting female movie stars, are quite undisturbed by this, and they cheerfully cook up some "corpse satay". Frustrated, the gods use every imaginable form of torture conceivable: they mix up deadly cocktails of petrol, beer and sleeping pills; they fill swimming pools with sharks; they equip electric chairs with lightning bolts; they let loose hordes of poisonous snakes and they release swarms of bees. In fact, the torture sessions are so shocking that Legal Aid officers faint upon reading the "Amnesty Intercontinental" reports, as the sessions are "bukan saja di luar batas kemanusiaan, tapi malahan tembok pembatasnya pun sudah dibongkar" [not only beyond the limits of humanity, but even the limit itself has been knocked right out of the ground] (p. 62). Meanwhile, the Kurawa laugh and smile.

However, not content with merely laughing their way through their endless torture sessions, the Kurawa actively taunt their torturers, making life hell for them too. For example, it is not unusual to hear taunts such as "Kok cuma sebegitu saja nyiksanya?" [C'mon, is that all the pain you can give me?] and

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[40] Siegel, "A New Criminal Type."

"Minta tambah dong siksaannya!" [Hey, c'mon, can't you increase my suffering a bit?] (p. 63). Furthermore, when they are actually given some food apart from rotting corpses, they refuse to eat it, mocking their oppressors with lines like "Enggak makan lebih enak kok, mulut bisa prei dan nggak usah gosok gigi" [It's nicer not eating you know, you can give your mouth a break and you don't need to brush your teeth!] (p.63). If the Kurawa happen to tire of taunts such as these, they amuse themselves with providing their oppressors with more work. For example, when a delegation of inspectors from the heavens are asked to increase the temperature of the lake of fire to 1000 degrees celsius - "supaye kite nikmat mandinye!!" [so that we can enjoy our swims!!] (p. 63) - the Kurawa have a field day. Ever eager to increase the level of suffering, the inspectors spend days cutting down trees and looking for other combustibles, and they even recruit Batara Bayu to blow so that the wood burns quicker. It is only after several days of making the inspectors sweat and toil that the Kurawa, feeling sorry for them, yell out: "Dewata bego! Enggak pernah belajar fisika ya? Mana ada aer bisa mendidih lebih dari seratus derajat? Belajar dulu dong sayang!" [Dopey gods! Haven't you ever studied physics? Where are you going to find water that can boil to a temperature greater than a hundred degrees? Do a bit of a study first darlings!] (p. 63). In a fit of anger, the gods order the Kurawa to perform a thousand sit-ups. Almost predictably at this stage, a Kurawa wag shouts back: "Kenapa cuma seribu kali? Minta sepuluh tahun!" [Why just a thousand? I want ten years!] (p. 64).

Thus the Kurawa literally thrive on their pain, suffering and marginalisation, and eventually "Batara Guru & Co." (highly reminiscent of 'Suharto Inc.'!) become so tired of the Kurawa's endless requests to turn up the

heat and increase the level of torture that they abandon the heavens with no forwarding address. Free at last, the Kurawa souls escape hell-ville and enter into the bodies of unsuspecting earthly hosts, who appear uncannily like the Javanese of Indonesia. For example, uncaring that in their human incarnations they are poverty-stricken peasants, a favourite Kurawa aphorism is "makan enggak makan asal ngumpul" [whether we eat or not, the main thing is to get together] (p. 67), which closely resemblances the well-known Javanese phrase "mangan ora mangan, asal ngumpul", which has the same meaning. However, unlike the feisty communists we have become accustomed to in hell-ville, it appears that the 'liberated' Kurawa, in their earthly (Javanese) incarnation, are very much opposed to rocking the boat: they don't want to have anything to do with class mobility, and they certainly don't want to antagonise either the rich or the powers-that-be. Why? Well, if the rich or the powers-that-be disappeared in the manner of the gods, "lha di mana lagi mereka bisa memperoleh kenikmatan dalam penderitaan?" [so where else would they be able to find pleasure in suffering?](p. 67). Nevertheless, as argued by Siegel, the New Order state in Indonesia was haunted over three decades by the fear of revenge, particularly given the absence of any culture of revenge among the children of those victimised during the 1965 massacres. In Chapter Six, an analysis of Pipit's reworking of the Ramayana reveals the extent to which the New Order's fear of revenge, not to mention the realms of the unknown and unseen, was revealed by means of heavy-handed authoritarianism, oppression, bloodshed and censorship.

Conclusion

As we have seen throughout this chapter, in *Baratayuda di Negeri Antah Berantah* Pipit has radically embraced the figure of the *dalang*, as shown by his adoption of a number of the narrative techniques, tales and characters common to wayang shadow theatre. Furthermore, Pipit has also humorously reanimated the shamanistic elements of the *dalang*, by using images of deceased wayang characters to resurrect the ghosts of New Order Indonesia's past. By exploring the extremely provocative image of the deceased Kurawa enjoying life in 'hell-ville', Pipit not only contests the New Order's 'Othering' of the communists but also explores what it means to be a human in New Order Indonesia. In short, by embracing the image of the *dalang* with his shamanistic tendencies, in *Baratayuda di Negeri Antah Berantah* Pipit has not only brought to life the spirits of Indonesia's past as a means of renegotiating conceptions of the present, but he has also drawn upon and interrogated the powers of the ruling authorities of the New Order, rhetorically tapping and taming their power.

The following chapter, which will discuss the self-consciousness of the wayang characters inhabiting the pages of the metafictional postmodern wayang novels of Putu Wijaya and Agusta Wibisono, is in a sense a logical continuation of Pipit's *wayang mbeling* 'exorcism' of New Order Indonesia. Like Pipit's wayang characters, metafictional wayang characters yearn for a greater degree of personal and political agency, and their assertion of autonomy and individuality ensures that they contest typical images of wayang characters as mere one-dimensional puppets at the mercy of an all-powerful *dalang*. However, unlike Pipit's masterful *dalang*-like attempts to give rise to the spirits of the past through his manipulation

of puppets and language, the wayang characters deployed by Putu Wijaya and Agusta Wibisono enjoy a far more egalitarian relationship with their literary *dalang*, not to mention their literary 'spectators', the implied reader. As we shall see, by undermining hierarchical conceptions of the author-character-reader relationship, metafictional wayang novels resemble Pipit's wayang narratives in that they represent just as great a challenge, and alternative, to the rigidly stratified ideology and power relations of the New Order regime.

5

Metafiction in the Postmodern Wayang Novels of Putu Wijaya and Agusta Wibisono

"Yes, we all know the world is just a stage. And you should ask yourself whether our wayang isn't just a big act too..ha..ha..ha. We're just actors you know, to be bent and moved around by the puppeteer."[1]
KI BASINO BAUTCARITO

Introduction: Putu Wijaya, Agusta Wibisono and Metafiction

As writers, both Putu Wijaya and Agusta Wibisono have drawn heavily upon the wayang tradition. Putu Wijaya, a Jakarta-based Balinese writer, playwright and director, has written a number of short stories and a novel featuring direct allusions to the wayang. One short story, for example, describes the resurrection of Bisma, a great wayang *ksatria* who has suddenly appeared in the middle of the Senen Market in Jakarta, thousands of years after his death in the Baratayuda war. In the Baratayuda, Bisma, who fought for the Kurawa, was killed by thousands of arrows striking his body. In Putu Wijaya's contemporary

[1] "Ya, dunia ini kan panggung sandiwara. Dan you pikir apakah wayang kita juga bukan sebuah sandiwara..he..he..he. Kita ini kan cuma pelakon-pelakon, yang bisa diengkak-engkuk oleh

tale, after removing the thousands of arrows from his body, Bisma takes off his wayang headdress and costume:

> Then he opened a plastic bag which he had been carrying. He took out a pair of jeans, a T-shirt, a pair of Reebok shoes, and a can of spray deodorant. He put these clothes on nonchalantly, seeming at ease with contemporary fashions. Then he even put on a pair of sunglasses, lit a cigarette which smelled like a joint, picked up a guitar, and sang a protest song à la Bob Dylan.[2]

According to Laurie Sears, Putu Wijaya's story about Bisma "starts on a note of reverence and then proceeds into a postmodern world where borders collapse and knowledge is open to unending negotiations".[3] Putu collapses "borders" and renegotiates "knowledge" by humanising the wayang characters and distorting the wayang tales, as we have just seen. In this case, Bisma is as human as the startled onlookers at Senen Market, and his predeliction for contemporary clothing fashions and protest songs cannot be further from the legendary Bisma of the Mahabharata. Such a distortion of the wayang mythology is playful and humorous. However, Sears notes that "other innovations show that Wijaya has thought deeply about the implications of the ancient stories and how they are

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dalang." Ki Basino Bautcarito, "Wawancara Dengan Salyapati (2)," *Suara Merdeka*, January 26, 1997.

[2] "Setelah itu ia mengambil sebuah kantung plastik itu yang sejak tadi dicangkingnya. Dari dalam plastik itu ia mengeluarkan celana jean, kaos oblong, sepatu Reebok dan semprotan kelek. Dengan tenang dipakainya seakan-akan ia tak asing lagi dengan busana masa kini itu. Bahkan ia kemudian mengenakan kaca mata, menyulut sebatang rokok yang berbau gelek dan meraih sebuah gitar lalu menyanyikan sebuah lagu protes model Bob Dylan." Putu Wijaya, "Bisma" (translated by Ellen Rafferty), in *Bom* (Madison: University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1988), p. 214.

used to manipulate popular opinions or to mask the disturbing contradictions of life in Indonesia today".[4] Putu Wijaya's novel *Perang* [War] (1990) is a perfect example of this. Appropriating the characters and tales of the wayang world, Wijaya's first and only wayang novel is a sharp comment on contemporary Indonesian society. The initial focus of this chapter will be on *Perang*, with an emphasis on the sociopolitical significance of Putu's postmodern retelling of the Mahabharata tales. We will see that the subversive relevance of Putu's novel derives from not only the satirical content of his text, but also the text's distinctive style.

The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to a study of the intersection of text, context and presentation in Agusta Wibisono's two postmodern wayang novels, *Balada Narasoma* [The Ballad of Narasoma] (1990) and *Balada Cinta Abimanyu dan Lady Sundari* [The Ballad of the Love of Abimanyu and Lady Sundari] (1990). Unlike Putu Wijaya, in the field of modern Indonesian literary studies Agusta Wibisono is a virtually unknown figure, and in Indonesia his two novels are long out of print and now extremely hard to find. The publishing house responsible for the novels' initial print run, Pustakakarya Grafikatama, is now defunct. Adding to the enigma surrounding this man, Agusta Wibisono is in fact a pseudonym for a writer and airforce pilot, Mohammad Agus Suhadi. Agus Suhadi was born on 16 February 1966 in Kediri, East Java, and in the 1980s he majored in journalism at Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung. In 1989 Agus Suhadi published *Humor itu Serius* [Humour is Serious], a study on the role of humour in

[3] Sears, *Shadows of Empire*, p. 287.
[4] ibid, p. 288

Indonesian society, highlighted by a chapter on humour in *wayang mbeling*.[5] Although this study, like others of its kind, is predominantly based on the content analysis of wayang parodies, it is distinguished by a survey of readers of the genre. Despite the small survey sample, Agus was able to argue that on the whole the reception of *wayang mbeling* narratives has been extremely positive, mainly due to the combination of the wayang with humour and sociopolitical satire. These aspects of the *wayang mbeling* genre are key elements in the two novel-length wayang parodies by Agus Suhadi's 'alter-ego', Agusta Wibisono.

One of the most humorous aspects of the wayang novels of both Putu Wijaya and Agusta Wibisono is the presence of self-reflexivity, an international literary phenomenon better known as metafiction. What is metafiction? "*Metafiction*", observes Patricia Waugh, "is a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality".[6] By taking fiction-writing, or fictionality, as its subject matter, metafiction reveals and critiques its own methods of construction, as a means of highlighting the flexibility, instability and lack of fixed identity of not only fiction, but also of reality itself. Metafiction, or, to borrow Will Derks' phrase, "narrative inversion", is a relatively common phenomenon in the oral literary tradition of Indonesia and Malaysia.[7] However, according to G.L. Koster and Henri Chambert-Loir, who have discussed self-consciousness in a corpus of narrative texts - including

[5] See M. Agus Suhadi, *Humor itu Serius* (Jakarta: Pustakakarya Grafikatama, 1989).
[6] Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: the Theory and Practice of Self-conscious Fiction* (London: Methuen, 1984), p. 2.
[7] Will Derks, *The Feast of Storytelling: On Malay Oral Tradition* (Jakarta and Leiden: RUL, 1994), p. 713.

humorous wayang parodies - that appeared towards the end of the nineteenth century in colonial Batavia, self-conscious narration is a recent phenomenon.[8]

In Putu Wijaya's *Perang* and Agusta Wibisono's *Balada Cinta Abimanyu dan Lady Sundari* and *Balada Narasoma*, a variety of literary techniques self-consciously reveal the 'fictionality' of the texts, emphasising their constructed and parodic nature. When examined in terms of the social, literary and political context of the texts in question, these humorous metafictional moments - like self-reflexivity throughout the world - embody a certain subversive intent. The 'subversive' nature of metafiction is supported by the observation that an increasing number of commentators have sought to forge links between radical literary practices (such as metafiction) and radical politics.[9] Inspired by post-structuralists such as Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, not to mention earlier theorists and writers such as Mikhail Bakhtin and Bertholt Brecht, these commentators have argued that by calling attention to its own processes of construction, metafictional texts point to the cultural and ideological codes informing the construction termed as 'reality'. It therefore works, as Linda Hutcheon argues, to " 'dedoxify' our cultural respresentations and their undeniable political import".[10] Wenche Ommundsen adds to this argument by saying that by "denaturalising cultural conventions, reflexivity then becomes the tool of a radical cultural critique, a critique aimed at unmasking our modes of representation and their ideologically constructed centres

[8] G.L. Koster, "The Soothing Works of the Seducer and Their Dubious Fruits: Interpreting the Syair Buah-Buahan," in *A Man of Indonesian Letters: Essays in Honour of A. Teeuw*, eds. C.M.S. Helwig and S.O. Robson (Dordrecht: KITLV, 1986), pp. 73-99; Henri Chambert-Loir, "Malay Literature in the 19th Century: the Fadli Connection," in *Variation, Transformation and Meaning: Studies on Indonesian Literatures in Honour of A. Teeuw*, eds. J.J. Ras and S.O. Robson (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1991), pp. 87-114.

[9] Wenche Ommundsen, *Metafictions? Reflexivity in Contemporary Texts* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1993), p. 85.

[...] the reflexive text, by highlighting the 'constructedness' of texts and their contexts, liberates the reader to intervene, politically, in these processes".[11] In accordance with this view, Waugh argues that

> metafictional deconstruction has not only provided novelists and their readers with a better understanding of the fundamental structures of narrative; it has also offered extremely accurate models for understanding the contemporary experience of the world as a construction, an artifice, a web of interdependent semiotic systems.[12]

In the context of New Order Indonesia the use of metafiction as a mode of deconstructing 'reality' has wide-ranging social and political ramifications. The recognition and rejection of the ideologically constructed hegemony of the New Order regime could arguably be considered as an important emotional and intellectual step in preparing the ground for the regime's eventual demise. For this reason, in this chapter I will argue that metafiction in the wayang novels of Putu Wijaya and Agusta Wibisono can be considered as key elements of a carefully crafted discursive attempt to undermine and blur the distinction between the 'fiction' of a parodic 'wayang world' and the 'reality' of New Order Indonesia, ultimately as a means of challenging and subverting the authoritarian foundations and hierarchical cultural ideologies of the New Order regime.

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[10] Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (New York and London: Methuen, 1984), p.3.
[11] Ommundsen, *Metafictions?*, p. 86.
[12] Waugh, *Metafiction*, p. 9.

Metafiction in the Indonesian Context: Postmodern or Traditional?

As I mentioned earlier, self-conscious narration characterises a corpus of fictional wayang parodies in late nineteenth-century Batavia. Indeed, the presence of metafiction is a defining characteristic of many *wayang mbeling* narratives. Of course, in response to this observation, an immediate question arises: in terms of the Indonesian literary domain, why has metafiction in Indonesian fiction manifested itself so evidently in texts based on the wayang? Part of the reason for this must lie with the strong metafictional strain within many wayang performances during the New Order era, or to be more precise, some of the more *'moderen'* wayang performances of the New Order era. In one of the first accounts of metafictionality within a *dalang*'s repertoire, Ward Keeler discusses the way in which the most expensive and popular *'moderen'* puppeteer of the 1970s, Ki Nartosabdho, often made "self-indulgent" references to himself during the course of his performances.[13] For example, Ki Nartosabdho would interrupt his story to refer to his fame, his fee and his home address, usually in the clown-servant routines. The close relationship between self-reflexivity and a consumerist imperative will be examined in more detail shortly. Suffice to say here that Keeler found Nartosabdho's self-allusions "especially piquant" and "grating", suggesting that this phenomenon, which magnified the name of Nartosabdho and the glory of the sponsors who paid his fee, may have helped contribute to much of the censure heaped upon the popular *dalang*. Meanwhile, despite the mixed reactions to Nartosabdho's self-reflexive innovations, several decades later such

[13] Keeler, *Javanese Shadow Plays*, p. 199.

innovations have become quite common (although I would suggest that nowadays the puppets are just as likely to mischievously criticise the *dalang* as praise or advertise him).

Since the 1970s, metafiction within the contemporary wayang tradition has appeared in many forms. The intrusive narrator, who interrupts the story to air his or her own personal concerns, is perhaps the most explicit form of self-reflexivity in the wayang. For example, in a performance of the well-known *Dewa Ruci* tale, a Yogyakarta-based puppeteer, Ki Parjaya, conducted what he regarded as an "experiment" by allowing one of the wayang characters, Bima, to carry out a direct conversation with the *dalang* himself. In an exorcistic *ruwatan* performance, a divine *dalang* is represented by a puppet and the *dalang*-in-reality only derives his authority to speak from the presence of this puppet. In contrast to this, in Ki Parjaya's performative "experiment", the *dalang*-in-reality was not represented by any puppet at all. Other progressive puppeteers such as Ki Entus Susmono of Tegal have made a name for themselves for similar metafictional antics. In the middle of a performance Ki Entus has been known to stand up and engage in hand-to-hand combat with his especially-made 'XL' (extra large) human-sized wayang puppets. Such a startling device reinforces the presence of the *dalang*, however it also gives a greater deal of agency to the puppets, subverting the traditional hierarchical power structures.

Interrupting the narrative flow to allow the *dalang* to participate within the fictional boundaries of the wayang universe may give the impression that the real world has intruded into the fictional universe. But, as Ommundsen observes,

"reality" in metafiction "is always a highly suspect concept".[14] This is because what is normally considered as 'real' becomes fictionalised, therefore becoming, instead, another narrative level, or "diegetic level". When an inhabitant of one narrative level (for example that of the *dalang*) starts interacting with those of another (such as the puppets in a wayang performance), then what Jan Mrázek terms as the "organic bond" between puppeteer and puppet is broken,[15] and diegetic levels are transgressed. The violation of narrative levels - variously referred to as "metalipsis", "tangled hierarchies", or "strange loops" - works to destabilise the fictional illusion and draw attention to its fabricated nature.[16]

The fabricated nature of a performance is also revealed in some of the more progressive wayang performances when lengthy sections are devoted to Petruk interviewing members of the *dalang*'s entourage, in particular the *pesinden*. Although Petruk's voice is the natural speaking voice of the puppeteer outside of the performance, most *dalang* regard Petruk as just another character.[17] Nevertheless, throughout extended periods of good-natured and often flirtatious repartee between *dalang* and *pesinden*, it is not uncommon for the *dalang* to speak at length whilst Petruk often remains completely unmoved. Although most *pesinden* during these passages refer to the *dalang* as "Mas Petruk", many use *"Pak Dalang"*, or even the *dalang*'s name. Such passages do not point to the *dalang*'s actual puppeteering skills, or to the puppets themselves, but rather to the status of the performance as a constructed artifice and the *dalang* as a mere character or 'star' on the same par as the *pesinden* and even the puppets themselves.

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[14] Ommundsen, *Metafictions?*, p. 7.
[15] Jan Mrázek, "Javanese Wayang Kulit in the Times of Comedy: Clown Scenes, Innovation, and the Performance's Being in the Present World, Part One," *Indonesia*, 68 (October 1999), p. 71.
[16] Ommundsen, *Metafictions?*, pp. 8-9.

Mrázek argues that the momentary disconnection of the "organic bond" between puppeteer and puppet is merely a symptom of a growing tendency in the wayang, especially more progressive wayang performances, where the *dalang* is becoming just another star among many others, such as *pesinden*, comedians, *dangdut* singers and dancers.[18] Many would argue that this tendency itself is part of an even greater tendency, that of the gradual replacement of the high philosophical values of the wayang with low entertainment values, epitomised by the overall trend towards a greater emphasis on innovation, flashy battle-scenes and risque humour. I would like to extrapolate from this observation by suggesting that the erosion of the *dalang*'s supreme authority - witnessed in transgressions of diegetic levels and allusions to the fabricated and illusory nature of a wayang performance, for example - is merely an aesthetic manifestation of the growing commodification of the wayang experience. In other words, metafictional elements in the wayang, viewed as part of what most observers regard as the larger trend towards the 'disintegration' of the traditional wayang form, can also be partly seen as playful manifestations of what Fredric Jameson terms as the postmodern cultural logic of late capitalism, where the consumerist imperative underscores artistic expression and experimentation. Furthermore, various scholars support the notion that the recent boom in international metafiction, and indeed 'meta' levels of discourse and experience in general, is partly a consequence of a global increase in social and cultural self-consciousness, a phenomenon typical of the postmodern era. However, mindful of the fact that we are dealing with the Indonesian context - where postmodernism is as much a

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[17] Keeler, *Javanese Shadow Plays*, p.199.
[18] Mrázek, "Javanese Wayang Kulit in the Times of Comedy".

postmodernism of resistance as a postmodernism of reaction - perhaps we are witnessing not so much the postmodern commodification of culture but rather, to quote Terry Eagleton, "a subversive strike at all elites, hierarchies, master narratives and immutable truths [...]"[19]

Perhaps it is a bit of both, and something more. In tandem with his earlier comments, Mrázek views what can be termed as metafictional 'jokes' in terms of the wayang's fascination with the 'foreign' and the increasing emphasis on comedy throughout the whole wayang performance:

> Comedy closely relates to the fascination with the foreign, and the mixing-in of the foreign. Many jokes in *wayang* work by juxtaposing two things that one would not expect to be juxtaposed, or by saying or doing a thing in a context where one would not expect it. In many cases, this is a matter of the sudden breaking of the performance's frame of reference, such as when Kurawa's prime minister Sengkuni plots an attack on the Pandhawa and one of the Kurawa states that Sengkuni's plan will fail like all others, for: "What kind of *dalang* would it be who would let the Kurawa win?" Or, we can cite an example when one character says to another something to the effect "only you can save us, it's all up to you", and the other character (such as Kresna) counters, "no, its up to the *dalang*." This kind of joke is popular in many variations [...] Or: as Cakil, after being killed, falls down on the ground, he suddenly stands up again, saying, "hey- an ant!" and moves to another

[19] Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, p. 202.

place, betraying that he is not the real dying Cakil, but only an actor (even though he is only a puppet).[20]

Mrázek observes that such jokes bring in a unexpected point of view, as if from outside the wayang's represented world. The perception that a puppet of Cakil is merely acting out the role of the 'real' Cakil, for example, refuses to comply with the audience's set of expectations both of Cakil and of the wayang puppet theatre as a genre. By upsetting the audience's genre expectations, the audience is forced to stop and reconsider what it is that has hitherto allowed them to define what is thought of as 'normal', at least in terms of the conventions of a wayang performance. In this sense metafiction in the wayang could well be simultaneously part of a commodity for pleasurable consumption as well as a subversion of notions such as 'normality', 'reality', and 'fiction'. It is the rejection of notions such as these, the more politically minded proponents of postmodernism would argue, that can undermine the social and political status quo.

It is, however, extremely unlikely that metafiction in the wayang is little more than a politically neutral attempt to either promote the *dalang* or *'cari sensasi'*, that is, 'sensationalise' proceedings. This, of course, can be regarded as merely part of the growing commodification (or rather 'comedy-fication') of contemporary wayang shadow theatre. For this reason one must not lose track of the fact that although self-reflexivity in the wayang is generally viewed as a contemporary phenomenon, it way well be limiting to claim that it is purely a

[20] Mrázek, "Javanese Wayang Kulit," p. 120-21.

postmodern phenomenon. However, one can argue that metafiction in both contemporary wayang and *wayang mbeling* appears to be as much postmodern as it is traditional.

Although the self-reflexive 'tricks' encountered in wayang and *wayang mbeling* narratives are similar, the motivation behind their use, and so their political import, is different. The adoption of postmodern techniques such as self-reflexivity for entertainment or commercial purposes in contemporary wayang is replaced in the literary form by a postmodernism of resistance, where a postmodern emphasis on a lack of truth, stability and homogeneity is a means of subverting structures of authority. Therefore, in terms of the contemporary literary, linguistic and political norms of New Order Indonesia, metafictional transgressions on the written page are, more often than not, literally and figuratively revolutionary. Writing about metafiction in the Western context, Ommundsen observes that

> by intensifying the artifact, making the transition from text to meaning more complex, reflexive fiction thus calls attention to the material existence of language and fictional systems, the 'stuff' of literature which the reader otherwise tends to overlook.[21]

Likewise, in the best tradition of international postmodernism, metafiction on the pages of *wayang mbeling* calls attention to the true essence of the hitherto overlooked 'stuff' of modern Indonesian literature: its inner workings and its

[21] Ommundsen, *Metafictions?*, p. 9.

social and political embeddedness. In this sense, then, metafiction can be considered as much a neo-traditional manifestation of the cultural logic of the postmodern era as a subversive strike against the New Order regime.

Redefining Fiction and Reality in Putu Wijaya's *Perang*

The publisher's introduction to Putu Wijaya's *Perang* classes the novel as a "cerita wayang kontemporer" [contemporary wayang tale]. Such a label is quite pertinent, especially as most of the novel's protagonists are wayang characters fitted out with modern technological accoutrements. For example, Kresna, the scheming advisor to the Pandawa, has a very powerful laptop computer. The significance of this computer lies in the fact that Kresna is entrusted by the gods to manipulate events on it, ultimately in order to ensure that any unexpected plot divergences do not endanger the outbreak of the Baratayuda war. From the safety of the heavens, the gods use telescopes to view the results of Kresna's latest handywork. Meanwhile, Kresna's brother, Baladewa, wears glasses and finds himself on an old bicycle instead of his normal chariot. The clown-servants, Gareng, Petruk and Bagong, are also 'contemporary' in the sense that they read travel brochures, eat chocolate and fried cassava and listen to music on their walkmans. Many of the *ksatria* characters such as Yudhistira and Arjuna read both local and international newspapers, and the editorials of these newspapers often bombastically denounce the Kurawa, or Pandawa, depending on which side one finds oneself. The contemporary nature of the novel, underscored throughout by the highly colloquial style of Indonesian used, suggests that the novel's message, or indeed array of messages, has a very contemporary relevance.

Besides the contemporary character of the novel, many of the situations depicted reveal a decidedly Indonesian flavour. One of the most humorous examples is when a large number of deceased Kurawa villagers find themselves waiting outside the gates of Heaven. Because their untimely deaths are unexpected, Heaven officials are caught off-guard. In a scene highly reminiscent of Pipit Rochijat's series of wayang tales set in the afterlife, the overwhelmed Heaven officials appear to be just as bureaucratic as their New Order counterparts:

> "Ladies and gentlemen I'm requesting that you all try and be patient please. Patience is necessary as much here as on Earth. Please everyone fill in the forms correctly. Write your name, occupation, a bit about yourselves, and then carefully answer the questions about what was the cause of your death, so that it will be easier to put you in the right place. You will very much need your identity card (*KTP*). Those who don't have a *KTP* will have a lot of problems. We don't differentiate in any way, but its our duty to carefully choose who you are exactly, whether you were all murdered, or died from illness. Ladies and gentlemen do you all have a 3 by 4 and a 12 by 8 passport photo? If you do not yet have one please obtain one on the left. Remember that in the photo your ears must be visible and make sure you wear a plain shirt!"(p. 149)[22]

[22] "Saya mohon saudara-saudara bersabar sedikit. Tidak hanya di dunia, di sini pun kesabaran diperlukan. Harap semuanya mengisi formulir dengan tepat. Menuliskan nama, pekerjaan, dan sedikit riwayat hidupnya, lalu menjawab pertanyaan-pertanyaan dengan teliti apa sebab-sebab kematian, sehingga mudah dikelompokkan. KTP perlu sekali. Siapa yang tak membawa KTP akan mendapat kesulitan besar. Kami tidak membeda-bedakan, tapi adalah tugas kami untuk memilih dengan teliti, siapa Saudara sebenarnya, apakah saudara semua benar-benar terbunuh, atau mati

This humorous glimpse of the afterlife presents a very dark vision of Heaven, which shares a much closer resemblance to an Indonesian immigration office, or any branch of Indonesia's sprawling public service for that matter. Surely one could assume that when one enters the afterlife one does not need to bring one's identity card and a supply of passport photos, let alone a plain shirt? Such an absurd scene, with its depersonalised New Order 'officialese' patter, is highly suggestive. In a sense it represents a microcosm of one of the major themes of *Perang*: the chaotic, fractured, disconnected, dislocated and dehumanised nature of contemporary existence. But more than this, Putu Wijaya's hellish vision of the afterlife points to a sense of crisis and a lack of confidence in an external authoritative system of order, a loss of belief that - in Indonesia - can be generally associated with the stagnant and authoritarian nature of the New Order regime.

As we have seen in Chapter Three, in the Indonesian context it can be usefully argued that the emergence of postmodernism – or, in the case of Emha's *Arus Bawah*, strategies of writing that share strong similarities with theories associated with postmodernism - as a postcolonial strategy of resistance establishes and affirms the power of one's personal subjectivity in the face of an authoritarian regime. It is highly significant, therefore, when Sears observes that Putu Wijaya's appropriations of the wayang in texts such as *Perang* "blend Balinese, Javanese, and even Indian tellings of Mahabharata tales in postmodern ways".[23] The following discussion will reveal the ways in which *Perang* displays

karena sakit. Apa Saudara-saudara sudah punya pasfoto ukuran 3 kali 4 buah dan 12 kali 8 sebuah? Kalau belum silakan membuatnya di sebelah kiri. Ingat telinganya harus kelihatan dan memakai baju polos!"

[23] Sears, *Shadows of Empire*, p. 288.

features typical of postmodern cultural expression. This discussion, of course, will be moulded in terms of my comments in Chapter Three. That is, in the context of modern Indonesian literary expression, what may appear to be a postmodern style of writing is as much a means of radically experimenting with the literary form as it is a counter-hegemonic statement.

The most obvious indicator of *Perang*'s postmodern leanings is not so much the 'contemporary' refashioning of the novel's traditional material but rather its tendency to systematically flaunt its own fictionality, in the manner of international metafiction. Writing on the link between metafiction and postmodernism, Patricia Waugh argues that

> Although metafiction is just one form of post-modernism, nearly all contemporary experimental writing displays *some* explicitly metafictional strategies. Any text that draws the reader's attention to its process of construction by frustrating his or her conventional expectations of meaning and closure problematizes more or less explicitly the ways in which narrative codes - whether 'literary' or 'social' - artificially construct apparently 'real' and imaginary worlds in the terms of particular ideologies while presenting these as transparently 'natural' and 'eternal'.[24]

On more than one occasion *Perang* fictionalises the way in which fiction can construct 'reality'. The most obvious example of this is when one morning the sky turns blood red and the Baratayuda war can no longer be delayed. This is caused

[24] Waugh, *Metafiction*, p. 22.

by a family of mice playing around with Kresna's computer when he is asleep. The true tragedy of the imminent onset of the Baratayuda lies in the fact that on the same night the mice wreak havoc on Kresna's computer, the Kurawa and Pandawa stay up all night at a party, dancing, eating and drinking together in peace and harmony. In effect, at the party the Kurawa and Pandawa seriously destabilise their 'real' world. Their 'real' world was meant to be a world of conflict, enmity and inevitable bloodshed, as witnessed by Petruk when he stumbles upon Kresna's computer late one night and inadvertently witnesses images of the climax of the Mahabharata and dreadful fate of the wayang heroes. The puppets' celebrations in *Perang* then, endangering the 'traditional' Mahabharata plot, appears to suggest that perhaps they could become much more than mere puppets staring at each other from either side of a screen, forever destined to remain mortal enemies.

During the party, even the hearts of the local *raksasa* [ogre-giants] had begun to soften, with many overcome with intense emotion as they realised that virtually overnight "pikiran mereka berkembang" [their thoughts had developed] (p. 192). Nevertheless, the morning after presented far more than just a few hangovers. The sudden inevitability of the Baratayuda had automatically indicated that the *raksasa*'s new-found self-realisation and the puppets' radical subversion and dismantlement of the Mahabharata plot was merely a brief plot-divergence, a *carangan* plot at best, which had no ultimate impact upon the Mahabharata itself. In this sense, the postmodernity of *Perang* collapses upon itself: it is through the chaos and indeterminacy of the events depicted in *Perang* that the stability and certainty of the Mahabharata is restored. 'Reality', Putu Wijaya seems to be suggesting, is merely one narrative chosen, arbitrarily, among

many. Or, in the words of Petruk, "Apa bedanya khayali dan nyata kalau kita percaya?" [What's the difference between fantasy and reality if we believe in it?] (p. 82).

Of course, in *Perang* the premature outbreak of the Baratayuda was by no means the first indication of a direct causal link between fiction and reality. For example, at one stage Semar angrily confronts Kresna for the way in which he apparently used Gareng, Petruk and Bagong as mere pawns for an interesting plot development (p. 111), which I will discuss in greater detail shortly. In response, Kresna stands his ground and explains his motives. However, in private Kresna is inclined to agree with Semar, although his reasons are quite selfish: "Tidak cukup sebulan untuk memperbaiki jalan cerita yang menyimpang sekarang. Bisa-bisa tak jadi, liburan kita ke Perancis ini" [A month isn't long enough to get this de-railed story back on track now. It could well be that we won't be able to go on our holiday to France now"] (p. 113). He curses himself for beating around the bush by using a 'literary' method for shaping reality, as a simple phone call could have easily provided the same results.

The way in which a narrative code can construct reality in the terms of a particular ideology is imaginatively explored when Gareng, Petruk and Bagong are brainwashed by a mysterious ascetic (Kresna in disguise). This ascetic reveals to the young clown-servants who their real enemy is:

> "Your biggest enemy is authority. Authority is manifested in the Kurawa, in your superiors and in your oppressors. If you want to achieve truth, it's not enough for you to just oppose the fruits of authority. Rather, you must directly challenge it. Smash everything that keeps authority standing

upright. Ensure that you sit on the same standing and at the same level. Refuse to be dictated to anymore. You don't need to speak in refined language to your superiors, because it is this sort of language that has ensured that they have remained more powerful than you. Return yourselves to the state of being human beings in interaction with other human beings. In this way, the Korawa aren't the one and only enemy. Rather, anyone who oppresses you is in essence the enemy".[25] (p. 85)

The impact of Kresna's words is dramatic and immediate. The young clown-servants gate-crash a meeting of the Pandawa *ksatria* and they create an uproar by speaking in coarse Indonesian, using rude slang, abusing Arjuna for his womanising, and impudently abbreviating Yudhistira's name to 'Yud'. Petruk even places his lanky arm on the king's shoulder, telling him brazenly, with a mixture of Low Javanese and impolite Indonesian, to loosen up and see how the other half live: "Kamu harus nyeker sekali-kali jangan pakai klompen emas terus"[You need to walk bare-feet for once, don't wear golden slippers forever] (p. 90). In effect, Kresna's subversive exhortations, as planned, are literally enacted by the three young clown-servants.

The *ksatria*, with their centuries-long tradition of strict protocol, are initially quite shocked by Gareng, Petruk and Bagong's behaviour, and the clown-servants

[25] "Musuh kamu yang terbesar adalah kekuasaan. Kekuasaan itulah yang telah mewujudkan dirinya sebagai Korawa, sebagai atasan, sebagai penindas kamu. Kalau kamu ingin mencapai kebenaran, kamu tidak cukup hanya melawan hasil-hasil kekuasaan itu, tetapi kamu harus menentangnya langsung. Putuskan segala sesuatu yang menyebabkan kekuasaan itu tegak. Buat diri kamu duduk sama rata dan berdiri sama tinggi. Jangan lagi mau didikte. Tidak perlu kamu bicara dengan bahasa halus kepada atasanmu, karena bahasa itulah yang membuat dia lebih berkuasa dari kamu. Kembalikan diri kamu sebagai manusia menghadapi manusia yang lain. Dengan cara begitu, Korawa bukanlah musuh satu-satunya, tetapi semua yang menindas kamu pada hakikatnya adalah musuh."

are almost thrown out. However, it soon becomes apparent that Kresna's manipulation of the clown-servants is not so much in aid of a lively plot-divergence but rather a crafty means of constructing a political transformation on a grand scale. In short, the behaviour of the clown-servants sparks off the sudden and unprecedented democratisation of the Pandawa court.

How does such a dramatic transformation come about? In short, over lunch. Due to the outrageous behaviour of the clown-servants, Yudhistira attempts to pacify them by offering a banquet of the finest food. Although the clown-servants disgrace themselves by eating with their hands and becoming hopelessly drunk, they manage to convince Yudhistira of the need for a transition from feudalism and authoritarianism to a more democratic basis to Pandawa society and government. As though he were merely following Kresna's script, Yudhistira embraces this suggestion and the clown-servants' proposal is tendered in the afternoon session of the meeting. Recognising that the clown-servants are probably mere "tools" for voicing the aspirations of an unknown third party (p. 100), Yudhistira, Nakula and Sadewa decide to chair the session, and this time it is they who outline in a didactic manner the necessary steps towards democratisation. For example, when asked what changes need to be made, Yudhistira plainly suggests that Amarta must be changed from a kingdom to a republic with general elections and a democratically elected President. Nakula and Sadewa go on to say that elections will be needed to be held every four years, and a consultative assembly in some form or another will need to be established in order to ensure that the *rakyat*'s concerns are addressed.

Both the clown-servants and Yudhistira emphasise the linguistic dimensions of democratisation, in particular the importance of a more egalitarian

aspect to the national language. This aspect of the democratisation process is emphasised because, in *Perang*, just as Kresna imposes his fictional world on the clown-servants' imagination through his manipulation of language, in the end it is language that shapes reality. The close link between language and reality, or rather textualised *narratives* of reality, is often exploited by metafiction.[26] Nowhere is this point more relevant in *Perang* than when, after almost 300 pages of literary illusion, the narrator uses his own narrative to intrude into the fictional world he is relating:

> At the same time that night, various things were happening in various places. There was someone in a crash. There was someone who lost their virginity. There was a birth of a baby. There was a murder. There were some people having sex [...] I myself was typing up this story. (p. 295)[27]

Here we find the narrator and his act of writing placed on equal footing with his fictional characters, their fictional activities, and the 'real' world. The voice of the narrator is no longer what Hutcheon refers to as "an exterior authenticating one",[28] but rather it is the voice of a character. Similarly, underscoring the close link between language and reality, the novel's other authorial figure, Kresna, does not view the results of his linguistic manipulations on the computer from afar: he is very much involved as a character. For this reason, Kresna's efforts to transform

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[26] Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative*, p. 32; and Linda Hutcheon,"Historiographic Metafiction: 'The Pastime of Past Time,'" in *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York & London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 105-123.

[27] "Pada saat yang bersamaan, malam itu berbagai kejadian terjadi di beberapa tempat. Ada orang tabrakan. Ada orang kehilangan keperawannya. Ada kelahiran bayi. Ada pembunuhan. Ada orang bersanggama [...] Saya sendiri mengetik cerita ini".

reality through language is at once a manipulating act and a highly democratic freedom-inducing act, a mirror for not only Putu Wijaya himself but also the other characters of the novel.

Consequently, both the clown-servants and their superiors place a great deal of emphasis on the search for a new language in which to realise a more democratic society. When Bagong complains bitterly - in front of the king, with some of the most colourful and coarse Indonesian imaginable - of the way in which polite and impolite language registers have been used as tools for establishing and maintaining hierarchy, subservience and oppression (p. 93), he is using language to shape a radically new reality. Simultaneously, he is released from the restrictions of 'polite' language, and the consequent repression engendered by this sociolinguistic manifestation of a hierarchically-oriented social and political system. Therefore, Bagong's usage of vernacular Indonesian - and the shocked, and then chastened, reponse of the *ksatria* elite - can be seen as a culmination of a tradition and the beginning of an egalitarian reaction against that tradition. In short, Bagong's uncouth outburst, which places an emphasis on the words themselves as the notions they are used to represent, is as much a practical manifestation of the democratisation process as it is an attack upon the feudalistic status quo.

'Puppet Democracy' in Agusta Wibisono's *Balada Narasoma* and *Balada Cinta Abimanyu dan Lady Sundari*

[28] Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative*, p. 63.

If the clown-servants' usage of vernacular Indonesian in *Perang* can be seen as the beginning of an egalitarian reaction against a 'tradition' of hierarchy and authoritarianism, then Agusta Wibisono's wayang novels are an extension of this reaction, literally. In both *Balada Narasoma* and *Balada Cinta Abimanyu dan Lady Sundari* the intertextual references to the wayang world are dominant. However, the precise contours of the reader-writer relationship, not to mention the character-writer relationship, are blurred, and the multi-genre nature of the novels themselves, defying definition, have a hybridising effect. Because the novels are variously depicted as novels, wayang performances, lectures, movies, tours and radio-plays, then principal actors within the metafictional drama become writers, puppeteers, puppets, movie actors, movie directors, critics, tourists and sound engineers. Similarly, readers are also included, being addressed as readers, viewers, listeners and note-taking students. Therefore, whilst the author may from time to time attempt to exert his authority over the narrative in which he figures, the provisional roles of narrator, character and reader ensure that no-one – including, it appears, the author - has absolute authority over the narrative in which they participate. Furthermore, mirroring democratic political systems throughout the world, the balance of power is both egalitarian and precarious: no-one has the ultimate and sole power to narrate or to interpret, and the roles of writer, character and reader are sufficiently flexible as to allow each the right to accept, decline or comment upon the roles offered by their counterparts within the text itself.

This is not to say that the playful postmodern author-figure of Agusta Wibisono's novels does not attempt to assert his authorial power. If Putu Wijaya uses metafictional references to shock the reader in the depths of fiction, Agusta

Wibisono decides to emphasise the narrator's 'authority' by destroying the fictional illusion in the first stages of its construction. For example, the first page of *Balada Cinta Abimanyu dan Lady Sundari* is spent revealing the 'mystery' behind the Vice-Chancellor of Universitas Terbuka [Open University] granting permission for the establishment of a bus terminal at Blok M. Why begin a novel supposedly based on the romance between wayang heroes Abimanyu and Siti Sundari in such bizarre fashion? In a direct address to the reader, the narrator explains:

> Right, you, o readers, giving me the honour of your attention (read: who I am honouring), you don't need to worry about whether or not it was the Rector of Universitas Terbuka who made the ruling about the bus terminal at Blok M. You know that was just my trick to start this story! Honest! You see, the hardest part is beginning the story. It's true! If you don't believe me, just go ask some authors.[29] (p. 6)

Here we find an attempt to overlap the authorial voice with the narrating one, a common technique in metafictional writing whereby the narrator becomes an ambiguous and ambivalent literary figure. However, the narrator of Agusta's novels is no all-powerful Kresna, controlling what Marie Maclean terms as the texts's "strategic battleground" between narrator and narratee, or between author

[29] "Baiklah, Anda, wahai sidang pembaca yang menghormati saya (baca: yang saya hormati), Anda tidak usah ikut pusing mikir ada tidaknya rektor UT yang membuat SK tentang terminal bis Blok M. Wong itu cuma akal-akalan saya untuk memulai cerita ini. Sungguh! Habis, yang paling susah itu memulai sebuah cerita, sih. Bener, deh! Kalau nggak percaya, tanya tuh para pengarang".

and reader.[30] In Agusta's two novels the author, who in fiction and literary theory is generally portrayed as an authoritarian figure limiting the text's potential for meaning, is challenged and forced to give ground both by the multiple and shifting genres of the texts themselves and by the readers and characters.

The ambiguous conflation of Agusta's author's voice with the narrator's voice is confounded by ambiguity regarding the interchangeable status of the narrator himself. One moment he is a narrator and a writer (as above), the next a lecturer or a *dalang*. In the following passage the narrator (as *dalang*) explains how it could be that an unknown boxer from the Kingdom of Mathura could defeat boxing champion Mike Tyson:

> Dear readers, I apologise, once again I apologise. You have to know that in matters such as this, *THE PUPPETEER is everything*...And, [Mike Tyson] really could be beaten! Mike Tyson really could be beaten!!! You, perhaps, are asking: *how could this be?* It can be, you know. THE PUPPETEER ensured that Tyson would be defeated so that the world would know that Mike Tyson actually can be beaten! Who beat him? *THE PUPPETEER*. Me, ha.. ha.. ha.. haaa...[31](p. 81)

Elsewhere, the narrator takes on the persona of a lecturer, teaching a course on the history of the wayang mythology:

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[30] Marie Maclean, *Narrative as Performance: The Baudelairean Experiment* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 15.

[31] "Sidang pembaca sekalian, maaf, sekali lagi maaf. Anda harus tahu, bahwa dalam persoalan seperti ini, *DALANG adalah segala-galanya* [...] Dan, [Mike Tyson] benar-benar dapat dikalahkan! Mike Tyson dapat dikalahkan!!! Anda, mungkin, bertanya: *kok bisa*? Bisa saja. DALANG menghendaki Tyson harus kalah, supaya dunia tahu, bahwa Mike Tyson memang bisa dikalahkan! Siapa yang mengalahkan? *DALANG*. Saya, he.. he.. he.. heee...."

In last week's lecture I explained the way in which in international geopolitics Lord Salyapati had a tendency to side with the Pandawa as opposed to the Kurawa. Even though, at the same time, the Kurawa ruler was his own son-in-law. Today's lecture will be taken up with more on the Kurawa. Get your notes ready![32](p. 94)

Earlier, the narrator is not so much a narrator of a novel, or even a lecturer or a puppeteer, but rather a 'behind-the-scenes' movie critic:

"Dad?!"

"Soma?!"

"Daaad?!"

"Somaaa?!"

"Daaaaaaaaaddd....!"

"Somaaaaaaaaaa.....!"

Father and son left their respective positions, rushed over to... embrace each other! The background music to this dramatic scene was *Song Theme of The Six Million Dollar Man*. The reason being that although the distance between the two of them was just 10 metres, when they were

[32] "Dalam perkuliahan minggu yang lalu sudah dijelaskan, kecenderungan Prabu Salyapati dalam percaturan politik internasional, lebih condong memihak Pandawa ketimbang Kurawa. Meskipun, sementara itu, penguasa Kurawa adalah menantunya sendiri. Lebih jauh tentang Kurawa, merupakan bahan perkuliahan kita hari ini. Siapkan catatan Anda!"

running (to embrace each other) it was like Lee Majors in slow-motion on TV. So it was slooooowed down.[33] (p. 87)

The critic's role is embraced on a number of occasions, most noticeably when the impact of the background music, as part of a radio performance, is analysed within the text itself:

Listening to his sister's whimpering which consisted of some molecules of sadness, Narasoma felt crushed. He cried as well. Touched. He held his sister lovingly (Background music: *Chariots of Fire* by Jon & Vangelish [sic]. This choice of music truly brought a touching sense of sadness to the scene of Narasoma hugging his sister Madrim. 99% of the radio audience got carried away by this atmosphere, which was brilliantly choreographed by a joint effort between the director and music director. They all wept uncontrollably).[34] (p. 72-73)

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[33] "Ayah?!"
"Soma?!"
"Ayaaah?!"
"Somaaa?!"
"Ayaaaaaaaahhh....!"
"Somaaaaaaaaaa....!"
Ayah dan anak itu pun beranjak dari tempatnya masing-masing, bergegas untuk...berangkulan! Musik pengiring adegan dramatis ini, *Song Theme of The Six Million Dollar Man*. Sebab, kendati jarak antara keduanya sebelum berangkulan cuma 10 meter, namun ketika mereka berlari (untuk berangkulan) cara mereka mirip *Lee Majors* di tivi yang di-*slow motion*-kan. Jadi, ya, lambaaaat gitu."

[34] "Mendengar rengekan adiknya yang cukup mengandung molekul kesedihan itu, Narasoma luluh hatinya. Ia ikut-ikutan mengangis. Haru. Dipeluknya adiknya itu dengan sepenuh kasih (*Background* lagu *Chariots of Fire* oleh Jon & Vangelish [sic]. Musik ini betul-betul membawa suasana kesedihan dan keharuan dalam adegan Narasoma memeluk Madrim, adiknya. Para pendengar radio 99% ikut larut dalam suasana yang, dengan cemerlang, diciptakan oleh kerja sama *sutradara* dan *music director*. Mereka menangis sesenggukan)."

It goes without saying that such a variety of dramatic roles embodied by a single narrator undermines not only the authority of the narrator but also the notion that Agusta's wayang novels are novels at all, in the strict sense of the word. As noted earlier, *Balada Narasoma* and *Balada Cinta Abimanyu dan Lady Sundari* are far more than novels. In fact, they are a fictional *gado-gado* [mixed salad] of wayang, literary criticism, television commentaries, radio plays, lectures and journalism. This modal *gado-gado* converges contemporary and earlier discursive paradigms, in the process defeating the reader's expectations about all of them.

The frustration of conventional expectations, which thereby calls attention to the reader's role in the construction of the fictional universe, is often cited as a model for the "freedom-inducing text", which acts as a metaphor for the postmodern dispersal of meaning, which ultimately favours indeterminacy and fluidity over adherence to form and structure. In her study of metafiction, Linda Hutcheon describes the process in the following way:

> The unsettled reader is forced to scrutinize his concepts of art as well as his life values. Often he must revise his understanding of what he reads so frequently that he comes to question the very possibility of understanding. In doing so he might be freed from enslavement not only to the empirical, but also to his own set patterns of thought and imagination.[35]

The freedom Hutcheon has in mind, however, is a 'forced' liberation. The reader has no real choice: "He is assaulted, frustrated in his normal novelistic

[35] Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative*, p. 150.

expectations. The author seems to want to change the nature of literature by altering the nature of the reader's participation in it".[36] Nevertheless, without coaxing the reader on-side, the metafictional author's political intentions cannot be fully realised. For this reason, in terms of realising the latent democratic potential of Agusta's texts, the problematisation of the 'traditional' role of the reader as a passive bystander is crucial.

Significantly, Agusta's novels stage the literary act as a collaborative project. On numerous occasions the narrator transgresses conventional text-reader relationships and involves the implied reader by directly addressing him or her. The following quote is just one of many examples of this thematised relationship:

> Perhaps you're asking: What happened to the fate of Abimanyu, who was the head of the journalism students' association, after he fled from Dwarawati? OK, let's have a look together.[37] (p. 88)

At other times, the implied reader is not so much invited to participate in activating the text but rather threatened and cajoled:

> [...] You still have the right to continue reading this story. I swear! Moreover, the story is actually just going to begin here. However, beforehand, I request and hope of you that while you read this story, don't even once try to interrupt it such as by farting, whatever your reason. In

[36] ibid.

the meantime, just hold it in. If you ignore this warning, then *something* will happen to you, five years in the future.[38] (p. 6)

Such playful banter between the narrator and the implied reader is certainly unusual in the field of modern Indonesian literature. Of course, it may well be merely a contemporary textual manifestation of the extremely intimate relationship between the *dalang* and the audience of a wayang performance, or alternatively between traditional story-tellers and their audience, or even writers of manuscripts and their audience.[39] Indeed, Derks would argue that this sense of togetherness between performer and audience is merely a manifestation of Indonesia's "orally oriented literary system".[40] As observed by Derks, whilst poems and short stories appear in magazines and newspapers in abundance, they are also often performed publicly, and extra-textual comments - say comments on what inspired the poem or story, criticism of the sound system, or witty responses to hecklers - are a common trait of these performances. Gatherings at which poetry and short stories are read and performed are a widespread phenomenon, and according to Derks the popularity of these gatherings, "undeniably oral in

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[37] "Mungkin anda bertanya: Bagaimana nasib Abimanyu yang ketua himpunan mahasiswa jurnalistik itu setelah minggat dari Dwarawati? Baiklah, mari kita lacak bersama-sama".

[38] "[...]Anda masih berhak untuk terus melanjutkan kegiatan membaca cerita ini. Sumpah! Apalagi, cerita ini sebenarnya baru akan dimulai di sini. Namun, sebelumnya saya mohon, saya harap, selama membaca cerita ini, jangan sekali-kali dan jangan coba-coba untuk melanggarnya Anda mengeluarkan bunyi kentut, apapun alasan Anda. Sementara, tahan sajalah. Jika Anda melanggar, maka *sesuatu* akan terjadi pada diri Anda, lima tahun mendatang".

[39] See, for example, Derks, *The Feast of Storytelling*; and Hendrik M. J. Maier, "A Chew of Sugar Cane: Ahmad Kotot's *Hikayat Percintaan Kasih Kemudaan*," in *Cultural Contestations: Mediating Identities in a Changing Malaysian Society*, ed. Zawawi Ibrahim (London: ASEAN ACADEMIC PRESS, 1998), pp. 101-117.

[40] Derks, "If Not to Anything Else," pp. 341-352.

nature [...] strongly suggests that literature in Indonesia really is something one listens to, in the company of others, rather than reads silently and in seclusion".[41]

Extrapolating from these observations, Wibisono's attempt to break the novel-reader's 'solitary confinement' within the textual boundaries of the novel itself should not be treated as a naive aberration. By transforming the reading act to become an open and collaborative process between reader and writer, Wibisono is drawing upon the strong sense of togetherness dominant in Indonesia's orally-oriented literary system. In so doing he simultaneously reinvigorates the novel form by transforming and adapting it to Indonesia's orally oriented context.

One only needs to make a small mental leap to suppose that in an orally oriented literary system the relationship between author and literary critic need not be a cold and distant affair. Indeed, not content with deconstructing the boundaries between reader and writer, Agusta also conflates the role of writer with that of a literary critic. In the following passage, which also happens to be inscribed with Wibisono's trademark concern for the reader, the narrator provides his own criticism:

> One day, Prince Narasoma was summoned to meet the King for a special function: the official opening of a government-funded primary school, with the wife of the Governor to cut the ribbon. Hey! That's a bit dodgy, what's going on? I'm sorry, when I was typing up this manuscript - on a computer you know! - I was pretty sleepy. Just imagine, it was 4:20am, and I hadn't

[41] ibid, p. 345.

> even given my eyes a break! I didn't care though, for the sake of the royalties, ha..ha..ha...[42] (p. 22)

Clearly the above quote - with its self-analytic overtness - can be perceived as pre-empting the critic's role as commentator. A passage such as this highlights Patricia Waugh's point that

> the lowest common denominator of metafiction is simultaneously to create a fiction and to make a statement about the creation of that fiction. The two processes are held together in a formal tension which breaks down the distinctions between 'creation' and 'criticism' and merges them into the concepts of 'interpretation' and 'deconstruction'.[43]

Thus having been informed that Agusta Wibisono's fiction is cheap, badly written, and furthermore written only for the expected royalties, the critic's role is subsumed by the narrator's pre-emptive strike, and the writer's role is synthesised "in a formal tension" with that of the critic. Most importantly, such metafictional antics embody the 'democratic' symbolic ruptures needed to spark off the 'democratisation' of the hierarchical wayang world, and by extension, the hierarchical political system of New Order Indonesia.

In other words, through the metafictional mode Wibisono simultaneously draws upon literary strategies that capture the irreverent and subversive

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[42] "Pada suatu hari, Rajaputra Narasoma dipanggil menghadap Baginda Raja dengan acara inti: peresmian gedung SD inpres dengan pengguntingan pita oleh Ibu Gubernuur. Hus! Ngwawur, ngawuuur. Maaf, waktu ngetik naskah ini-- di komputer lho!- beta rada-rada ngantuk. Bayangin, wong udah pukul 04:20, mata belum dibikin merem! Biarin deh, demi royalti, ha..ha..ha..."

momentum of postmodernism and the participatory nature of traditional cultural elements, ultimately as a means of rhetorically undermining the hierarchical and authoritarian nature of the New Order regime. It is not surprising, therefore, that Wibisono uses metafictional techniques to allow the puppets themselves to be given a high degree of autonomy, whereby they too, paradoxically, can self-reflexively participate in their own performance. A key literary strategy that Wibisono uses in order to reveal the fictive, literary elements of his fiction is the bestowal of self-consciousness upon his characters. In *Balada Narasoma* the characters often reflect on their status as fictional entities, especially when they find themselves acting as mere mouth-pieces for the author. For example, when Setyawati is asked by her husband Narasoma about how deep her love is towards her husband and her father, she finds herself giving such a long-winded answer that she admits to being confused herself. The reason for this, she explains, is as follows:

> "Whatever we want to talk about is entirely up to whoever is writing the story, you know. Well, the problem is that the one writing just wants to be funny all the time. So even if we have a bit of a momentum going to talk about something romantic and a little political, oh, I mean a little sad, yeah well the writer persists in giving our discussion a humorous edge. And just supposing the writer of this story wants to talk about philosophy, well we'll end up talking about something philosophical. Anyway, don't worry

[43] Waugh, *Metafiction*, p. 6

about it, we're just wayang puppets, whereas the guy writing this is the *dalang*. So...we just give in to whatever the *dalang* wants!"[44] (p. 46-7)

Here we find that the relationship between Setyawati and the author is conflated with the relationship between a puppet and a puppeteer. As a result, Setyawati's self-consciousness is tinged with a degree of resignation: as a puppet, she is unable to assert her autonomous identity, and she has no option other than to acquiesce to the tyrannical puppeteer's wishes. Again, the danger arises whereby the 'benevolent democracy' of metafictional novels can mask a return bid for authorial power. By allowing characters such as Setyawati just enough autonomous agency to admit that they are but mere puppets in the hands of the narrator, in the words of Ommundsen, "the rhetoric of freedom becomes the means by which the playful author-figure of postmodern fiction enlists readerly cooperation in a new and not necessarily less dictatorial regime".[45]

However, in Agusta's novels the metafictional "rhetoric of freedom" cuts both ways. By situating the author's 'real' identity as creator of the text *within* the text, paradoxically he is at the same moment creating himself as a 'mere' character. Following this logic, one could argue that he is also annulling his 'power' as author over the world he is supposed to be creating. In *Balada Cinta Abimanyu dan Lady Sundari*, the extraordinary consequence of such a movement is that the narrator finds himself in an even worse position than his characters. This

[44] "Kita ini mau ngomong apa kan terserah yang menulis cerita. Nah, padahal yang menulis pingin lucu terus. Biar momentum kita kali ini untuk bicara soal romantis dan sedikit politis, eh maksudku sedikit sedih gitu lho, ya tetap aza si penulis cerita membelokkan arah pembicaraan ke suasana lucu. Seandainya yang nulis cerita ini pingin ngomong filsafat, ya kita akan ngomong soal filsafat. Udah deh, kita ini cuma wayang, sedang yang nulis ini dalang. Yaah..kita manuuuut saja apa yang dimaui sang dalang!"

situation gives the impression that Agusta's fictional world, created by words on a page, exists autonomously, independently, and currently with the 'real' world. For example, at one point the narrator pauses to consider how much *'Mbok'*[46] Sud, the maid-servant of Lady Sundari, is paid:

> Hey, by the way, how much is *Mbok* Sud getting paid? 300 thousand a month! Bullshit, I'm getting way less! From book royalties, on average all a writer gets is just 100 thousand a month, and that's only if the books sell. You'd be better off being a servant than an author. But the difference is that a servant is from the lower *sudro* class, whereas an author is from the higher *brahmono* class. But, regardless of this, long live Mbok Suuuud!!![47] (p. 31)

In an elaborate conceit, where the narrator is pushing to extremes the pretence of powerlessness, we see here how the autonomy of the textual world appears to undermine the narrator's authority. His conceit invites us to consider: is he a puppeteer or a puppet? Clearly the puppets themselves are not powerless because of the fact that they are 'mere' puppets. Indeed, the more the puppets assert their powerlessness, the more noticeable their identity and autonomy. Likewise, the true democratic 'power' of Agusta's self-reflexive narrator lies in the fact that he is just another character, and a poorly paid character at that.

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[45] Ommundsen, *Metafictions?*, p. 68.
[46] *'Mbok'* is a term of address for a Javanese maid.
[47] "Eh, ngomong-ngomong, berapa sih gaji Mbok Sud? 300 ribu sebulan! Busyeet, gue kalah nih! Dari royalti buku, rata-rata seorang penulis cuma mendapat honor 100 ribu sebulan, inipun kalau bukunya laku. Mending jadi pembantu daripada jadi penulis buku. Bedanya, pembantu itu *sudro*, sedang penulis buku itu *brahmono*. Tapi, bagaimanapun, hidup Mbok Suuuud!!!"

In such a fashion, one could argue that in the metafictional wayang novels of Agusta Wibisono the narrator is an accessible *participant* in the interaction between text and reader. The effect of this, which impacts directly on the texts' ultimate sociopolitical meaning, is that the reading process, in contrast to the wayang proper, becomes an interactive enterprise, where the role of the narrator is no more important than the role of reader, and, as we have seen, the metafictional character. However, it is worth bearing in mind that this 'puppet democracy' is not democratic *per se*. At most, it merely foreshadows the possibility of democracy. To be precise, the 'puppet democracy' of *Balada Narasoma* and *Balada Cinta Abimanyu dan Lady Sundari* is a carefully-measured pretence on the part of Agusta Wibisono. As I explained earlier, the puppets' power increases the more they allude to their powerlessness. Likewise, the more Agusta's narrators participate in their own texts – even if they are bemoaning the fact that their literary characters are receiving more wages than themselves - the greater their presence, thus, paradoxically, the greater their authority. As if to confirm Ommundsen's words, what we may have here is "a new and not necessarily less dictatorial regime". Ultimately, if Agusta Wibisono's 'puppet democracy' could be considered as a symptom of the times and the changing society in which it appears, in New Order Indonesia democracy was very much still a distant, and problematic, proposition.

Conclusion

The characters and narrators of Putu Wijaya's *Perang* and Agusta Wibisono's *Balada Narasoma* and *Balada Cinta Abimanyu dan Lady Sundari* play their

parts with a mischievously comic awareness. Futhermore, by continuing to play their fictional roles humorously and self-consciously, they are able to assert their autonomy and focus on changing the social and political system *from within*. In this sense, through the *wayang mbeling* medium, Putu Wijaya and Agusta Wibisono are using the convergence of tradition and postmodernity as their launching-pad for the creation of a form of 'literary democratisation'. Of course, we might question to what extent can such an unusual method of cultural resistance influence political change in the 'real' world. As we have seen in the discussion of Putu Wijaya's *Perang*, the 'real' world (as according to the Mahabharata) is an entirely arbitrary concept, merely one constructed fiction among many. Likewise, in Agusta Wibisono's *Balada Cinta Abimanyu dan Lady Sundari*, the depiction of the 'real' world can also be merely a fictional strategy to begin the 'real' story.

When the words *'Layar Turun'* [Final Curtain] appear at the end of *Balada Narasoma*, the switch in scene to audience comments - and thus the 'real' world of New Order Indonesia - is also a fitting means to finishing the story proper. This is because it appeals to a common reality outside the realm of fiction. However, as a means of reminding us that reality is infused with fictions, one 'real' comment in particular, by an Indonesian politician, is highly pertinent:

> "Honestly, I feel ashamed to be a member of parliament, after seeing how the parliament in Mandraka operates in terms of its function! They truly give voice to and promote the aspirations of the *rakyat*, so much so that the people feel that these politicians are indeed suitable as people's representatives. After coming home from the "Tour de Mandraka", every

night I haven't been able to sleep, I've been terrified! Me, and it seems like my fellow parliamentarians as well, have all this time been deceiving the *rakyat*, we've betrayed the *rakyat*! Oh, my God...." (crying).[48] (p. 125)

Here, through the emotional outpouring of an (apparently) repentant politician, we see a different attitude from one of Indonesia's political elite, and perhaps even a tongue-in-cheek expression from Agusta Wibisono himself of a new confidence in the sociopolitical power of fiction. The extent to which fiction can foreshadow and symbolically enact political action will be explored in the next chapter, which will examine the variety of ways in which Indonesian writers appropriated the Ramayana epic.

[48] "Terus terang, saya merasa malu menjadi anggota parlemen, setelah melihat betapa parlemen di Mandraka berjalan sesuai dengan "fungsi"nya! Mereka benar-benar menyalurkan dan memperjuangkan aspirasi rakyat, sehingga rakyat merasa bahwa mereka memang pantas dijadikan sebagai wakil rakyat. Setelah pulang dari "Tour de Mandraka" ini, setiap malam saya tidak bisa tidur, saya merasa ketakutan! Saya, dan agaknya juga teman-teman saya sesama anggota parlemen, selama ini telah membohongi rakyat, kami telah mengkhianati rakyat! Oh, Tuhanku..." (menangis).

6

Indonesian Writers and the Ramayana in the New Order[1]

"The essence of the Romo Tambak tale should be that all of the Indonesian people, in facing hardship and evil, not merely rely on the invulnerability of a person, whoever that person may be. Instead, they must unite in an underlying spirit of mutual-help as well as the spirit of *Manunggaling Kawula lan Gusti*, unity between the government and the people".[2]
PAKU BUWONO XII

Introduction: The *Rama Tambak* Phenomenon

In January 1998, at about the same time that the Asian economic crisis began to dramatically affect Indonesia's previously prosperous middle classes and the urban and rural poor, the Indonesian government sought a 'spiritual solution' to the crisis. The Minister for Tourism, Post and Telecommunication, Joop Ave, suggested the performance of a particular wayang tale, *Rama Tambak*. Located in the Ramayana cycle of tales, *Rama Tambak* recounts Rama's attempt to

[1] This chapter is a revised version of my essay, "Shadow-Boxing: Indonesian Writers and the Ramayana in the New Order," accepted for publication in *Indonesia*, 72 (October 2001, forthcoming).
[2] "Inti pesan lakon Romo Tambak itu, hendaknya seluruh rakyat Indonesia dalam menghadapi kesulitan dan keangkaramurkaan, tidak hanya mengandalkan kedigdayaan seseorang- siapa pun orangnya. Tetapi harus bersatu-padu dengan dilandasi semangat gotong royong serta semangat

rescue his kidnapped wife, Sinta, from the clutches of the evil King of Alengka, Rahwana (also known as Dasamuka). Alengka is an island kingdom: to rescue his wife Rama must transport his army of monkeys, which is under the leadership of Hanoman and Sugriwa, across the sea. Being an incarnation of the god Wisnu, Rama therefore decides to shoot his powerful arrow, the Gunawijaya, into the waves. This arrow will dry out the water and allow his army to cross over on foot. But just in time, the Sea God Baruna manages to convince Rama not to do so since the 'environmental impact' would be catastrophic.[3] Thus, Rama decides instead to build a colossal *tambak*, or causeway, linking the two land-masses. Eventually with the help, cooperation, and sacrifice of thousands of monkeys, the causeway is successfully completed, despite constant attacks by Alengka's hordes of crocodiles, crabs, and ogres. As soon as Alengka is in sight, a command post is constructed and the final assault is launched.

In the hope that *Rama Tambak* would have a positive impact upon the economic crisis, Joop Ave allocated 150 million rupiah for the project.[4] Billions of dollars had already been committed to the Indonesian economy through the IMF,[5] without any tangible signs of success. A mere 150 million rupiah for an artistic and spiritual 'solution' to Indonesia's grave economic condition, with no strings attached, may have seemed a bargain, at least from the perspective of the

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Manunggaling Kawula lan Gusti, persatuan antara pemerintah dan rakyat". "Pentaskan Wayang Kulit 'Rama Tambak,'" *Kompas*, January 19, 1998.

[3] According to one of the leading *dalang* of Yogyakarta, Ki Timbul Hadiprayitno, Baruna tells Rama that even if he succeeded in removing the water, his troops would find it quite slow and difficult crossing the ocean floor, as it is covered with mountains. See Bersihar Lubis, Kastoyo Ramelan and Joko Syahban, "Rebut Sinta, Pulihkan Rupiah," *Gatra*, February 7, 1998, p. 106.

[4] See "'Rama Tambak' dalam Gejolak Moneter," *Suara Merdeka*, February 5, 1998.

[5] In early November 1997 the IMF approved roughly US$10 billion in financial support. See Mark McGillivray and Oliver Morrisey, "Economic and financial meltdown in Indonesia: prospects for sustained and equitable economic and social recovery," in *Reformasi: Crisis and Change in Indonesia*, pp. 19-20.

Indonesian government. The first performance was held in Jakarta on February 13, 1998, led by Ki Manteb Sudharsono, long considered the leading *dalang* of Surakarta. Shown live on the state television station, TVRI, and broadcast live on the state radio station, RRI, Ki Manteb's performance was enhanced by over 80 gamelan musicians and singers, a screen 17 metres wide, the use of dry ice, and special sound and light effects.[6] Over the next week performances were also given in Bandung, Surabaya, Semarang, Yogyakarta, and Solo. Apart from Ki Manteb, the shadow puppeteers involved included another highly respected Solo-based *dalang*, Ki Anom Suroto, the senior Yogyakarta-based *dalang*, Ki Timbul Hadiprayitno, the leading Bandung-based *wayang golèk* puppeteer, Asep Sunandar Sunarya, the popular Tegal-based *dalang*, Ki Enthus Susmono, and the lesser known Ki Suryanto Purbocarito and Ki Wisnu Warsito.

Solichin, the chairman of the pro-government wayang shadow puppeteering organisation Senawangi, observed that the timing of the project was very important, because the crisis facing the Indonesian nation strongly resembled the crisis confronting Rama, whose kidnapped wife Sinta could easily be seen as a representation of the goddess Dewi Pertiwi, the symbolic embodiment of Indonesia herself.[7] Meanwhile Wirabumi, the son-in-law of the Susuhunan of Surakarta, Paku Buwono XII, likened the kidnapped Sinta to the rupiah's dollar exchange-rate, which desperately needed rescuing.[8] Joop Ave preferred to view the kidnapped Sinta not so much as the exchange rate in

[6] See "Rama Tambak Digelar Penuh Gebyar," *Suara Merdeka*, February 14, 1998, "Membendung Krisis ala Sri Rama," *Forum Keadilan*, 6, 24 (March 9, 1998): 65.
[7] "Membendung Krisis ala Sri Rama."
[8] "Pentaskan Wayang Kulit 'Rama Tambak,'" *Kompas*, January 19, 1998.

particular, but rather the Indonesian economy as a whole.[9] Furthermore, a month before the performances, Joop Ave observed publicly that *Rama Tambak* was the very same *lakon* performed for President Suharto whenever he faced serious problems in the early years of his presidency.[10] Perhaps the embattled Suharto felt that it was time to revive his earlier association with Hanoman, who is also the key to Rama's eventual success.

In addition, on January 17 of 1998, the same day that Joop Ave invited Indonesia's leading *dalang* to perform *Rama Tambak*, Paku Buwono XII was reported to have received a *wisik* [a message from a god or some other supernatural power] during the first *ruwatan* [ritual purification ceremony] held in the Surakarta palace in 253 years. The *wisik* suggested that for the sake of the nation *Rama Tambak* be performed.[11] As suggested by the Susuhunan in the quotation at the start of this chapter, the *Rama Tambak* tale enacts the important philosophical idea of *Manunggaling Kawula lan Gusti*, or unity between the common people and the state. Hence, by watching and listening to *Rama Tambak*, the Indonesian *kawula* or *rakyat* [common people] would see that the only way out of the economic crisis was to unite behind the same philosophy and work with one another and with their *gusti*, the Indonesian government. The next section, after very briefly examining the immediate critical and artistic responses to the *Rama Tambak* phenomenon, will focus on the ways in which literary appropriations of the characters and tales of the Ramayana radically diverged from this pro-government *Manunggaling Kawula lan Gusti* interpretation.

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[9] "'Rama Tambąk' dan Krisis Ekonomi," *Kedaulatan Rakyat*, January 8, 1998.
[10] "Rebut Sinta, Pulihkan Rupiah."

Rama Tambak vs. *Politik Dosomuko Rezim Orde Baru*

In the days and weeks following the *Rama Tambak* performances the reaction from cultural critics and journalists was cool, to say the least.[12] The shows appeared to be dynamic and innovative in their presentation, yet ultimately they lacked the gravity that the occasion, and the preceding media hype, demanded. True enough, it was widely reported that Ki Manteb had actually fasted for two days and two nights prior to the show, and practised with his musicians intensively for a week, treating his *Rama Tambak* performance more seriously than any other he had ever performed. Afterwards, he had even claimed it as the pinnacle of his illustrious career. It was also well-publicised that Ki Manteb had intended to imbue his performance with an "authoritative" element, and the huge screen and light and sound effects were seen as an integral part of this strategy. However, the glitz and glamour dominated to such an extent that it overshadowed any "authoritative" essence. Furthermore, by focusing on the political intrigues of the *ksatria*, the important role of the monkeys was overlooked. A magazine review described Manteb's performance in the following way:

> It's a pity that in Manteb's performance the very authority that he had hoped for was in fact overwhelmed by the flashiness on show. Also missing was a focus on the role of the *rakyat*. The problem was, what dominated was

[11] "Pentaskan Wayang Kulit 'Rama Tambak.'"
[12] See "Rama Tambak Digelar Penuh Gebyar,"; "Ruwatan 'Rama Tambak' Dianggap Tidak Lebih dari Hiburan," *Suara Merdeka*, February 16, 1998; "Penonton tak Terusir di 'Rama

the intrigue between court officials who wanted to render their services. This was as much to do with monkey commanders such as Anila and Anggada, as with Sugriwa's suspicion towards Gunawan Wibisana, Rahwana's brother, who deserted and joined Sri Rama's side. Meanwhile the *rakyat*, even though their sacrifice was the greatest, as in other wayang tales as usual, they were not put centre-stage. Perhaps, we don't need to be worried about too much. After all, that's usually what happens to the *rakyat* outside the wayang.[13]

Also in 1998, in stark contrast to the *dalang* involved in the *Rama Tambak* phenomenon, Indonesian writers and political activists were making no secret of the fact that they saw the monkeys as a metaphor for the Indonesian masses and Rahwana as a perfect metaphor for Suharto. As a reflection of this, consider the following *pantun* poem,[14] which was entered into a *'Plesetan Pantun'* [Play on *Pantun*] competition in a Yogyakarta newspaper soon after Suharto resigned as president:

A young couple were riding on their bikes

Tambak,'" *Kompas*, February 16, 1998; "'Rama Tambak' di Sala Gagal 'Nambak Guyonan,'" *Suara Merdeka*, February 24, 1998; "Membendung Krisis ala Sri Rama."

[13] "Sayangnya, dalam pergelaran Manteb, kewingitan yang diharapkannya justru tertindih oleh kemegahan yang tampil. Yang juga luput adalah sorotan terhadap peran rakyat. Soalnya, yang banyak muncul justru adalah intrik di antara punggawa yang ingin berbuat jasa. Baik sesama pasukan kera seperti antara Anila dan Anggada, maupun kecurigaan Sugriwa terhadap Gunawan Wibisana, adik Rahwana, yang membelot ke kubu Sri Rama. Sementara rakyat, kendati paling berat pengorbanannya, apa boleh buat, seperti halnya dalam cerita wayang lainnya, tidak mendapat tempat utama. Barangkali, itu memang tak perlu terlalu dirisaukan. Soalnya, itulah pula yang lazim terjadi pada rakyat di luar panggung wayang". "Membendung Krisis ala Sri Rama."

[14] A *pantun* is a form of traditional Malay poetry in which each quatrain consists of two rhymed couplets. The first couplet is linked with the second couplet both through its sound and through allusion, although the point of the allusion is often difficult to grasp.

Roaming very very far

After three decades and two years

An end came to the story about that guy Dasamuka.[15]

Cheerfully referring to the end of Suharto's 32 years as president of Indonesia, this poem is testament enough to the widespread conceptualisation, and representation, of Suharto as a latter-day Rahwana/Dasamuka. T-shirts designed and printed in Solo early in 1998,[16] depicting a caricature of Rahwana strongly resembling Suharto as the gaoler of the many missing student activists at the time, also reinforced the image of the President as an 'evil kidnapper', intent on thwarting the student-led *reformasi* movement.

A similar theme was developed at the same time by Soebadio Sastrosatomo, the aged Sukarno-era socialist leader and author of *Politik Dosomuko Rezim Orde Baru* (1998). Soebadio's book, which is based on a humourless reading of the Ramayana's oppositional conflict between Dasamuka and the monkey army, undeniably represents Suharto as Dasamuka and the monkeys as ordinary Indonesians. Throughout the 23 pages of *Politik Dosomuko*, Soebadio is scathing in his attack on Suharto's 'evil' rule, claiming that throughout Suharto's presidency the Indonesian people were harshly oppressed. The dominant motif of this highly polemical text is the conceit that Suharto began and continued his rule of Indonesia in the same manner as Dasamuka had done in Alengka. Under the heading 'Dosomuko's Political System', Soebadio bitterly

[15] Dua sejoli bersepeda/ Jauh di sana berkelana/ Usia tridasa dwiwarsa/ Tamat lakon si-Dasamuka. S. Maharani, *Minggu Pagi*, 51, 8 (July 1998).
[16] My thanks to Helen Pausacker, who was living in Solo at the time, for showing me one of these T-shirts.

claims that Dasamuka's ten faces represent ten aspects of Suharto's regime: the eradication of the sovereignty of the people, the manipulation of the Pancasila as a means of political control, the neutralisation of the legal system, the repression of political parties and workers' unions, the emasculation of the parliament, the censorship of the mass media, the development of an economy rife with nepotism, corruption, and collusion, the de-intellectualisation of the education system, the standardisation of culture, and the violation of basic human rights (pp. 3-4).

Marc Perlman has observed that Soebadio's "blistering" comparison between Dasamuka and Suharto's regime would do many a *dalang* proud.[17] Significantly, *Politik Dosomuko* appeared in February 1998, and was banned and withdrawn from sale on April 22 of the same year, in the month before Suharto's resignation.[18] This shows how seriously, and personally, such writing was taken by the President, confirming the remarks of a nine-teenth century editor of Aesop: "A tyrant cannot take notice of a Fable without putting on the cap that fits".[19] Suharto had every reason to be concerned. The timely appearance of Soebadio's text indicated that in the hearts and minds of ordinary Indonesians in early 1998, the characters and stories of the Ramayana had much more in common with the subversive sentiments of the *reformasi* movement than the hollow *Manunggaling Kawula lan Gusti* exhortations of the state-sponsored *Rama Tambak* performances. As will become evident when we examine a number of the literary interpretations

[17] Marc Perlman, "The Traditional Javanese Performing Arts in the Twilight of the New Order: Two Letters from Solo," *Indonesia*, 68 (October 1999): 1-37.
[18] See "Buku "Politik Dosomuko" Karya Soebadio Dilarang," *Kompas*, May 8, 1998; and "Soebadio Sastrosatomo Tutup Usia," *Kompas*, December 8, 1998.
[19] Joseph Jacobs, quoted in Annabel Patterson, *Fables of Power* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), p. 17.

of the Ramayana cycle in more detail, the social embeddedness of the texts stretches well beyond obvious associations between Rahwana and Suharto. Imaginative appropriations of other Ramayana characters such as Wibisana, Sinta, and Hanoman also mediate between the world of myth and contemporary Indonesia. Furthermore, we will also find that socially and politically engaged literary interpretations of the Ramayana appeared in Indonesia long before early 1998. For example, Sindhunata's Ramayana-based novel, *Anak Bajang Menggiring Angin*, was first published in 1983. Beginning with a discussion of Sindhunata's novel, the remainder of this chapter will focus on the innovative forms that various reworkings of the Ramayana have taken, the subversive values they embody, and the many intriguing ways in which they contested the symbolic authority of Suharto and his New Order regime.

Sindhunata's *Anak Bajang Menggiring Angin*: Liberating the 'Ugly Ones'

Sindhunata was born in Malang, East Java, on May 12, 1952. An ordained Catholic priest who is also a writer, essayist and journalist, he is best known for his cultural columns and soccer commentaries. In 1992 Sindhunata graduated in Germany with a PhD in philosophy, and he currently works in Yogyakarta as editor of the Catholic cultural studies magazine, *Basis*. Sindhunata's first novel, the highly poetic *Anak Bajang Menggiring Angin* [The Little Runt Herding the Wind] (1983), is closely based on the Ramayana cycle of tales. However, thematically *Anak Bajang* is quite innovative, reflecting an understated commitment to social and political reform. The key innovation in Sindhunata's novel is the emphasis placed on representing the marginal figures in the stories of

the Ramayana cycle: the monkeys, the demons, and the ogres.[20] In the wayang today, the monkeys are usually regarded as symbolic representations of the Indonesian *rakyat*. This symbolism is embraced in *Anak Bajang*, with the addition of ogres and demons, who are also treated as representations of the *rakyat*. Considering that in the early 1980s the New Order's heavily-Javanised cultural hegemony was at the height of its strength, shifting the wayang's *ksatria*-oriented focus into a *rakyat*-oriented framing is a significant philosophical transformation, which carries important social and political resonances.

Another distinctive feature of Sindhunata's novel is its highly lyrical prose style. It could be argued that the lyrical language and style of *Anak Bajang* harks back to the world of Javanese tradition, a common literary motif of the 1980s, when several major texts conveyed regional traditions in a nostalgic fashion.[21] It could also be argued that Sindhunata was under the stylistic influence of the other Yogyakarta-based Catholic priest and writer, Y.B. Mangunwijaya, who also often wrote in a highly lyrical manner. Nevertheless, Sindhunata says that the 'highly poetic' style of *Anak Bajang* is not so much based on the style of any other Indonesian writer, or the wayang for that matter. Instead, it is based on the lyricised 'folk' style popularised by one of Spain's leading socialist writers of the twentieth century, Federico Garcia Lorca.[22] Just as Lorca rewrote folk tales in

[20] In terms of theatre, the monkeys are not marginal at all in the Ramayana cycle. Some *dalang* deliberately choose to perform stories from the Ramayana, or at the very least incorporate a Ramayana character such as the monkey Hanoman into non-Ramayana performances, so that they can show off their ability to perform the spectacular fighting movements of the monkeys. As a consequence, stories from the Ramayana are often referred to as 'lakon kethek' [monkey tales]. See Jan Mrázek, "Phenomenology of a Puppet Theatre: Contemplations on the Performance Technique of Contemporary Javanese Wayang Kulit" (PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 1998), pp. 102-103.

[21] Barbara Hatley, "Cultural Expression."

[22] Sindhunata, "Semar dan Estetika Kejelekan," in *Bayang-Bayang Ratu Adil* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1999), pp. 211-228.

lyrical prose as a means of strengthening the political consciousness of his fellow countrymen, in *Anak Bajang* Sindhunata uses a similar style to revitalise and transform what he felt was the 'narrow' confines of wayang, in order to inspire the people of Indonesia to take their sociopolitical fate into their own hands.

Unlike a standard wayang performance, which usually begins in the first scene with a lengthy description of the palace and the state of the kingdom featuring in the first scene, Sindhunata's novel begins with a poem introducing some of the devils and demons that so heavily populate his version of the Ramayana. After a lengthy foray into the calamitous events surrounding the birth of the evil Rahwana and his siblings, Kumbakarna and Sarpakanaka, minimal attention is given to Rama and Sinta, who are usually the central figures of the Ramayana. In the author's words,

> I abandoned the old way which usually glorified the beauty of the *satria* and human beings. The main characters of *Anak Bajang* were not *satria* such as Rama or Sinta, but rather those who have been categorised as the ugly ones, such as the monkeys, the ogres and the formless creatures inhabiting the world of spirits.[23]

This focus was quite deliberate, and highlighted Sindhunata's desire to promote his vision of both the need for and the means by which social and political transformation could take place in Indonesia. According to Sindhunata, the

[23] "Saya meninggalkan cara lama yang biasanya mengagungkan keindahan para satria dan manusia. Pelaku utama *Anak Bajang* bukanlah para ksatria seperti Rama dan Sinta, melainkan mereka-mereka yang tergolong jelek, seperti kera, raksasa dan makhluk-makhluk tak berbentuk di alam alus." ibid, p. 218.

wayang has traditionally represented virtue as sharply contrasted with evil, and the former always defeats the latter in the end.[24] However, Sindhunata argues that such a rigid polarity leaves little room to explore the more ambiguous 'grey' areas of reality, not to mention the everyday struggles of human nature, where one must overcome one's inherent sinfulness in order to allow goodness and virtue to prevail. In *Anak Bajang*, by juxtaposing the marginal beings of the wayang world with the *ksatria*, Sindhunata addresses more fully these ambiguities of human nature. This thematic focus is part of what Sindhunata terms an "aesthetics of ugliness", a literary strategy inspired by the nineteenth-century German philosopher Karl Rosenkranz.[25] An aesthetics of ugliness rests on the hermeneutic notion that if cultural expression intends to depict the interconnected totality of human existence, then it must show, for example, that beauty co-exists with ugliness, or that sickness is in a constant dialectic with health, and vice versa.

The key to understanding the sociopolitical significance of the marginal beings in *Anak Bajang* lies in grasping the symbolism of their 'ugliness'. Three human siblings - Guwarsa, Guwarsi, and Dewi Anjani - are personally confronted by this 'ugliness' when they are transformed into monkeys.[26] These children are distraught at this turn of events, and when their father, Resi Gotama, discovers them, he is overcome with grief. However, Resi Gotama soon checks himself and realises the positive aspect of his children's transformation. Their suffering, he claims, will become a crucial factor in fighting the evil Rahwana:

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[24] ibid, p. 222.
[25] ibid, p. 217.
[26] Guwarsa and Guwarsi become monkeys after they dive into a lake in search of the Cupu Manik Astagina, a magical pillbox containing visions of the past and the future. The box was their sister Dewi Anjani's keepsake, a gift from her mother, Dewi Windradi, which was in turn a gift from her lover, the sun-god Batara Surya. After Dewi Windradi's husband, Resi Gotama, discovered his

"Guwarsa, Guwarsi, and Anjani, my children. Don't be sad. For the world now greatly yearns for your suffering at the moment. You have become monkeys, abject creatures. But precisely by being monkeys you will be aware of your true natures as *titah* [creatures], who are nothing in the face of their Creator."

"Over there across the sea, wickedness and pride are enthroned in an earthly creature, who desires to reach above his station as a *titah* [...] His wickedness and pride can only be subdued by those who are aware of themselves as *titah*, as small, and as insignificant. This pride can only be subdued by humility, my children. Be happy you three, because it is precisely by being in the form of monkeys that you will easily be aware of yourselves as *titah*."[27]

Although both Rahwana and the monkeys are described as *titah* [an Old Javanese word taken up by Javanese Catholicism to mean one of God's creatures or creations], there is a vast difference in outlook between them. Unlike Rahwana, who thinks he is some kind of god, the monkeys are very much aware that they are not 'complete' as human beings: "kera adalah *titah* yang merindukan

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wife's infidelity, he threw the pillbox into a lake. Soon after Guwarsa and Guwarsi attempted to retrieve the box, Dewi Anjani dived into the lake. She also resurfaced covered in monkey fur.

[27] "Guwarsa, Guwarsi, dan Anjani, anakku. Janganlah kau bersedih. Sebab penderitaanmu saat ini sangat diinginkan dunia. Kau telah menjadi kera, makhluk yang hina. Tapi justru sebagai kera itulah kau akan menyadari hakekat dirimu sebagai *titah*, yang tiada artinya apa-apa di hadapan *Penciptanya*."

"Di seberang sana, telah bertahta kejahatan dan kesombongan dalam diri seorang makhluk dunia, yang ingin melebihkan dirinya sebagai seorang *titah* [...] Kesombongannya dan kejahatannya tidak dapat ditaklukkan oleh siapa pun juga, kecuali oleh mereka yang menyadari diri sebagai *titah*, yang kecil, dan tak berarti apa-apa. Kesombongan itu hanya bisa ditaklukkan

kesempurnaan manusia" [monkeys are *titah* longing for the completeness of human beings] (p. 43). By accepting their incompleteness, the monkeys are thus more inclined towards enduring suffering with humility, forebearance, and hope, ultimately ensuring that "dari penderitaan itulah dunia akan memperoleh kebahagiaannya" [from that very suffering the world will obtain its happiness] (p. 43). The chastened Guwarsa and Guwarsi, whose names are changed to Sugriwa and Subali, thus go off to meditate. For their efforts, they are rewarded by the gods with supernatural powers. For example, Subali is given the sacred mantra, *Pancasona*, which guaranteed him invincibility in battle as long as his body never lost contact with the ground. Later, Subali and Sugriwa bitterly oppose each other. However, their feud seals the alliance between Sugriwa and Rama for the invasion of Alengka to rescue Rama's abducted wife.

After being transformed into a monkey Dewi Anjani also chooses to meditate, and her humility and suffering is rewarded by the gods with her conception and birth of Hanoman, who is "sangat dinanti-nantikan" [greatly awaited] (p. 47). Of course, Hanoman was also instrumental in the defeat of Rahwana. Reflecting Sindhunata's Catholic faith, Dewi Anjani's Mary-like qualities of suffering, servitude, and humility - which are also embodied in her son, the messianic Hanoman - are emphasised as the means to overcoming the evil of Rahwana. The Christ-like sentiments associated with the monkeys, and Hanoman in particular, is an important link between *Anak Bajang* and Sindhunata's later wayang-based novel, *Semar Mencari Raga* (1996), in which

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dengan kerendahan hati, Anakku. Berbahagialah kamu bertiga, karena kamu akan dengan mudah menyadari dirimu sebagai *titah*, justru dalam rupa kera." (pp. 42-43)

Semar is portrayed as a debased yet redemptive leader of the masses against an oppressive power.

Although the monkeys of *Anak Bajang* are not explicitly linked with the *rakyat* of Indonesia, in a large number of Sindhunata's essays, the *rakyat* is presented as the saving grace of the Indonesian state. For example, in one essay, "Petruk Dadi Ratu" [Petruk Becomes King],[28] based on the famous *lakon* where Petruk becomes king after Abimanyu, his master, falls ill, the clown-servant Petruk describes the crucial role of the *rakyat* in the kingdom's governance. Reminiscing in his old age, Petruk describes how when he became king he named himself Lord Wel-Geduwel-Beh, legalised opium smoking, and promoted gambling until it was the kingdom's number one sport. However, despite possessing the necessary three holy *wahyu* [divine rights to rule], he was unable to sit firmly on Palasara, the throne of Astina, as he kept falling off. The only way he could remain on the throne was by letting Abimanyu sit on his lap. At that point Petruk realised his true calling was as a member of the *rakyat*, best suited to supporting the king on his throne, "menyempurnakan hidup raja" [to perfect the life of the king] (p. 149). By the same token, Petruk warned that a king cannot rule properly without the help of the *rakyat* holding him up. If a king were to rule without respecting the rights of the *rakyat*, he would soon lose his *wahyu*. The king's complete dependence on the *rakyat* was emphasised when Petruk recounted that when Abimanyu died on the battlefield of the Baratayuda his body was picked up and buried by Petruk himself. In short, according to Petruk, "Raja dan rakyat itu harus *wengku winengku*, rangkul-merangkul, pangku memangku,

[28] Sindhunata, "Petruk Dadi Ratu," in *Bayang-Bayang Ratu Adil*, pp. 146-150.

seperti singa dan hutan, seperti Abimanyu dan Petruk" [the king and the *rakyat* must look after each-other, embrace each-other, support each-other, like a lion and the jungle, like Abimanyu and Petruk] (p. 150).

In the pages of *Anak Bajang* it is quite clear that like Abimanyu, Rama is very much dependent on the help of the *rakyat*. This dependence is reflected in a physical sense by Rama's reliance on Hanoman to locate Sinta, as well as his total dependence on Sugriwa and his monkey army to build a causeway to Alengka and then launch the final onslaught on Rahwana and his allies. Furthermore, as I have discussed, Sindhunata suggests that it is through the suffering and the humility of the monkeys, and their acute awareness of their station in life as *titah*, creations of God, that the arrogance and evil of Rahwana will be overcome. The final scene of the novel, depicting young monkey and ogre children playing together in blissful ignorance of the fate of either their parents or of Rahwana, Rama and Sinta, foreshadows an optimistic and egalitarian future for the descendants of the characters of the Ramayana, and thus for Indonesia itself.

When viewed as a metaphor for the Indonesian nation, the poetic style of the *Anak Bajang* merges the 'ugly' state of the *rakyat* under the Suharto regime with the hope of a 'beautiful' and 'new' Indonesia emerging from within the very heart of the New Order. According to Sindhunata,

> poetry has the most freedom to remove itself as far as possible from the empirical realities that ensure that ugliness stays as ugliness. Poetry needs to discover that ugliness, then purify it from elements such as uncertainty,

formlessness, ephemerality and randomness, and then embody all these aspects in a new form of beauty.[29]

Sindhunata's novel, rhetorically enacting a mobilisation of the hitherto marginalised monkeys masses though it does, is in a sense a 'straight' reading of the Ramayana. The following texts which I discuss do not take the Ramayana seriously in its own right at all, preferring instead to use it as a springboard for humorous parody and scathing social and political satire.

Sinta and the New Order 'Social Contract' in Whani Darmawan's "Kabesmen"

In late 1997 and throughout 1998, soon after the onset of the Asian financial crisis, a significant number of short stories, poems, plays, and newspaper columns featuring Ramayana stories and characters appeared.[30] Examples of literary allusions to the Ramayana in 1997 and 1998 include Made Adnanya Ole's short story, "Rahasia Gambuh" [The Secret of Gambuh], (1997)[31]; Sriyono's short story, "Culik," [Kidnap] (1998)[32]; Nano Riantiarno's play, *Opera Hanoman* [Hanoman's Opera], 1998; Soni Farid Maulana's poem, "Sepucuk Surat Sita Sebelum Labuh Pati," [A Letter From Sita Before Her Odeal] (1998)[33]; Putu Wijaya's play, *Ngeh*

[29] "puisi yang paling mempunyai kebebasan untuk menarik diri sejauh mungkin dari realita-realita empiris yang mengikat kejelekan itu sebagai kejelekan. Puisi perlu menemukan kejelekan itu, lalu "menyucikan" kejelekan itu dari unsur-unsurnya seperti ketidakmenentuan, ketidakbentukan, kefanaan dan keserbakebetulan, lalu mengidealisasikan semuanya itu ke dalam bentuk keindahan baru." Sindhunata, *Bayang-Bayang Ratu Adil*, p. 218.
[30] Of course, the following observations merely update G.J Resink's visionary article, "From the Old Mahabaharata."
[31] Made Adnanya Ole, "Rahasia Gambuh," *Horison*, 32, 10 (1997): 25-30.
[32] Sriyono, "Culik," *Kedaulatan Rakyat*, May 3, 1998.
[33] "Sepucuk Surat Sita Sebelum Labuh Pati" was first written in 1998 and published in Soni Farid Maulana, *Kita Lahir Sebagai Dongengan* (Magelang: IndonesiaTera, 2000), pp. 66-67. Note that *labuh*

[Got It], 1998; and Ki Sunu's series of Ramayana parodies appearing in the Sunday edition of the Surabaya-based newspaper, *Jawa Pos*, from September 1997 to January 1999. In the year or two after Suharto's resignation, Ramayana characters and motifs continue to proliferate in various literary forms, such as in Sunaryono Basuki Ks.'s short story, "Gadis Kecil dan Mahkota Raja" [A Small Girl and the King's Crown], (1999)[34]; the title poem of Asep S. Sambodja's collection, *Menjelma Rahwana* [Becoming Rahwana] (1999)[35]; Linus Suryadi's unpublished novel *Kisah Dewi Anjani* [The Tale of Dewi Anjani], which was read as a performance (accompanied by a *gamelan* orchestra) in Yogyakarta on February 10-11, 1999, just before Linus passed away; Bonari Nabonenar's "Tata" (2001)[36] and Seno Gumira Ajidarma's forthcoming novel based on the characters and tales of the Ramayana.[37]

One of the Ramayana-based short stories appearing in early 1998, "Kabesmen" [On Fire],[38] was written by Whani Darmawan, a young playwright and writer based in Yogyakarta.[39] In this short story, when Hanoman is sent to Alengka to ascertain the welfare of Sinta, he discovers more than he bargained for: a naked Sinta sleeping with an equally naked Rahwana. Exhaustive in its unflattering portrayal of both Rahwana and Sinta, "Kabesmen" is a savage indictment of the hypocritical selfishness and corruption of Indonesia's privileged

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pati is a Javanese term for a scene in the Ramayana where after her rescue, Sinta must prove her purity by ascending a burning pyre. Some versions say that she is consumed by the fire, others that she emerges unharmed.

[34] Sunaryono Basuki Ks., "Gadis Kecil dan Mahkota Raja," *Jawa Pos*, May 21, 1999.

[35] Asep S. Sambodja, *Menjelma Rahwana* (Jakarta: Komunitas Bambu, 1999), p. 12.

[36] Bonari Nabonenar, "Tata," *Suara Merdeka*, January 8, 2001.

[37] Interview with Seno Gumira Ajidarma, Jakarta, November 17, 2000.

[38] Whani Darmawan, "Kabesmen," *Basis*, 47, 1-2 (January-February 1998): 82-87.

[39] Under the guidance and encouragement of poet and playwright Emha Ainun Nadjib, Whani has been writing and performing in both Javanese and Indonesian for almost ten years. Born in

elite. Consider the following passage, depicting Sinta's rationale for what she is doing:

> For her, people should use every moment to renew themselves. The past is best treated as a time forever lost. Sinta wanted to forge a career as a famous woman, without caring what sort of career. As a consequence, she decided not to regret her past history. For her, loyalty and fortitude had changed their meanings: now they were synonyms for stupidity and uselessness. Sinta had decided to share her bed with Rahwana even though she didn't love him.
>
> "Your charade is brilliant, Sinta. What a success," puffed a tired Rahwana. "You're my watermelon."
>
> "And you are my golden banana. Go and publicise this refusal of mine, so that the *pakem* plots about us remains unchanged, forever closing the door to democratic values. So go and angrily fume away with your ten faces so that the world may keep on regarding me as a pure woman and keep on regarding you as the embodiment of evil. A world that rejects revolution is sure to accept such an idol as this."
>
> Rahwana immediately burst into laughter. (p. 85)[40]

Yogyakarta on May 24, 1966, Whani has experimented with wayang characters and plots on a number of occasions, most notably in his 1998 theatre production, *Karno Tanding*.

[40] "Baginya, dalam setiap detik manusia senantiasa harus memperbarui dirinya. Masa lalu sebaiknya diperlakukan sebagai masa yang hilang. Sinta ingin mengejar karier sebagai wanita ternama, tak peduli sebagai apa. Karenanya, ia memutuskan untuk tidak menyesali pada sejarah yang sudah dilaluinya. Kesetiaan dan ketahanan baginya telah berubah makna, semacam kebodohan dan kesia-siaan. Sinta telah memutuskan bercinta dengan Rahwana meski ia tak mencintainya.

"Begitu hebatnya sandiwaramu, Dinda. Betapa berhasilnya." Engah Rahwana dalam lunglainya. "Engkaulah semangkaku, Dinda."

This passage shares much in common with Yudhistira's satire of Jakarta's urban elite in the late 1970s, especially in the malicious contradiction between the protagonists' stilted language and their modern bourgeois behaviour. For example, Sinta and Rahwana refer to eachother with stilted pronouns such as "Engkau" [you], "Dinda" [an affectionate 'literary' form of address for a wife or lover], and "Kanda" [an affectionate 'literary' form of address for a husband or lover]. Coupled with ludicrous terms of affection such as "my golden banana" and "my watermelon", these pronouns are used as obvious forms of mockery, highlighting the hypocritical nature of the text's protagonists. This is especially so for Sinta, who seeks comfort and corruption whilst deluding the outside world with her "sandiwara" [charade], which she uses to maintain the myth of her purity. Of course, this charade, besides making Rahwana laugh, does not fool Hanoman at all.

Whani's biting denouement to the story, in which small ogre-tusks appear to emerge from the corners of Sinta's mouth, suggests that our so-called heroine is not only in cahoots with Rahwana, but has even become a female version of her ogre-lover. If Sinta were to be treated as a metaphor for the Indonesian nation and its people, as she so often is,[41] one could argue that Sinta's marriage-of-convenience with Rahwana represents what has been termed the New Order 'social contract'. As a consequence of Indonesia's high levels of economic growth

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"Engkaulah pisang ambonku, Kanda. Terus kobarkanlah penolakanku ini. Agar *pakem-pakem* cerita tentang kita tak pernah berubah, tak pernah memberi ceruk ruang demokrasi nilai. Terus beranglah dengan muka sepuluhmu agar dunia tetap mengenalku sebagai wanita yang suci, agar menganggapmu tetap sebagai Durjana. Dunia yang menolak revolusi pasti menyetujui berhala ini."

Rahwana seketika menyalakkan tawanya.

during the first few decades of Suharto's regime, an unspoken 'social contract' came into being, whereby the upper and middle classes ceded their political rights in exchange for social order and the opportunity to pursue their dreams of upward economic mobility relatively unhindered.[42] Using Darmawan's story as a metaphor for the societal tensions of the Indonesian nation, in effect what we can see is that Sinta, a representation of the increasingly prosperous middle classes, is co-opted by Rahwana, who can be considered as a representation of the New Order regime. The next two stories to be discussed also use the Ramayana as a basis for satirical comment, with even more emphasis on the link between Rahwana and the New Order.

Pipit Rochijat's 'President Dosomuko': a Parody of Suharto

As discussed in Chapter Four, Pipit Rochijat Kartawidjaja is an Indonesian writer, émigré and activist based in West Berlin. In this chapter, I will return to his collection of wayang parodies, *Baratayuda di Negeri Antah Berantah* [The Baratayuda in Never-Never Land] (1993). Although sections of this collection have been discussed in detail earlier, this chapter would seem a logical place to examine Pipit's adaptations of the Ramayana. Again, as I have discussed in Chapter Four, Pipit's story-telling style is drawn from wayang comics as opposed to the Javanese shadow theatre proper. Nevertheless, in the first story of Pipit's collection, "Dan Apalah Artinya Kejayaan Itu, Kalow Toh Tak Mampu Melawan

[41] See earlier comments in this chapter, as well as A. S. Laksana's short story, "Air Mata Dewi Shinta," in *Podium Detik* (Yogyakarta: Sipress, 1995), pp. 49-52.

Guna-guna?" [And What's the Point of Being On Top, If You Still Can't Fight Black Magic?] (pp. 1-3) Pipit uses humorous literary devices similar to the standard narrative tools of a *dalang*, such as *plesetan* and *kérata basa*, or 'word play'. However, whether the techniques used are derived from an oral or literary tradition, ultimately the aim of Pipit's humor is to ensure that his version of Dasamuka - that is, President Dosomuko - is undoubtedly representing, and humiliating, none other than former President Suharto. Consider the following passage:

> After General Dosomuko succeeded in seizing power of the Republic of Lokapala, he promptly appointed himself to President and changed the name of the Republic of Lokapala to the Republic of Ngalengkodirjo. He chose this unique name deliberately as a warning for everybody. That is, to make them mindful that with the rise of General Dosomuko to President, the Republic of Ngalengkodirjo opened a new page in history. Because, according to the story he made up, Ngalengkodirjo means *Ngalahke Koboi Dadi Rojo* ("Defeating the Cowboys in Order to Become King") - in contrast to Lokapala ("the *Lokasi*[43] of the Head of State's Henchmen").[44](p. 1)

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[42] See "Introduction" by Edward Aspinall, Herb Feith and Gerry van Klinken in *The last days of President Suharto*, eds. Edward Aspinall, Herb Feith and Gerry van Klinken (Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 1999), pp. ii-iii.

[43] *'lokasi'* here refers to the New Order government's habit of formally concentrating places of prostitution and gambling in one neighbourhood, a process called 'localization.'

[44] "Setelah Jenderal Dosomuko berhasil merebut kekuasaan di Republik Lokapala, maka ia pun mengangkat diri menjadi presiden dan mengubah nama Republik Lokapala menjadi Republik Ngalengkodirjo. Nama unik ini sengaja dipilih untuk mengingatkan penduduknya. Bahwa dengan berkuasanya Jenderal Dosomuko menjadi presiden, Republik Ngalengkodirjo itu membuka lembaran sejarah baru. Sebab, menurut dongengnya, Ngalengkodirjo berarti *Ngalahke*

By using *kérata basa* to explicate the etymology of the kingdoms of Ngalengkodirjo and Lokapala, President Dosomuko's move to change the name of Lokapala to Ngalengkodirjo strongly resembles the New Order regime's manipulative naming of Sukarno's Indonesia as the 'Old Order' and post-Sukarno Indonesia as the 'New Order'.[45] Pipit's explication of the meaning of Lokapala as "Lokasinya Antek Kepala Negara" [The *Lokasi* of the Head of State's Henchmen] and Ngalengkodirjo as "Ngalahke Koboi Dadi Rojo" [Defeating the Cowboys In Order To Become King] also cleverly alludes to the violent fashion in which Suharto came to power. That is, Suharto became "king" by "defeating" the "cowboys", which could easily be taken to mean the ousting of Sukarno and the massacre of his *antek*, a word with a 1960s flavour used to refer to "henchmen" or "cronies". In this context, there is no doubt that Pipit is referring to Sukarno and the Communists and Sukarnoists.

Other parallels are drawn between President Dosomuko and Suharto. For example, just like Suharto, the power of President Dosomuko is based on military might, social repression, and the corruption of key public figures and institutions such as his political advisors and the legal profession. However, as a leader, President Dosomuko is a pathetic failure. No longer is he an all-powerful mythological king with the world at his feet. In Pipit's hands, Dosomuko's presidency is a sham, and in terms of running the nation he is totally dependent on his advisors, not to mention his military thugs. Furthermore, as will become

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Koboi Dadi Rojo ("Mengalahkan Koboi Menjadi Raja")- sebagai lawan dari Republik "Lokasinya Antek Kepala Negara" (Lokapala)."

[45] For more on *'kérata basa,'* see Chapter Four.

evident in the climax of Pipit's opening wayang narrative, the greater President Dosomuko's thirst for power the greater his powerlessness:

> Despite the fact that President Dosomuko had supernatural powers and couldn't be done in, he also had a weakness. According to palace whispers, he was once put under a spell by a famous *dukun*,[46] Maha Ageng, the result being that he needed to rest his vital organ for weeks on end, as it had swollen to the size of his thigh.
>
> Naturally, President Dosomuko's life became hell. Just imagine: even after picking up Dewi Sinta, the disco queen, he couldn't even get a kiss. Why? Well, she would only start screaming, probably thinking that the president's leg was in the wrong place. This was of course nothing compared to his wife, Nyai Dosomuko, who for some time had been on a full-scale rampage, due to the fact that the President had been unable to satisfy her natural urges. As a result, the President became stressed out. After all, even if he wanted to masturbate, it was impossible. Oh my God, how would he grip the thing?
>
> It was this bitter experience that finally led President Dosomuko to appoint Maha Ageng and all the other famous *dukun* as his personal bodyguards. Since then he has always been on his guard, in case his political opponents might fight dirty and use black magic.
>
> Thus President Dosomuko also knows that his personal safety cannot be fully guaranteed. His vital organ swelling up is just one indication of this.

[46] A *dukun* is defined by Ward Keeler as "a magic specialist to whom people turn for cures, advice, and other mystical assistance". Keeler, *Javanese Shadow Plays, Javanese Selves*, p. 269.

Luckily Maha Ageng is easily bribed. Of course, Maha Ageng has no idealism whatsoever.

But, what will happen if new *dukun* emerge- more powerful than Maha Ageng, and with a high idealism to boot- who decide to side with the President's political opponents ?[47] (pp. 2-3)

The attack on Suharto in this tale is twofold. As I have already tried to show, through President Dosomuko, Suharto is portrayed and denounced as an evil totalitarian dictator, comfortable with immorality, brutality, repression, and manipulation.[48] The humorous language of the tale, characterised by *plesetan, kérata basa,* and Pipit's linguistic 'comic-to-the-eye' idiosyncracies such as the amusing spelling of words ending in "-au" like "kalau" and "atau" as "kalow" and "atow", may present a softer edge to Pipit's satire.[49] However, the passage

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[47] Walowpun Presiden Dosomuko itu sakti mandraguna dan tak bisa dimampusin, ia punya kelemahan juga. Sebab, menurut desas-desus istana, ia pernah diguna-guna oleh seorang dukun terkenal, yaitu Maha Ageng, sehingga alat vitalnya pun harus berminggu-minggu mengaso sebab menjadi bengkak segede paha kakinya.

Tentu saja, Presiden Dasomuko menjadi sengsara. Coba: Dewi Sinta yang ratu disko dan baru digaet itu tak bisa dicumbui. Wah, wah, dia bisa jerit-jerit karena kaki Presiden Dosomuko dikira salah ngamar. Belum lagi bininya, Nyai Dosomuko, jadi ngamuk-ngamuk, sebab kebutuhannya tak bisa dipenuhi oleh Presiden Dosomuko. Makanya, ia pun jadi syaraf. Habis, mau onani juga tak mungkin. Olala, gimana dia harus megang?

Pengalaman pahit itulah yang akhirnya menyuruh Presiden Dosomuko mengangkat Maha Ageng dan dukun-dukun terkenal lainnya sebagai pengawal pribadinya. Dia selalu was-was, kalow-kalow lawan-lawan politiknya main curang dan menggunakan metode guna-guna.

Presiden Dosomuko pun tahu, bahwa jaminan keamanan seratus persen tak bisa dicapai. Dan membengkaknya alat vitalnya cuma merupakan satu bukti saja. Untung Maha Ageng bisa dibujuk. Sebab, Maha Ageng tak punya idealisme sama sekali.

Tapi, apa yang bekal terjadi, kalow muncul dukun-dukun baru yang lebih hebat ketimbang Maha Ageng dan beridealisme tinggi lalu memihak lawan-lawan politiknya?

[48] A similar perspective is presented in Yudhistira's collection of short stories, *Wawancara Dengan Rahwana* (Jakarta: Grafitipers, 1982), pp. 65-68. In the title story of the collection, the deceased Rahwana is interviewed in the afterlife by a particularly keen journalist, Sanjaya. Yudhistira's Rahwana believes that traces of his evil essense have infiltrated all authoritarian leaders, even suggesting that "Seorang penguasa yang baik harus sadis" [A good leader must be sadistic] (p. 68).

[49] For a more detailed discussion of the language in Pipit's *wayang mbeling,* see Chapter Four.

above, totally humiliating to the real President, shows us that Pipit's humour is deadly serious.

This leads us to the second prong of Pipit's attack, which is even more radical.[50] Referring to President Dosomuko's massively engorged penis as an "alat vital", the prim officialese "vital organ", Pipit's tale is a low blow, a dig not only at New Order Indonesian and Suharto's manhood, but also his wife, who is depicted as a sex-obsessed vamp. The humiliating image of President Dosomuko unable to masturbate also hits the President below the belt, in a strikingly crude way stripping the emperor of his clothes and exposing to public gaze his normally private activities. In the sense that Pipit's story depicts President Dosomuko as impotent and powerless, completely at the mercy of outside forces such as *dukun* working on the side of 'political opponents', it also foreshadows later events, in particular the well-documented economic and political events of late 1997 and 1998. In effect, Pipit, like one of his fictional *dukun*, claims a power that Suharto, even as self-proclaimed *'Bapak Pembangunan'* [Father of Development], lacked - the power to 'construct' the future. The next text to be discussed, a short story by Martin Suhartono, reveals precisely what the future held for Suharto: his 'abdication' from the presidency, an act Suharto himself referred to as *lengser keprabon.*

[50] The following analysis was inspired by J.M. Coetzee's analysis of Breyton Breytenbach's 1972 poem, "Letter from Foreign Parts to Butcher," which was banned for distribution in South Africa due to its references to the then Prime Minister Balthazar John Forster. See Coetzee, *Giving Offense*, pp. 215-32.

Revisiting *Lengser Keprabon*: Martin Suhartono's "Lengsernya Rahwana"

In a manner highly reminiscent of Pipit's insolent parody of Suharto, Martin Suhartono's "Lengsernya Rahwana" [The Abdication of Rahwana], published in July 1998, is another highly personalised attack on the legacies of Suharto's authoritarian rule.[51] As with Pipit's *wayang mbeling*, the importance of Suhartono's story lies in the way in which it displays the symptoms of the times and the changing society in which it appeared. The story's title is the most obvious clue that this tale is concerned, at different levels, with representing something of the truth and reality of late New Order Indonesia. Of course, "Lengsernya Rahwana" is easily recognised as a play on Suharto's much-discussed intention to follow what he regarded as a practice of wayang rulers, *'lengser keprabon, madeg pandhita,'* or 'abdicate' the presidency at the appropriate time.[52]

Using a flashback technique popularised by a number of Java's more progressive *dalang*, Suhartono's story opens with the death of Rahwana, and then through a shift in time-frame it recounts the birth of Rahwana and the series of misadventures leading to his death. Yet the story is by no means linear, and it often digresses into streams of highly politicised wayang exegesis and thinly-veiled allusions to Suharto and his regime. Consider the tongue-in-cheek combination of wayang discourse and references to Suharto and his governance in the story's dramatic opening passage:

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[51] Martin Suhartono, "Lengsernya Rahwana," *Basis*, 47, 7-8 (July-August 1998): 63-68.
[52] See Ben Anderson, "A Javanese king talks of his end," *Inside Indonesia*, 54 (April-June 1998): 16-17; and Franz Magnis-Suseno,"Langsir Keprabon."

> The ground shook, the sky thundered, the mountains shuddered, and the sea churned when Rahwana died. The entire cosmos was moved when Rahwana's ten heads were chopped off one by one and hit the ground. Nature was moved not because she was sad, of course. If she could, she would have sung out aloud *Sorak-Sorak Bergembira* [Shouts of Happiness], just like the majority of the people of the Kingdom of Nusantara when The Lord was dethroned by a landslide. The difference between The Lord and Rahwana was that Rahwana had the *Aji Pancasona*, whereas The Lord had the *Aji Pancasila*.[53] (p. 63)

Stylistically, "Lengsernya Rahwana" is dominated by the wayang medium, and in particular the language and narrative techniques of wayang shadow puppeteers. Common wayang terms and expressions are evoked and manipulated as a means of expressing highly confrontational sociopolitical commentary. For example, as in the passage above, it is stated that Rahwana is protected by the "Aji Pancasona", which - as noted earlier, in the discussion of *Anak Bajang* - is a powerful boon whereby as long as its possessor is in contact with the ground, he or she is unable to die. "Pancasona" can also be read as a spiteful pun on the Pancasila [The Five Principles]. Considering that "sona" is literary Javanese for "dog", "Pancasona" can also mean "The Five Dogs". Meanwhile in contrast to Rahwana, "Sang Prabu" [The Lord] - a reference to Sukarno, who invented the

[53] "Bumi *gonjang-ganjing*, langit *kerlap-kerlip*, gunung *morat-marit*, dan laut mbolak-mbalik ketika Rahwana binasa. Seluruh alam semesta bergolak sewaktu sepuluh kepala Rahwana copot satu per satu menimpa bumi. Alam bergejolak bukan karena sedih, tentu saja. Seandainya bisa, alam raya akan bernyanyi *Sorak-Sorak Bergembira*, sama seperti mayoritas tunggal warga kerajaan daripada Nusantara sewaktu Sang Prabu *longsor keprabon*. Bedanya, Rahwana mengandalkan *Aji Pancasona*, sedangkan sang Prabu *Aji Pancasila*."

Pancasila in June 1945 - was protected by another magic weapon, the "Aji Pancasila". Also in the same passage, the ungrammatical placing of "daripada", which is a direct translation into Indonesian of the Javanese in which Suharto thinks, and the pun on "longsor keprabon" (which literally means "land-sliding off the throne" instead of "abdicating the throne") satirises Suharto's well-publicised linguistic idiosyncracies, and thus immediately identifies Suharto as the main polemical target of the story. Later, Suhartono is even more strident in his attack upon Suharto, again using word play to emphasise his malicious intent. For example, toying with the similarity between "pembangunan" [development] and "pembangkrutan" [bankruptcy], the narrator observes that "Padahal dulu Rahwana pernah diangkat sebagai 'Bapak Pembangunan Alengkadireja,' kini ia hanya akan dihujat sebagai 'Bapak Pembangkrutan Alengkadireja'!" [Whilst before Rahwana was once promoted as 'Father of Alengkadireja Development,' now he'll only be denounced as 'Father of Alengkadireja Bankruptcy'!] (p. 67)

In combination with the self-conscious manipulation of wayang terminology and both Javanese and Indonesian expressions, the stylistic presentation of "Lengsernya Rahwana" is imbued with the chaotic realities of Indonesia's *era reformasi* [pro-Reform era]. This is apparent in Suhartono's eclectic mixture of essayistic discourse, quotes, footnotes, and translations, all included within the body of the text itself. Literary versions of the Ramayana cycle by Indonesian writers such as Herman Pratikto[54] and Sindhunata are quoted from time to time, as well as the analyses of some of the essays from a Ramayana

[54] Herman Pratikto wrote a 'straight' retelling of the Ramayana cycle of tales in Indonesian entitled *Ramayana* (Jakarta: Penerbit Widjaya, 1962).

conference held in Yogyakarta in early 1998.[55] The deliberate mixture of essay and fiction as a narrative technique has much in common with the style and purpose of Soebadio's *Politik Dosomuko Rezim Orde Baru*, which was discussed earlier. In homage to Soebadio's text, the narrator of "Lengsernya Rahwana" even quotes in full Soebadio's famous ten characteristics of 'Dosomuko's Political System'. Ultimately, with quotation after quotation interspersed with translations, puns on New Order discourse, facile asides, and overly-politicised interpretations of Rahwana's life-story, any pretence to fictionality is abandoned, just as the 'truth' behind Suharto and his regime is uncovered.

One could argue that the eclectic jumble of fact, fiction, and quotation in "Lengsernya Rahwana" embodies what Michael Bodden has loosely termed "the postmodernist style of the pro-Reform era—including a 'poetic collage report' format without fixed characters or linear plots".[56] However, the pastiche of "Lengsernya Rahwana" is not merely a reflection of the social and political chaos of the times, but also a pointer to the development of a new conceptualisation of what it means to be a meaningful citizen of Indonesia in the post-Suharto era. After Alengka is destroyed and Rahwana defeated, his younger brother Wibisana is counseled by Rama. He is told to move beyond the past, and to look to the future, which will be of his own making. Rama explains that Wibisana's task is to rebuild the ravaged Alengka into a peaceful, prosperous, and just society, using the 'Astabrata', or 'eight steps' of leadership, "mirip dengan *The Seven Habits* dari Stephen Covey itu, tapi lebih ampu lagi karena ini bukan cuma tujuh melainkan

[55] The proceedings of this conference are published in Sarworo Soeprapto and Dra. Sri Harti Widyastuti, eds., *Ramayana: Transformasi, Pengembangan dan Masa Depannya*, (Yogyakarta: Lembaga Studi Jawa, 1998).
[56] Bodden, "Notes on the Culture of the Reformasi Era," p. 16.

delapan!" [just like *The Seven Habits* by that Stephen Covey,[57] but even better because this isn't just seven steps but eight!] (p. 67). Unlike Stephen Covey's pop psychology, the "Astabrata" is a mystical passage included in a nineteenth-century Javanese text based on the Ramayana, *Serat Rama*, written by Yasadipura I (1729-1803). *Serat Rama* itself is a reworking of the Old Javanese *Ramayana kakawin*, which was written in about 856 A.D.[58]

Suhartono's version of the "Astabrata" is updated to suit the pro-Reform context. Each step involves following the example of a Hindu god, including Indra's benevolent devotion to the provision of social welfare without resorting to *nepotisme* [nepotism] or *koncoism* [cronyism]; Yama's righteous desire to establish a fair legal system without recourse to kidnappings and murder; Surya's love of learning and disdain for propaganda and indoctrination; Chandra's embodiment of morality and equanimity; Bayu's intimacy with the aspirations of the masses without resorting to the use of *intel* [state intelligence agents]; Kuwera's ability to provide an abundance of employment and *sembako* [the nine basic items of food and services]; Baruna's dislike of violent and lawless behaviour, especially at the hands of *preman* and *gali* [petty criminals and thugs] hired and equipped by the powers-that-be; and Agni's ability to eliminate any stumbling blocks against the establishment of social and political justice, such as *politik adu domba* [divide and conquer politics]. In Suhartono's version of the "Astabrata", Pertiwi, or the Goddess of the Earth, can act as a replacement for any of the other gods. This is

[57] Stephen R. Covey is the author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), as well as several other books on the psychological aspects of personal and financial success.

[58] Soemarsaid, *State and Statecraft in Old Java*, Appendix 3. See also Wahyati Pradipta, "Ajaran Kepemimpinan Astabrata," in *Ramayana: Transformasi, Pengembangan dan Masa Depannya*, pp. 154-165; and Helen Pausacker, "Wignyosoetarno's Makutharama: an Annotated Translation with an

because Pertiwi "menunjang dan melindungi siapa saja sama rata tanpa KKN (Korupsi, Kolusi, dan Nepotisme) apa pun!" [supports and protects anybody fairly without any sort of KKN (Corruption, Collusion and Nepotism)] (p. 68).

After Rama's explanation of the eight 'steps' needed in his nation's recovery, Wibisana is enlightened, emboldened, and ready to face an uncertain future with a new confidence. It appears that in "Lengsernya Rahwana" the transition to a new society must involve the leadership of an appropriate *ksatria* leader, such as an enlightened Wibisana. However, by the same token, the path ahead involves at least one major conceptual 'rupture' or modification to the Ramayana's *ksatria*-orientation: the empowerment of the hitherto marginalised subordinate masses. As a reflection of this, not unlike the optimistic denouement of *Anak Bajang,* the monkeys are portrayed as the final image of "Lengsernya Rahwana". On this occasion the monkeys are specifically aligned with the pro-Reform university students:

> Every time that the monkeys who represent nature are oppressed and forgotten, at that very moment Rahwana will be capable of shoving aside the three mountains that are pinning him down, and come back and resume his absolute rule unhindered. It's just the same with the students: if they are oppressed and forgotten in their every effort to bring about *reformasi,* at that very moment *reformasi* will be transformed into *deformasi.*[59] (p. 68)

Introduction and Comparison of Different Versions of the Makutharama *lakon,*" (Masters dissertation, Monash University, 1994), pp. 92-97.

[59] "Setiap saat kera-kera yang mewakili alam ditindas dan dilupakan, saat itulah Rahwana akan mampu menyingkirkan ketiga gunung yang menghimpitnya dan kembali berkuasa merajalela, sama halnya bila para mahasiswa ditindas dan dilupakan dalam setiap usaha reformasi, saat itulah reformasi bakal berubah menjadi deformasi."

Suhartono appears to suggest that the role of the monkeys in bringing about *reformasi* (and then ensuring that the gains of the *reformasi* movement are carried through to their logical conclusion) is crucial to the social development of the Indonesian nation. Furthermore, Suhartono is also warning us that Dasamuka, a metaphor for dictatorship and repression, can come back at any time if the students of Indonesia are not vigilant.

"Anoman Obong"

Both Martin Suhartono's and Sindhunata's focus on the monkeys in their reworking of the Ramayana epic has been complemented by the efforts of other writers, who have chosen to fictionalise other characters of the Ramayana, such as Rahwana, Rama, Sinta, Hanoman, and Wibisana. This by no means downgrades the monkeys' role as representations of ordinary Indonesians, and their role as discursive counters to Suharto's symbolic authority. Indeed, many Indonesians felt that Suharto's days were numbered from the very moment the catchy Javanese pop song "Anoman Obong" [Anoman Alight] appeared in 1996. The title of the song refers to one of the core classical episodes of the Ramayana epic, in which Hanoman slips into Rahwana's palace in Alengka in search of Sinta. In the words of the song itself,

> Anoman the white monkey
> Came to Sinta's prison to take her home
> Captured by Indrajit and the Chief Minister

But Anoman was not a scared monkey.[60]

Unable to rescue Sinta, Hanoman is captured and condemned by Rahwana to be burned at the stake as a spy. Although the captive Hanoman is put to the stake, and his tail is set alight, he uses his supernatural powers to break his bonds. As he springs into the sky, the sparks from his burning tail burn all the roofs of Alengka, setting the whole city on fire. The 1996 song "Anoman Obong" was composed by the Javanese comedian Ranto Edi Gudel, initially recorded by Kawulo Alit, a group of buskers based in Solo, and popularised by *dangdut* singer Mamiek Melani. Much has been made of the song's symbolism, particularly in light of the fires, partly organised by Suharto's own henchmen, that were later to engulf shopping centres, houses, and buildings in Jakarta and Solo during the May riots of 1998. Consider the following lines, which, in referring to the fiery fate of Ngalengko (Alengka) and the presence of Togog and Bilung, the clown-servants of Rahwana, undeniably foreshadowed later events:

Oh, hey my goodness Ngalengko was burnt (was burnt, was burnt)
Togog and Bilung, oh, were both spellbound and speechless
Big buildings were all burnt to cinders (to cinders, to cinders)
Dosomuko died roaring and crying.[61]

[60] Anoman si kethek putih/ Sowan tamane Sinta diajak mulih/ Konangan Indrajit lan Patih/ Ning Anoman ora wedi kethek.
[61] Ee... ladalah Ngalengka diobong (diobong, diobong)/ Togog Bilung wah ah o... padha pating domblong/ Omah gedhe padha dadi areng (dadi areng, dadi areng)/ Dosomuko mati gereng-gereng.

One well-known 'paranormal' psychic based in Solo, Bang To Es, felt "gelisah" [unsettled] as soon as he heard these lyrics, and his fears dramatically increased upon hearing that the Indonesian government was commissioning a series of *Rama Tambak* performances.[62] From that moment he was in no doubt that "Anoman Obong" was "a sign from God", warning of impending disaster. In light of the mass destruction and large loss of life experienced in the May riots alone, his fears were well-founded.

Jan Mrázek has observed that in 1996 and 1997 "Anoman Obong" was played in almost every wayang performance that he attended, and I can add that in the first half of 1998 this song was performed in almost all of the wayang performances that I happened to attend (after the May riots, I did not hear the song again). Mrázek quoted a 1997 newspaper article to describe the incredible popularity of this song:

> About "Anoman Obong" itself: it is not too much to crown it as one of the most popular songs in the last two years, even when compared with songs in the [national] *pop Indonesia* genre [that is, not only with Javanese pop]. How could it be otherwise; from adult people, to street children begging on buses, all really know by heart the lyrics...[63]

According to Frans SP, the manager and producer of Mamiek Melani's *dangdut* group, OM Ken Arok, the album containing "Anoman Obong" had sold 400,000

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[62] "'Anoman Obong' di Mata Paranormal," *Suara Merdeka*, May 26, 1998.
[63] Muliawan Hamdani SE, "Lagu Pop Jawa Riwayatmu Kini," *Suara Merdeka*, July 24, 1997, quoted in Jan Mrázek, "Javanese *Wayang Kulit*," p. 56.

copies by late 1998.[64] For an album in a regional language, this is a phenomenal number.[65] What's more, these sales do not include all the other versions of "Anoman Obong" that have appeared in genres ranging from *gendhing Jawa* [gamelan music] to up-tempo styles of dance music such as techno (electronic house music).

Of course, in terms of sales, popularity and audience reach, if "Anoman Obong" were to be placed alongside its fellow reinterpretations of the Ramayana, the literary texts discussed in this chapter, there would be no comparison. For example, the cultural studies magazine responsible for publishing "Kabesmen" and "Lengsernya Rahwana", *Basis*, only has a print run of five thousand for each edition.[66] As noted earlier, *Politik Dosomuko Rezim Orde Baru* was actually banned and removed from circulation for a short period in 1998. Since the ban was lifted soon after the resignation of Suharto, copies for sale have proven to be almost impossible to find. Meanwhile, although *Baratayuda di Negeri Antah Berantah*, in either its manuscript or published form, has quietly held cult status amongst Indonesianists and Indonesian intellectuals and activists for almost twenty years, it is virtually impossible to calculate exactly how many people have actually read it. According to Maier, literary texts in Indonesia usually sell no more than four or five thousand copies over a long period of time.[67] Based on the assumption that three or four people read each copy, arguably no more than twenty thousand people have read Pipit's text, which has had just the one print run. The most popular of the texts discussed here, *Anak Bajang Menggiring Angin*, was initially

[64] "Frans SP Cari Produser Lain untuk Produksi 'Brantayuda,'" *Suara Merdeka*, September 1, 1998.
[65] My thanks to Edwin Jurriens, a Leiden University researcher working on the electronic media in Indonesia, for confirming this statement.
[66] I am indebted to Budi Sardjono, a *Basis* editor, for this information.

serialised in the authoritative Indonesian newspaper, *Kompas*, and since its publication in 1983 it has gone through four editions, almost a best-seller by Indonesian standards.

Conclusion

Even if texts such as *Anak Bajang* have sold, say, thirty or forty thousand copies, some might argue that, politically, texts such as these have not proven to be anything more than a useful safety-valve, through which disaffected intellectuals could let off some steam without unduly disturbing or provoking the wider public. There are arguments against this. Although the writers of these texts were not literary heavyweights in the same division as Pramoedya, and they were not intending to incite millions of villagers to overthrow the President, they were also doing much more than letting off steam. Their intended audience, the politically aware of Indonesia, consisted of students, middle-class intellectuals, activists, and, in the case of at least Soebadio and Pipit, Suharto himself. It seems then that their importance lies not so much in their status as literary creators or artists in the serious sense of the word, but as entertainers and social commentators, giving voice to the social and political frustrations of the Indonesian middle class.

As I have tried to show, by reinterpreting the Ramayana, writers such as Pipit, Sindhunata, Soebadio Sastrosatomo, Whani Darmawan and Martin Suhartono appropriated the discourse of the late New Order state, a discourse

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[67] Maier, "Flying a Kite," p. 242.

epitomised by the state-sponsored *Rama Tambak* phenomenon and its emphasis on the feudal *kawula-gusti* ethos. In their reinterpretations of the Ramayana, these writers promoted the social and political aspirations of Indonesia's middle class, mocked the New Order's ruling elite, and satirised and humiliated Suharto. In so doing, they appropriated the Ramayana for their own social and satirical purposes, manipulating it as a means to parody, criticise, and rhetorically undermine the Indonesian authorities, ultimately foreshadowing the overthrow of Suharto and the demise of his New Order regime. The texts to be discussed in the following chapter, which appropriate one wayang character in particular, the renegade Wisanggeni, point to an important development in the post-Suharto era. As opposed to the satirical anti-Suharto sentiments of the Ramayana-based texts appearing in the later New Order period, novels and plays experimenting with the rebellious spirit of the Wisanggeni figure indicate an emphasis on the need to foster an alternative focus of social allegiance, with unexpected conclusions.

7

Too Many Wisanggenis: Reinventing the Wayang at the End of the Century

"The problem with Indonesia is that we have too many Wisanggenis".[1]
SENO GUMIRA AJIDARMA

Introduction: the Wisanggeni Legend as Counter-Discourse

In a recent review of Seno Gumira Ajidarma's *Wisanggeni Sang Buronan* [Wisanggeni the Outlaw] (2000), Radhar Panca Dahana comments that Seno's work is not only "seru seperti silat, bijak seperti buku filsafat, ringan seperti hiburan" [racy like martial-arts, full of wisdom like a book of philosophy, easy-reading like entertainment] but also "komedis seperti humor, liris bagai puisi" [humorous like comedy, lyrical like poetry].[2] Seno's vivid literary poetics are modeled on a number of different sources, including the wayang comics of R. A. Kosasih, the ancient court texts of Central Javanese palace scribes, the improvisation of jazz musicians, and, most importantly in the case of *Wisanggeni*

[1] Interview with Seno Gumira Ajidarma, Jakarta, November 17, 2000.
[2] Radhar Panca Dahana, "Memburon Batara Guru," *Tempo*, May 14, 2000, p. 92.

Sang Buronan, Danarto's fine line-drawings of the wayang world. When Seno first wrote the novel, which was as a series of narratives in 1984 in a now defunct current affairs magazine, *Zaman,* he wrote it in response to Danarto's sketches.[3] Seno felt that each of Danarto's finely-wrought "masterpieces" brought the wayang characters and their world to life, humanising and exoticising them at the same time. Emphasising the radical nature of Danarto's sketches, Dahana labels them as "plastis, kontemporer, dan melanggar pakem" [life-like, contemporary, and going against the *pakem*].[4] Whilst these drawings play a significant role in the novel, their greatest impact lies in their counter-hegemonic ideological stance, a stance most obviously displayed in the way that they simultaneously embrace the wayang tradition whilst reinventing it, with a twist.

Consequently, Seno's novel shares much in common with what Helen Tiffin refers to as the postcolonial project of "canonical counter-discourse",[5] a process whereby, in the words of Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins, "the post-colonial writer unveils and dismantles the basic assumptions of a specific canonical text by developing a 'counter' text that preserves many of the identifying signifiers of the original while altering, often allegorically, its structures of power".[6] Seno is not alone in his desire to borrow, appropriate and humanise Wisanggeni and his world as a means of 'writing back' to the New Order regime. Arya 'Aji' Dipayana, the script-writer of *Wisanggeni Berkelabat* [Wisanggeni Away], a theatre production presented by Teater Tetas in Solo in

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[3] See Seno Gumira Ajidarma's preface to *Wisanggeni Sang Buronan,* entitled "Karena Gambar," pp. v-ix.
[4] Dahana, "Memburon Batara Guru."
[5] Helen Tiffin, "Post-colonial literatures and counter-discourse," *Kunapipi,* 9, 3 (1987):17-34.
[6] Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins, *Post-colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 16.

October 2000, also uses the characters and plots of the wayang, and the Wisanggeni legend in particular, to 'counter' the New Order regime. Aji, like Seno before him, wrote an earlier version of his text in the 1980s, only to resurrect it over a decade later in the aftermath of the New Order. Ayu Utami's highly acclaimed novel of 1998, *Saman*,[7] also draws upon the character of Wisanggeni, and it too entails a critical re-writing project that is both revisionist, counter-discursive and highly political.

Why, one may ask, has each of these young writers drawn upon Wisanggeni in their attempts to destabilise the power structures of the wayang, and all it has come to symbolise in contemporary Indonesia? Is Wisanggeni not a wayang *ksatria* in the mould of Rama, Arjuna, Bima and Gatotkaca, past favourites of villagers and presidents alike? In many ways Wisanggeni is no different from the host of wayang characters inhabiting a typical puppeteer's wayang box. Even though Wisanggeni is a member of the younger generation of the Pandawa - including *ksatria* such as Antasena, Antareja, Gatotkaca and Abimanyu - he is as much a symbol of the feudalism of Java and the New Order regime as any other wayang puppet. According to Pamudji MS, "Dalam wayang, kaum mahasiswa pun tak ada. Wisanggeni, Antasena, Gatutkaca, atau Abimanyu adalah sejenis kaum pewaris nepotis Orde Baru" [In the wayang, there aren't any students. Wisanggeni, Antasena, Gatutkaca, or Abimanyu are just the latest generation of New Order nepotists].[8] In other words, even the next generation of Pandawa *ksatria* cannot be allowed to represent the pro-*reformasi* students. This is because they are just as nepotistic as their parents' generation, which was often

[7] Ayu Utami, *Saman* (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 1998).
[8] Pamudji MS, "Mempersoalkan Kembali Reformasi Wayang," *Suara Merdeka*, August 22, 2000.

used as a symbolic representation of the New Order elite. To be fair, Pamudji also observes that some wayang performances at the turn of the millenium - such as Ki Anom Suroto's performance in Solo of *Wisanggeni Gugat* [Wisanggeni Accuses] - appear significantly reformist, both in content and presentation. Nevertheless, Pamudji claims that performances such as these "tetap berpijak pada sistem nilai feodalistik" [are still based on a feudalistic moral ethos].[9] However, in the following brief outline of the Wisanggeni legend, it will become clear that Wisanggeni in many ways is set apart from a significant number of his fellow puppets, not to mention certain groups of the Javanese and the feudalistic ethos of the Mahabharata itself.

What is beyond argument is that Bambang Wisanggeni is one of several Mahabharata characters indigenous to Java, and almost for this reason alone he enjoys great popularity. In the wayang tradition of Central Java, Wisanggeni, which literally means 'fiery poison', is the son of Arjuna and Dewi Dresanala (or alternatively Drestanala, Darsenala and Dersanala), who is the daughter of Batara Brahma, the God of Fire. Dewi Dresanala, a heavenly goddess, is one of the many women Arjuna knew intimately during his seven years as King of Heaven. Wisanggeni has his father's good looks and superior intelligence, and both his mother's and his father's supernatural powers. In one of several versions of Wisanggeni's childhood, Wisanggeni spent his formative years as a fugitive under the sea, in the care of Dewa Baruna, the God of the Ocean, and Antaboga, a minor deity with the head of a dragon, the body of a man and the tale of a snake. Aware of the immense challenges Wisanggeni would face as an adult, Dewa

[9] ibid.

Baruna and Antaboga ensure that Wisanggeni is provided with a powerful arsenal of magical powers and weaponry. A popular light-hearted *lakon* involving Wisanggeni is *Wisanggeni Takon Bapa,* where Wisanggeni seeks out his father. In the course of his travels he comes across a number of sacred weapons which had gone missing. These included the sacred text of Kalimasada, which was for his uncle Yudhistira, the arrows *Pasopati, Saratoma* and *Ardha Dadali,* and the magical *keris, Pulanggeni,* which were all for Arjuna. Later, all of these weapons become crucial in helping the Pandawas achieve victory in the great war of the Baratayuda.

In terms of character, Wisanggeni is outspoken, garrulous, honest, principled and well-intentioned. His upward-facing countenance betrays his extreme self-confidence and an almost-arrogant belief in his supreme powers as a fighter and a *ksatria.* His arrogance is fully justified, as on the battlefield he is invincible. As a matter of principle, when in mortal combat he continues fighting his adversary until their death, only sparing their life if they admit their mistake in challenging him. He has a shrill and exciteable voice, and upon the death of each of his adversaries, he is known to spontaneously break out into a *tajungan,* or an energetic victory dance. Quirks of behaviour such as these, coupled with Wisanggeni's irrepressible energy, his dry sense of humour, and his status as a high-principled rebel and an outlaw, have ensured a cult following amongst Javanese devotees of the wayang. Furthermore, Wisanggeni's feisty dynamism is reflected not only in his deliberate usage of *ngoko,* Low Javanese, in all social situations, but also in his unique aesthetic form. Physically he is very small, slender and refined, almost petite. However, his slight frame merely adds to his quicksilver nature, especially during battle scenes where he proves himself to be

an extremely agile power-packed dynamo.

Wisanggeni also has a keen sense of survival, which was forged very early in his life. In a fit of rage his grandfather, Batara Brahma, who strongly opposed the union between his daughter Dewi Dresanala and Arjuna, threw the new-born Wisanggeni into the boiling-hot Candradimuka cauldron. However, the baby not only survived but also thrived, magically turning into a young man. The many gods who witnessed this event, such as Dewa Baruna and Antaboga, rewarded Wisanggeni by giving him a host of magic weapons and talismans. Later, these weapons prove essential, as Wisanggeni is constantly forced to fight for his life against a stream of deadly emissaries acting upon the orders of Batara Guru, the supreme god. Later, in his passionate yearning to leave the underwater kingdoms of Dewa Baruna and Antaboga in order to search for his mother and father, not to mention his unquestioning willingness to uphold righteousness by defending himself and crushing evil, he also displays an unwavering sense of duty.

Nevertheless, despite his popularity as an outlaw and a rebel, Wisanggeni has always remained a peripheral figure in the shadow theatre of Central Java, and is vastly overshadowed by the exploits of his famous father, uncles, cousins and half-brothers. Furthermore, unlike the other great *ksatria* heroes of the wayang, Wisanggeni does not participate in the climax of the Mahabharata. In the Central Javanese wayang shadow theatre version of the Mahabharata, the scheming Kresna ensures that Wisanggeni surrenders himself - and his equally invincible half-brothers, Antasena and Antareja - and ascends to the Heavens before the onset of the Baratayuda. According to popular understanding, if Wisanggeni and his half-brothers were to participate in the Baratayuda, the Pandawa would almost certainly win. However, if this victory were to be

achieved with Wisanggeni's help, the personal cost would be great.

Like other outlaw heroes throughout the world, although Wisanggeni carries out immense deeds of cunning and bravery usually associated with 'traditional' heroes of the wayang such as Arjuna, Bima or Gatotkaca, his valiant feats are tempered by the shadow of ambivalence. The ambivalent nature of Wisanggeni's status derives from the fact that despite his heroics he is also an outlaw, a fugitive living outside and against the rule of the gods. Furthermore, by opposing the will of the gods, and by refusing to use the polite registers of Javanese - *kromo* or *kromo inggil* - he is at once a representation of the dissatisfactions of 'the common people' who sympathise with him, as well as someone set apart from and opposing the members of other groups, due to his outlaw status. It is for this latter reason, one may assume, that Wisanggeni, as opposed to the likes of Arjuna, Bima, Gatotkaca, Semar *et al*, may well have been, like the people he represents, 'suppressed', in the sense that he was not as actively adopted and promoted by either Sukarno or Suharto or the extremely influential pro-government shadow puppeteers of the New Order. This did not mean that Wisanggeni rarely appeared on a wayang screen. On the contrary, Wisanggeni has remained one of the most popular wayang characters of Java, and as noted between 1998 and 2000 two critically-acclaimed novels and one drama production have attempted to reinvent him. The fact that Wisanggeni has stood the test of time and re-emerged in literary form in the aftermath of the heavily-Javanised New Order regime - as a 'people's outlaw' no less - attests to the latent 'Indonesianness' of the mythic energy embedded in the Wisanggeni legend, and the depth of the dissatisfactions of the many Indonesian people represented by his slender frame.

As observed by John Sidel, in the Philippines bandits and gangsters have often enjoyed great popularity, appearing as local heroes of the poor and the downtrodden, their criminality becoming "a form of societal 'resistance' to injustices unpunished - or perpetrated - by predatory agents of capital and the state".[10] Eric Hobsbawm has referred to Robin Hood-like figures as "social bandits",[11] and in *The Outlaw Legend* (1996), Graham Seal argues that the bandit or "outlaw hero" is a particular type of folk hero whose tradition can be traced as a cultural constant persisting through time and space, and is available to be called into use whenever the particular "local circumstances and pressures" are appropriate.[12] Wisanggeni is one particular folk hero of Indonesia who has been called upon from time to time, in particular, it seems, in the last years of the twentieth century. This chapter will explore the ways in which Wisanggeni has appeared as a "social bandit" or "outlaw hero" in literary form, with a particular focus on the manner in which his latest appearances not only re-establish the prominent role of the wayang in the Indonesian literary and cultural psyche, but also the strong desire of Indonesia's leading writers to 'write back' against the power structures depicted in the wayang, a form of counter-discourse that is as much creative as it is political. Ultimately, these texts will show that even as the wayang - and all it has come to stand for - is borrowed and given greater legitimacy in literary form, Indonesia's latest generation of writers are not interested in merely contemporising traditional cultural expression, but rather the

[10] John Sidel, "The Usual Suspects: Nardong Putik, Don Pepe Oyson, and Robin Hood," in *Figures of Criminality*, ed. Rafael, pp. 70- 94.
[11] Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981); Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1959).
[12] Graham Seal, *The Outlaw Legend* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 2.

oppositional reinterpretation of myth.

Lotus Petals, Stir-Fry Dog: Reworking the Wayang in Seno Gumira Ajidarma's *Wisanggeni Sang Buronan*

Discussing the writing of Danarto in the early years of the New Order regime, Keith Foulcher observes that Danarto's short stories, which reject realism in favour of surrealism, "are also the work of an individual writer who adapts the images and conventions of traditional representation to suit his own purposes, rather than honours the immutability they are accorded within the regional tradition".[13] In 1968 Danarto's writing was heralded as the "new form in Indonesia", and as a mode of literary representation, surrealism, which draws heavily upon regional cultural traditions, has to a large extent retained a significant position in the field of Indonesian letters, with Seno Gumira Ajidarma being just one of several prominent writers to revitalise and promote this trend in the 1980s and 1990s. Like his earlier fiction, Danarto's line drawings of Wisanggeni and his wayang cohorts - which besides appearing in *Wisanggeni Sang Buronan* also appeared in an art exhibition in Jakarta in late 2000 - are free adaptations, with key differences. For example, Danarto replaces standard wayang crowns with Buginese or Samurai head-pieces, and he depicts the deadly emissaries of the gods as Roman gladiators complete with knuckle-dusters and long swords. Elsewhere he depicts bows as freshly-cut branches of a tree, or dresses wayang *ksatria* such as Wisanggeni in Roman sandals, gladiator-briefs

[13] Foulcher, "Postmodernism or the Question of History," p. 32

and an Indonesian farmer's *caping* hat. As for his depictions of wayang women, refined features, elegant dignity and ample cleavages abound. In Seno's words, "Danarto selalu bisa memainkan antara keanggunan dan sensualitas dengan cara yang tidak pernah terpikirkan akan terdapat dalam tokoh-tokoh wayang" [Danarto can always interplay between elegance and sensuality in a fashion one could never imagine could appear in wayang characters].[14]

In many ways, like Danarto's fiction and drawings, Seno's literary adaptation of the wayang is also much more than mere repetition. For example, Seno's Wisanggeni barely resembles the delicate and beautifully decorated puppet of Wisanggeni we can view in the hands of a *dalang*. Seno's Wisanggeni is portrayed as a weary vagabond, his clothes are little more than grey rags, his beard is ragged, and his flowing locks reach beyond his shoulders. His unkempt and unwashed appearance ensures that when he enters a bar to buy some food and rice wine in a small market-town on the edge of a desert, everyone turns away in embarrassment (apart from a few young waitresses, who can sense that this mysterious stranger is actually quite handsome). Such realism does not detract from Seno's novel in any way. Seno's handsome yet world-weary Wisanggeni is a very much a humanised Wisanggeni, the sort of battle-scarred Wisanggeni one could easily imagine has been on the run for years, fighting for his life from time to time against the gods and their emissaries, seeking and avoiding adventure wherever it lies.

The way in which the Wisanggeni tale is told is also a significant reworking of the wayang tradition. However, the counter-discursive nature of

[14] Seno Gumira Ajidarma, "Karena Gambar," p. vii.

Seno's narrative style is not immediately obvious. For example, within the constraints of the novel format and the usage of Indonesian language, Seno claims that great care has been taken to emulate the language style and mode of delivery of the Javanese *dalang*.[15] Furthermore, the numerous *suluk* poems interspersed throughout the novel, like the *dalang*'s sung *suluk* of a wayang performance, actually act as a highly poetic metacommentary on the tale itself, linking the 'past' of the wayang world with the contemporary context.

As a form of what Becker terms as "metacommunication",[16] Seno's *suluk* embody significant points of convergence between the idealistic beauty of the past and the dark underside to the sociopolitical realities of contemporary Indonesia. By briefly examining the *suluk* of *Wisanggeni Sang Buronan,* it will become apparent that Seno's novel, and the *suluk* in particular, are as much a deconstruction of the wayang's narrative traditions as a snapshot and critique of some of the darker aspects of New Order Indonesia. However, from my observations, both critics and *dalang* alike appear to be uncertain as to which particular aspects of contemporary Indonesia Seno may be alluding to. For example, Radhar Panca Dahana hedges his bets by observing that the *suluk* of *Wisanggeni Sang Buronan* speak of "Dunia sang pengarang. Dunia Seno, enam belas tahun lalu" [The world of the author. The world of Seno sixteen year ago].[17] Meanwhile, a *dalang* in Yogyakarta, who shall remain nameless, expressed concern that the *suluk* of Seno's novel may actually refer to the shameless lifestyle of another "buronan" [outlaw] circa late-2000, Tommy Suharto!

Even after carefully reading through each *suluk* with a fine-tooth comb,

[15] Interview with Seno Gumira Ajidarma, Jakarta, November 17, 2000.
[16] Becker, "Text-Building, Epistemology, and Aesthetics," p. 214.

confusion over their 'meaning' is not surprising. Consider the first *suluk* of Seno's novel, which awkwardly juxtaposes, and, in a sense, darkly synthesises, the timeless beauty of a lotus in a pond with the depravity and licentiousness of eating pork satay and stir-fry dog:

a song for a scholar passed away, o,
pork satay and stir-fry dog
o, how the oil oozes and drips and a lotus blossoms
in a coin pond
awaiting the love of the outlaw, o![18] (p. 1)

Other *suluk* describe haunting Dante-esque images of burning wayang screens, missing persons, drunk poets, debauchery, prostitutes, robbers, marijuana smoke, flowing *arak* rice wine, tears, pain, flowing blood and cold-blooded murder. For example:

a spirit child stole a dream
kissed bloody lips
a rusty keris was removed from its case
stabbing a love-sick lover
o my god devils and demons (p. 80)[19]

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[17] Radhar Panca Dahana, "Memburon Batara Guru."
[18] *tembang kiai yang gugur, o / sate babi dan tongseng anjing / o, minyaknya menetes-netes/ dan teratai merekah/ pada danau logam/ menanti cinta sang buronan, o!*
[19] *anak siluman menyamun mimpi/ mencium bibir yang berdarah/ keris berkarat lenyap sarungnya/*

I would argue that just as the distant sound of *gamelan* accompanying the narrator's account alludes to the fact that Wisanggeni's tale is in fact being performed as a *wayang kulit* performance in far-off Yogyakarta, the *suluk* verses act as a significant point of convergence between the wayang world and the 'real world' of New Order Indonesia, the dark and horror-filled nights of the early 1980s to be precise.

On the one hand, the *suluk* verses interspersed throughout the novel present majestic scenes of poetic beauty, such as full moons, baby rabbits, shepherds, falling leaves, empty skies and red sunsets, timeless scenes common to the traditional wayang world. On the other hand, as we have seen Seno's *suluk* also portray, or at the very least, foreshadow, a sinister world of decay, depravity, madness, terror and threat, a nightmarish world very much part of Indonesia in the early 1980s, the spectre of which arguably still haunts Indonesia as a nation. This dark underside to Seno's novel may have much to do with the fact that the year Seno's version of the Wisanggeni legend was first serialised, 1984, happened to be at the height of the infamous *Petrus* campaign, the nation-wide series of killings of 'criminals' as part of the Indonesian government's early 1980s 'Elimination of Crime Operation'.[20] Without the benefit of an arrest or trial, the 'criminals', over 8000 petty criminals and gang members, were kidnapped, viciously murdered and dumped at night-time (and sometimes in broad daylight) by bands of masked men, Indonesian soldiers in disguise. At the risk of trivialising these horrific events, perhaps the way in which the wayang gods and their appointed emissaries condemn, terrorise and hunt Wisanggeni can be seen

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menikam nyai yang kasmaran/ oladalah setan bekrakakan

[20] For more on *Petrus*, see Chapter Four. For more on Seno's literary response to *Petrus*, see Seno

as the perfect metaphor for the lethal treatment of the *Petrus* 'criminals' at the hands of the Indonesian government and its military. Likewise, the dark images of death, demons and destruction haunting Seno's *suluk* can be seen as the perfect musical accompaniment.

Becker has observed that the *suluk* of a wayang performance are specifically addressed to the Javanese ancestors, as a means of exorcising danger or potential danger and to contextualise the present in the past.[21] Likewise, Seno's *suluk* share a great deal of similarity with Pipit's 'exorcistic' tales set in the afterlife. As I have tried to show in Chapter Four, Pipit's depiction of the Kurawa in the afterlife rhetorically resurrects the massacred communists of Indonesia's past, as a means of symbolically exorcising the ghosts of New Order Indonesia. Similarly, it might not be too much of an exaggeration to claim that Seno's *suluk* can also be seen as an attempt to communicate with another set of spectres, the tens of thousands of murdered 'criminals' of the early 1980s, as a means of contextualising Indonesia's present in its past.

The lyrical conflation of beauty and terror, past and present, is but one aspect of Seno's critique of 'life' in New Order Indonesia. Elsewhere, on numerous occasions the narrator or implied narrator addresses the reader directly, and as a consequence issues of metafictionality arise. A focus on fictionality, a literary phenomenon otherwise known as metafiction, reveals and critiques the text's own methods of construction, ultimately in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality.[22] Steven Connor observes that the most influential accounts of postmodernist fiction stress the

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Gumira Ajidarma, *Penembak Misterius* (Jakarta: PT Pustaka Utama Grafiti, 1993).
[21] Becker, "Text-Building, Epistemology, and Aesthetics," pp. 232-233.

prevalence of parodic metafiction, which he defines as the exploration by literary texts of their own nature and status as fiction.[23] One could argue, then, that as in the postmodern metafiction of Agusta Wibisono and Putu Wijaya, Seno's emphasis on the fictionality of his novel, and as we shall see the fictionality of Wisanggeni himself, is a postmodern means of highlighting the flexibility, instability and lack of fixed identity of not only fiction, but also of reality itself, in particular the 'reality' of contemporary Indonesia. Reconsidering the social, political and historical context of *Wisanggeni Sang Buronan,* both when it was first written in serial form and first published in novel form almost twenty years later, one could argue that by emphasising the fictionality of this version of the Wisanggeni legend, Seno explores some of the fundamental issues and tensions underlying constructions of Indonesian identity, both in the darkest days of the New Order and the chaos of the so-called *reformasi* era.

Perhaps as a reflection of the powerlessness of both the thousands of 'criminal' outlaws during the *Petrus* killings and the millions of average Indonesians struggling to forge a sense of agency in the years following the demise of the New Order, initially the identity of Seno's Wisanggeni is as contingent and transitory as a traditional Wisanggeni puppet. As if to confirm his position as a helpless figure outside 'the law' yet totally defined by 'the lore' of mythology and fiction, Wisanggeni himself is initially a complete bystander to the fact that Seno's novel deals as much with issues of storytelling as with Wisanggeni's life as an outlaw. For example, when Arjuna confronts Kresna and demands to be told the truth regarding his long-lost son, Kresna orders Hanoman

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[22] See Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative.*
[23] Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture,* Second Edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell,

to reveal the mystery of Wisanggeni's childhood by telling 'a story,' the story of Wisanggeni. Wisanggeni also listens, simultaneously learning about himself as well as becoming himself, "mengenali perjalanan hidupnya" [acquainting himself with his life's journey] (p. 26). This tale is, in turn, recounted for the benefit of the reader by an omniscient narrator.

Before retelling Hanoman's account, the narrator describes how Hanoman began the tale, and then apologises:

> So Hanoman sat on top of a rock and began his story. But o, forgive this senseless writer if I'm unable to retell the tale as well as the great Hanoman with his refined wisdom and wonderful storytelling ability. Hanoman's literary flair is beyond question whereas my ability as a pulp fiction writer is nothing, and I am genuinely unqualified to represent Hanoman in the retelling of his story. So dear reader you must bear with me and imagine that what is written here is but a grain of sand compared to the literary reality of the true events (p. 26)[24]

Here we see that like an ancient Central Javanese court scribe and his royal audience, the relationship between narrator and reader is intimate and fluid. Furthermore, the allusion to Hanoman's superior narration is intriguing, as it self-reflexively places the characters of the narrative on the same diegetic or narrative

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1997), p. 129.

[24] "Hanoman pun duduk di atas batu dan memulai ceritanya. Tapi o, maafkanlah si penulis yang bodoh ini kalau tak mampu menceritakan kembali dengan baik kehalusan budi dan cakap bicara sang Hanoman yang telah pinandhata itu. Kecakapan sastra Hanoman begitu tinggi sementara kemampuanku sebagai penulis cerita picisan tak ada seujung kuku dan sungguh tak patut mewakili sang Hanoman untuk mengulang kembali ceritanya. Jadi sudilah pembaca

level as the narrator.[25] Ultimately this metafictional narrative device provides the characters with as much agency, if not more so, than the unreliable storyteller, to a certain extent subverting traditional structures of authority and power. In the context of New Order Indonesia, where power relations were very much top-down in the manner of a hierarchical Central Javanese kingdom, the symbolic resonances of such a power reversal are unmistakable. Moreover, we may also be witnessing a seminal precursor to the shape and direction of a new sense of cultural identity in the post-Suharto Indonesia, where concepts of the 'imaginary' such as indeterminacy, uncertainty, incontingency and egalitarianism appear increasingly likely to replace the concepts associated with New Order 'reality' such as stability, hierarchy, and, above all, order. Then again, Seno's novel convincingly underscores the postmodern notion that 'reality' - in this case the 'reality' of a 'stable' and 'ordered' New Order - is as much a representation of the imaginary as fiction itself.

Paradoxically emphasising both the postcolonial desire to recuperate a sense of self and agency and postmodern claims about the disintegration of the subject, Wisanggeni's life is repeatedly presented as a fictional entity. For example, Wisanggeni had no awareness of or control over the fact that the high drama surrounding his conception was merely the point at which the story heated up: "Itulah saat cerita ini dimulai berkembang o Wisanggeni anak Arjuna" [That was the moment this tale began to gather momentum o Wisanggeni son of Arjuna] (p. 32). Even principal actors in his life-story, such as Batara Brahma, are aware of the fact that Wisanggeni is but part of an extraordinary story. However,

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mengandaikan bahwa yang tertulis ini hanyalah sebutir pasir dibanding kenyataan sastra dalam kejadian sesungguhnya."

Batara Brahma is unaware of how Wisanggeni's tale will unfold, even as he unfolds it himself: "Oladalah, bayi suci anak sang takdir," ratap Batara Brahma dengan lirih, "lakon apakah yang menyertai hidupmu, o, cucuku, sampai-sampai kakekmu sendiri mendapat tugas untuk membunuhmu?" ["O dear holy baby, the child of fate" wept Batara Brahma uncontrollably, "what tale is it that comes with your life, to the point where your grandfather is duty-bound to kill you?"] (p. 39). Significantly, when Wisanggeni is rescued by Dewa Baruna and Antaboga, Kresna suggests that Wisanggeni's story can diverge from the plot pre-ordained by the gods: "kita akan menentukan jalan cerita ini" [we will be the ones deciding on which way this story will go] (p. 51). The irony of this statement is only revealed later, when it is Kresna that argues that for the continuation of the plot, Wisanggeni must give up his fight against the gods, surrender himself, and leave the wayang world. Nevertheless, I will try to show that it is by surrendering his life - thus embracing a disintegration of self, a deferral of closure and a dispersal of meaning - that Seno's Wisanggeni paves the way for a postmodern overcoming of the wayang mythology and the power of the Indonesian state.

How does Seno resolve the paradox of Wisanggeni's simultaneous surrender and recuperation of self? Soon after a heart-breaking reunion with his stunningly beautiful mother, Wisanggeni flies off and leaves the wayang world. Upon emerging through some clouds, he views a city down below, a city situated between a mountain and the sea, a city characterised by a palace surrounded by two fields. For those familiar with Indonesian geography, it is clear that Wisanggeni is approaching the Central Javanese court city of Yogyakarta. He

[25] For more on diegetic levels, see Chapter Five.

lands just in time to catch the last few scenes of a performance of *wayang kulit*, the very same *lakon* that he had been enacting upon the pages of Seno's novel. As the *gamelan* plays on, Wisanggeni slips in amongst the sleeping audience and sits behind the screen, watching the shadows of Arjuna and Kresna, who are discussing whether Wisanggeni has accepted his fate. Wisanggeni, who looks like a tramp, then bursts into an uncontrollable fit of laughter, to the point that tears stream down his eyes and his belly aches. The audience, however - who recognise the man as the mad vagabond who sleeps under the banyan tree in front of the *kraton* - fails to see the humour in his behaviour, and he is soon dragged off and thrown out into the street.

It is at this point that the epigraph chosen for this chapter gains its significance, as it plays with the seemingly contradictory notion that for the greater good of Indonesia the best Wisanggeni is a dead, or discarded, Wisanggeni. Clearly, as an oppositional figure, a living Wisanggeni has much to offer. Although Seno's Wisanggeni is by no means deliberately represented as a figure of political rebellion, his much-vaunted "naluri pemberontakan" [spirit of rebellion] (p. 80) can very easily be understood as a focus of an alternative set of values and beliefs which, from the perspective of the many Indonesian social groups in crisis in the post-Suharto period (not to mention during Suharto's New Order era), can be seen as a rallying point for moral resistance against the hegemonic status quo. However, as we have seen in the chaotic history of Indonesia at the end of the century, there has been no shortage of Wisanggenis clamouring for attention, be they in the form of clones of Semar, Sukarno, and others. The following passage, in Arya Dipayana's *Wisanggeni Berkelabat*,

expresses something of the psychic impact of such an overabundance of, and overabundant hope in, messianic-figures:

Everybody: Wisanggeni!

But the hero they were hoping for still wasn't there.

Old Man: (Suddenly rising, angrily) Cat shit! There's always a new name which is offered and introduced to us. But what does it ever bring? For years and years all we do is rustle up names for us to convert them into heroes. Then when they die we forget about them straight away, whereas the ones still alive turn into tyrants. I'm amazed. We never learn from reality. By choosing a bunch of names that look like they can give us some hope clearly we're never sick and tired of offering ourselves as bait for oppression. What on earth for?! Our narrow minds are already jam-packed with new names. We're already tired and worn out by our own dreams, by our own hopes and fantasies. But we never stop repeating the same old mistake. Ha! Wisanggeni? Who the hell is he?![26](p.4)

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[26] **Semua:** Wisanggeni!
Tapi tokoh yang mereka harapkan itu tetap tak ada.
Pak Tua: (Tiba-tiba bangkit dan marah) Tai kucing! Selalu saja ada nama baru yang ditawarkan dan diperkenalkan. Tapi apa hasilnya? Dan waktu ke waktu kita cuma menyusun nama-nama untuk kita jadikan pahlawan. Lalu mereka yang mati akan segera kita lupakan, sementara mereka yang hidup akan segera berubah menjadi tiran. Heran. Kita tidak pernah belajar dari kenyataan. Tidak pernah bosan menyodorkan diri kita sendiri sebagai umpan penindasan dengan memilih sejumlah nama yang nampaknya memberi harapan. Untuk apa?! Kepala kita yang sempit ini sudah sesak dijejali nama-nama baru. Kita sudah dibuat capek oleh mimpi-mimpi kita sendiri. Harapan dan angan-angan sendiri. Tapi kita tidak berhenti juga mengulang-ulang kesalahan yang sama. Huh! Wisanggeni! Siapa pula itu?!

Many would contend - as does Arya Dipayana throughout *Wisanggeni Berkelabat* - that Indonesia cannot benefit from the appearance of any new Wisanggenis, as it has already, as it were, 'lost the plot'. Instead, Seno and Arya Dipayana are suggesting that what Indonesia needs is more vagabonds and madmen, outsiders unafraid to laugh at the powers-that-be and their petty attempts at maintaining their own sense of mythic legitimacy. In the following discussion of Ayu Utami's *Saman,* it will become evident that the outlaws, madmen, vagabonds and misfits of Indonesia – who may appear in the form of intellectually handicapped teenagers, lapsed Catholic priests, and promiscuous expatriate dancers - indeed do have much to say and do, ultimately challenging and appropriating the state's *dalang*-like monologue.

Wis, Upi and Oedipus in Ayu Utami's *Saman*

Much has already been said and written about Ayu Utami's award-winning first novel, and much has been written and said about Ayu herself. Critics such as Sapardi Djoko Damono and Faruk HT have praised *Saman* for it its unusual structure, its poetic, innovative language, its powerful and unusual themes, the breadth of its vision, and its aesthetic and thematic "beauty".[27] Other leading literary luminaries such as Umar Kayam and YB. Mangunwijaya praised *Saman* for its rich symbolism, its emancipatory populist spirit and its illuminating representation of the consciousness of contemporary Indonesian urban youth.[28]

[27] See "'Saman', Generasi Baru Sastra Indonesia,"*Kompas*, April 5, 1998; Faruk HT, "Keindahan Novel Saman," unpublished paper delivered at the launch of *Saman*, Jakarta, May 13, 1998.
[28] See Y.B. Mangunwijaya, "Menyambut Roman 'Saman'"*Kompas*, April 5, 1998; "Kayam: Potret Realitas; Pram: Integritas Tinggi," *Kompas*, April 5, 1998.

Some have argued that the emergence of Ayu's novel, coinciding with the resignation of President Suharto and the collapse of the New Order regime, spearheads a new generation of socially and politically engaged Indonesian literary expresssion, usually labelled as *sastra reformasi* [literature of the Pro-reform era].[29] Meanwhile, Hatley celebrates the fact that whilst the dominant female image in recent Indonesian literature appears to be one of "modesty, restraint and domesticity" in *Saman,* all social and sexual mores are questioned and broken, ultimately subverting the feminine ideal espoused by the dominant ideology and standard literary characterisation of New Order Indonesia.[30]

Up until now, however, critics have failed to approach *Saman* in terms of its retelling and reinterpreting of myth and mythical characters. A mythopoeic approach to *Saman* may have held little attraction due to the fact that Ayu does not profess to be a great follower of the wayang, and she modestly claims that her knowledge of both wayang characters and plots is hardly sophisticated. Nevertheless, in *Saman* the allusions to the wayang world are many and intriguing, and Ayu easily holds her own when questioned in detail about the wayang characters appearing in her novel.[31]

For many readers, the leading characters in *Saman* are not immediately recognisable as reinterpretations of mythological characters. Yet for those well-versed in the characters and tales of the wayang the parallels are soon recognised. First of all, the way in which Wis, the leading male character of *Saman,* is named, and secondly, the way in which he bravely challenges the powers-that-be in South

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[29] See "'Saman', Generasi Baru Sastra Indonesia,"*Kompas,* April 5, 1998.
[30] Barbara Hatley, "New Directions in Indonesian Women's Writing? The Novel *Saman,*" *Asian Studies Review,* 23, 4 (1999): 449-460.
[31] See "Ayu Utami: Seks itu Problem bagi Perempuan,"*Kompas,* April 5, 1998.

Sumatra and breaks the mould of religious and sexual conservatism, leaves little doubt about his mythological ancestry. Like the popular Wisanggeni of the wayang world, Wis is at once saviour and devil incarnate, a man seeking social and political justice, a man both extremely caring and dangerous, especially as his placid exterior hides a soul consumed by inner turmoil. Wis carries the same allegorical message and weight as the rebellious Wisanggeni of the wayang shadow puppet theatre, but in one sense he is arguably much more fully envisioned, in a fresh and contemporary fashion. The following discussion initially explores the parallels and differences between the mythological hero Wisanggeni and Ayu Utami's fictional hero, Wis. From this, the important position of Wis in *Saman* will serve as a key point of departure for exploring the ways in which transformations of mythology underscore the novel's broad thematic scope.

Wis's struggle to trace and develop the full depths of his own identity as a young pastor and social activist in New Order Indonesia mirrors and transforms the mythical Wisanggeni's own personal quest. Like Wisanggeni, from an early age Wis displays a keen awareness of and affinity with all things mystical. As a boy he resolutely avoids the forest behind his parents' house in Perabumulih, South Sumatra, as he is afraid that ghosts and snakes live there, and he is told that it is inhabited by devils, goblins and fairies (pp. 45-47). Upon his induction as a Catholic priest, he approaches one of the senior priests, Romo Daru, to talk about the possibility of serving in his home town. They discuss this, yet Wis ultimately feels disappointed, as the elderly priest ends the discussion before Wis gets the opportunity to speak of a matter far more intimate, that is, "tentang roh-roh yang pernah ada di sekitar mereka, roh yang pernah mereka rasakan kehadirannya,

melayang-layang atau menapak tanah" [about the spirits that were once around them, spirits in the air and spirits on the ground] (p. 43). Later, when he spends some time alone in his old house in Perabumulih, he senses the presence of the spirits of his three stillborn brothers and sisters. After turning off the lights, closing his eyes and fearlessly tuning himself into the spiritual domain, he hears them speaking to him, and, although their sentences are incomprehensible, he excitedly feels as though he is able to communicate with them (p. 62). In such a fashion Wis appears comfortable with immersing himself in the spiritual domain.

Yet as noted earlier, the mythological Wisanggeni refused to remain in the relative safety of Dewa Baruna's underwater kingdom, and sought his mother and father on the earth and in the heavens, confronting various challenges along the way. Similarly, upon his induction Wis refuses to accept a posting to the predominantly Catholic island of Siberut, and presses for a posting to predominantly-Muslim Perabumulih, where he intends to search for "yang dulu hilang" [what was once lost] (p. 42). In an intriguing reversal of the *Wisanggeni Takon Bapa* tale, rather than searching for his father, in this case Wis takes leave from his father and seeks traces of his late mother. Ultimately, this intriguing reinterpretation of Wisanggeni's search becomes a key premise to understanding not only the dynamic mythopoeic tapestry of Ayu Utami's novel, but also the rich depth of its sociopolitical message.

Accompanying Wis's search for his mother, there is another tale, and another challenge: that of the re-enactment of the Oedipus myth. The child who fantasises about killing his father and marrying his mother, and so repeating the offence of Oedipus, is here aligned with Wis's search for what his mother lost and his ambivalent attitude towards his father and all that he stands for. Sigmund

Freud turned Sophocles' version of the ancient Greek myth of Oedipus into an exploration of repressed desire, and in Ayu Utami's hands the mythic dimensions of Freud's psychoanalytical explorations are given a greater intensity. Freud took Sophocles' narrative as evidence that all male children sexually desire their mother, but they reject this desire out of fear of retaliation from their father, who is hated, as he is a competitor for their mother's love. The male child then develops a castration anxiety, as he fears that his father will harm his genital organs, the source of his lustful feelings. Whilst the complexity of Wis's background and motivations would be severely diminished by creating a single and reductive link to an Oedipal trauma such as this, Wis's ambivalent relationship with his father, Sudoyo, appears to have become a dominating influence both in his childhood and in his later life, with significant ramifications.

One of Wis's earliest memories is of his father in bed placing his head on his mother's breasts, "bercerita dalam suara yang terdengar seperti gumam di tengah malam" [telling stories in a voice sounding like a midnight murmur] (p. 44). His father, a hard-working bank manager who attends church regularly, sternly warns Wis about the dangers of venturing into the forest behind their house, scaring him with a sermon on the dangers of Satan and Lucifer and the deadly habits of snakes. The Freudian undertones here are portentous, with the image of the snake both phallic and sexual. Elsewhere, Wis's father is depicted as taking pleasure in seeing his mother vomiting from morning sickness (p. 48), and, after his mother's two unsuccessful pregnancies ending in mystery and tears, not to mention the possibility of a mysterious male lover, Wis finds himself unable to speak to his father about his thoughts and feelings (p. 53). Even after Sudoyo is transferred to Jakarta and Wis' mother dies, Wis is unable to forge a particularly

close relationship with his father, and he is haunted by the image of his mother silently crying and uncontrollably shaking. At the time Wis senses the great pain that his mother was experiencing in leaving behind the spirits of the children she had lost. It was only later, after his mother died, and after his intense jealousy and anger had subsided, that he could begin to imagine the bitter sense of betrayal and loss that his mother had experienced (p. 58).

Ironically, in the New Order context, it was men such as Sudoyo who were easily associated with Wisanggeni's mythological father, Arjuna. Arjuna, one of the most popular *ksatria* characters of the wayang world, has long been held up as a perfect model for the Indonesian "Everyman". Anderson explains:

> What is one to say of Ardjuna? Unequalled warrior on the battlefield, yet physically delicate and beautiful as a girl, tender-hearted yet iron-willed, a hero whose wives and mistresses are legion yet who is capable of the most extreme discipline and self-denial, a satria with a deep feeling for family loyalty who yet forces himself to kill his own half-brother, he is, to the older generation of Javanese, the epitome of the whole man. In contrast to Judistira, he is joyfully at home in the world. His amorous adventures never cease to delight the Javanese, yet in a strange way he is in complete contrast to Don Juan. So great is his physical beauty and refinement, that princesses and maid-servants alike hurry to offer themselves to him. It is they who are honoured, not Ardjuna. And in contrast to Wrekudara he represents the physical grace and gentleness of heart which generations of Javanese have

so highly prized."[32]

Similarly, Sudoyo can be considered as an Arjuna-like *ksatria*, willing to defend, or at least preserve, the state's emphasis upon order, stability and economic rationalism for the sake of national unity and development. An economics graduate from Universitas Gadjah Mada, one of Indonesia's most prestigious universities, Sudoyo is depicted as a hard-working, religious, morally upright citizen, and on the whole a caring husband. In short, he is the epitome of the New Order regime's conceptualisation of the ideal Indonesian citizen. That is, as explained by David Reeve, an individual who guards against base passions that could lead to error, a citizen who finds his fulfilment and identity through the vast interdependent community of the nation. This conceptualisation, which is called an "integralistic" view, "puts duties before rights, and places the obligation on the individual to act according to values of harmony and the general good".[33] Nevertheless, for the sake of his career, Sudoyo appeared to coldly sacrifice his wife's intense maternal need to be close to her lost children. The consequences were disastrous: his wife soon passed away and Wis's ambivalence soon turned into anger. It is no surprise that Wis shares little interest in following in his father's footsteps as a banker. Although he has no qualms about asking his father for millions of rupiah at the drop of a hat (p. 83), Wis is at best ambivalent towards his father's chosen path.

The relationship between Wis and his mother is equally problematic, and

[32] Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, *Mythology and the Tolerance of the Javanese* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1965), p. 13.
[33] David Reeve, "Indonesia" in *Communities of Thought*, eds. Anthony Milner and Mary Quilty, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 127.

from this perspective one could argue that *Saman* is a profoundly Oedipal novel. By opting for celibacy and a life of the cloth, and immediately seeking out traces of his late mother in South Sumatra, Wis not only betrays an incredibly warm tenderness for his mother but also an inability to sustain a fulfilling relationship with a woman. This condition is highlighted when after arriving in South Sumatra Wis soon befriends Upi, who in many ways represents what Wis once lost, and indeed what he is searching for. As observed by Barbara Hatley,[34] the appearance of the physically disfigured and intellectually-handicapped Upi, whose speech is unintelligable, somehow convinces Wis that "ia sungguh-sungguh telah menemukan yang dulu hilang" [he had really encountered what had been lost] (p. 86). Nevertheless, as will be discussed in greater detail shortly, in many ways Upi remains a mystery for Wis. Of course, Wis's mother, like Upi, is also an enigma. She is said to be warm, attractive and a loving wife and parent, her aura as radiant as the sun (p. 44). However, like Dewi Dresanala, Wis's mother is also from another dimension altogether:

> "His mother, noble and beautiful, was a figure not always able to be explained through rational means. She often appeared not to be in a certain place even though physically she was there, or being in a place where she wasn't fully there. At such moments it was quite difficult to include her in conversation, as she was impervious to those who were speaking right next to her. Sometimes her silence would come to an end after she had paid a visit to a mysterious place, a place of which nobody knew the

[34] Hatley, "New Directions," p. 457.

whereabouts, perhaps a place that is in fact nowhere."[35] (p. 44)

When she loses several children in mysterious circumstances, her mystical qualities become even more dominant. For example, six or seven months into her second pregnancy, Wis's mother is unable to explain why her baby disappears without trace (pp. 48-49). Even more mysteriously, months later, during his mother's third pregnancy, one morning Wis hears the sharp cries of a new-born child, and he also hears the sound of his mother singing soothing lullabies. Yet it is revealed that when Wis opens the door to his mother's bedroom there is no sign of a baby, and no sign of his mother's five-month pregnancy: "jabang itu lenyap tanpa tetesan darah, seperti dihirup oleh atmosfir" [the foetus had disappeared without a trace of blood, like it was sucked up by the sky] (p. 50).

In many ways Upi's identity remains as blank and mysterious as Wis's mother. Besides her mother, nobody knows her proper name: her fellow villagers call her Eti, Ance, Yanti, Meri and Susi, and it is explained that, like a dog, she answers to any name that ends with 'i', such as Pleki, Boni and Dogi (p.68). Like Wis's mother, a 'mythology' has been developed as a means of understanding her. Intersecting with the mysticism surrounding Wis's mother's child-bearing experiences, Upi's father thinks that Upi failed to develop normally because he killed a turtle during her mother's pregnancy. Like Wis's mother, many think that Upi is possessed, and her habit of masturbating in public, not to mention her tendency to become more sexually precocious immediately preceding

[35] "Ibunya yang masih raden ayu adalah sosok yang tak selalu bisa dijelaskan oleh akal. Ia sering nampak tidak berada di tempat ia ada, atau berada di tempat ia tidak ada. Pada saat begitu, sulit mengajaknya bercakap-cakap, sebab ia tak mendengarkan orang yang berbicara di dekatnya. Kadang kebisuannya diakhiri dengan pergi ke tempat yang tidak diketahui orang, barangkali

menstruation, embodies the male apprehension of female power, particularly uncontrolled sexuality.[36] Clearly the similarities between Upi and Wis's mother are not insignificant. In a classic Oedipal correlation, not only is Upi attracted to Wis, but a shocked Wis vigorously rejects Upi's amorous advances (p. 76, 78), preferring to concentrate his energy on his social and spiritual mission, which involves building Upi a solid shelter and a tireless effort to lobby for the rights of the local rubber tappers. Yet despite growing pressure to abandon his attempts to help the local villagers, Wis is unable to completely deny the significance of the villagers or his relationship with Upi. This is because by rejecting the villagers, and thus also Upi, he would also be unconsciously rejecting his mother *in* Upi, which is evident in Upi's naive charm, her unpredictability, and most importantly, the incomprehensible elements of her nature.

From Wis's male perspective, which is the dominant narrative voice of much of *Saman*, both his mother and Upi embody the uncanny, humanising the mystery of the heavenly Dewi Dresanala. However, as argued by Nadya Aisenberg, "if *women* are doing the viewing and defining, then their sexuality is no longer "other," and losing its "otherness," no longer uncanny".[37] Much of the remainder of Ayu Utami's novel is indeed based upon women doing the viewing and defining, and even more importantly, this section involves a far more eclectic,

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suatu ruang yang tidak di mana-mana: suatu suwung."

[36] In Indonesia, the deep-seated fear of the dangers of unleashed female sexuality is embodied by mythical archetypes such as Rangda, the widow-witch of Bali and Nyai Roro Kidul, the Javanese goddess of the South Seas. Archetypes such as these help to explain the sensationalist propaganda surrounding the so-called sexual assaults and violent sadism that members of the women's Communist organisation Gerwani allegedly enacted upon several captured and murdered Indonesian generals in 1965. See Saskia Wieringa, "Sexual Metaphors in the Change From Sukarno's Old Order to Soeharto's New Order in Indonesia," *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Summer 1998): 143-178.

[37] Nadya Aisenberg, *Ordinary Heroines: Transforming the Male Myth* (New York: Continuum, 1994), p.82.

ironic and self-conscious approach to mythology. As opposed to Wis's convincing (yet unintended) evocation of the centrality of the male Oedipus myth and the Wisanggeni outlaw legend of the wayang mythology, the expatriate Indonesian women inscribed in the latter half of the novel present an arresting case for the development of an array of female narratives comparable to the Oedipus and Wisanggeni outlaw myths, narratives that not only validate women, but also allow them to develop into heroines in their own right.

Beyond Wisanggeni: Shakuntala and the Possibilities for Women in Post-Suharto Indonesia

Although the first half of *Saman* appears to be underscored by some of the more established mythical paradigms of both the Indonesian and Western world, the latter half of the novel is equally as interesting because it is itself a radical exploration of inherited mythical models. In its depiction of Wis in his new life as Saman, a technology-savy expatriate NGO activist, the latter half of *Saman* is both a continuation and a reworking of the Wisanggeni legend: Wis's 'death' and rebirth as Saman mirrors Wisanggeni's transformation in Seno's *Wisanggeni Sang Buronan* from a rebellious mythological *ksatria* to human vagabond. But in the depiction of young and assertive female characters such as Shakuntala overcoming societal taboos and forging their own social and 'mythological' identity in an international context, *Saman* is not a mere repetition of the Wisanggeni legend but rather a counter-discursive feminist re-creation of it.

In terms of the Wisanggeni legend alone, the latter half of *Saman* takes Seno's explorations of Wisanggeni in the 'real world' a step further. In this case,

Ayu Utami not only explores what it might be like for a 'real' Wisanggeni in the 'real world', but also what it might be like post-Wisanggeni: how does the 'Mahabharata' fare without him? Furthermore, what if the setting of the 'Mahabharata' was not Indonesia at all, but contemporary New York, and what if the stars of the show were not *ksatria* in the mould of Arjuna, Karna, Bima and Abimanyu but much more marginal characters such as Drupadi, Cangik or Cakil? These notions are explored in the latter half of the novel, yet Ayu's achievement is not only to rewrite ancient myths, but also to challenge contemporary myths of the New Order era, especially myths that have hitherto applied to the ongoing conceptualisation of the Indonesian national identity. In particular this section of the novel queries the superior role of the Indonesian male, and Shakuntala's assertion of personal and creative autonomy plants the seeds for a significant feminist revision of Indonesia's hitherto patriarchal conceptualisation of women.

Shakuntala is one of a group of four Indonesian women whose friendship provides the second key narrative focus of the novel. Shakuntala, also known as Tala, recounts in first person the experiences of the different members of the group. As a narrator, Shakuntala shares much in common with a shadow puppeteer, energetically introducing and focusing upon one of the women, then moving on to the next in quick succession, all the time stylistically interchanging between prose, conversation, poetry and internal dialogue. A sublime storyteller, Shakuntala deftly combines her own thoughts and fantasies with snippets of conversation between the women, where they discuss anything from their school-day experiences together to intimate details of sex. Most importantly for the purpose of this discussion, Shakuntala places a great deal of emphasis on the world of dreams, myths and fairy tales, at one point asking "What is the

difference between dreams and reality?" [Apa bedanya kenyataan dengan impian?] (p. 119). One could even argue that Shakuntala's interpretation of the world of myth is crucial as a means of developing, maintaining and asserting her own keen sense of autonomy. Furthermore, Shakuntala's highly personal appropriation of myth and mythical characters lends weight to the argument that the term 'archetype' must be redefined as the "tendency to form and reform images in relation to certain kinds of repeated experience" and thus varying from culture to culture and person to person, rather than as an eternal and universal form.[38] Thus although Shakuntala may compare herself with a wayang character such as Arjuna - who is, as we have seen, quite heavily laden with a good deal of social and cultural baggage - she does not necessarily take on the full archetypal weight of such a character.

In a sense the eclectic nature of Shakuntala's private mythologising perhaps ensures that she cannot be reductively linked with any particular mythical archetype. In effect Shakuntala denies from the outset the possibility of deconstructing and reconstructing mythical prototypes in the manner of Wis. Consider the following sequence, characterised by an extreme fluidity of gender positions, where Shakuntala links herself with no less than four wayang characters:

> I'm a master of imitation. Sometimes I take on the voice of the monkey-king Sugriwa, complete with low guttural growl. Other times I like to be Cangik [sic], whose deep, sluggish voice somehow seems to suit the flabby

[38] Estella Leuter and Carol Schrier Rupprecht, *Feminist Archetypal Theory: Interdisciplinary Revisions of Jungian Thought* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), pp. 13-14.

skin around her armpits. When I was a teenager I always used to dance as Arjuna from the wayang and all the girls would idolise me- they saw no signs of femininity in my character at all. But I could also do Drupadi, who can ignite the passion of the Pandawa brothers.[39] (p. 118)

The lack of boundaries and the fluidity of gender positions identified in this passage are highly significant. Futhermore, although her ancestry is Javanese, Shakuntala's private mythologising is by no means limited to the Javanese archetypes, and elsewhere she draws upon Western myths and fairy tales. For example, when as a girl Shakuntala's father sends her to a new school in a new city, she compares the setting to a wild forest, and when she leaves home for school each day she leaves a trail of bread in order to find her way home, just like the Brothers Grimm tale of Hansel and Gretel. Furthermore, she also believes that - like Hansel and Gretel - she has a cruel father (p. 119).

Clearly Shakuntala's imagination has been active from a young age, and besides imagining herself as a fairy or nymph (p. 120), she fantasises about wayang ogre-giants (*raksasa* and *buto*), so much so that she reveals that she had her first sexual experience with an ogre (p. 124), and was sent away from home for having a romantic relationship with one (p. 120). Freudian critics see ogres in Western folk tales and children's stories as always in part embodiments of the (male) child's fear and resentment of the father.[40] For example, Bruno Bettelheim

[39] "Aku mahir mengubah suaraku. Kadang aku ini kera Sugriwa dengan geram egresif maupun ingresif dalam trachea. Kali lain aku adalah Cangik yang suaranya yang klemak-klemek seperti kulit ketiaknya yang lembek. Ketika remaja aku selalu menari sebagai Arjuna dalam Wayang Orang, dan gadis-gadis memujaku sebab tanpa sadar mereka tak menemukan sisa-sisa femininiti dalam diriku. Tapi aku juga Drupadi, yang memurubkan gairah pada kelima pandawa."
[40] Hourihan, *Deconstructing the Hero*, p. 151.

describes the giant ogre in "Jack and the Beanstalk" as the "oedipal father",[41] and he argues that, in cutting down the beanstalk and killing the giant, Jack frees himself from a view of the father as destructive and devouring. However, according to Margery Hourihan, the felling of the ogre evokes a far richer set of personal, social and political meanings than Bettelheim allows.[42] In *Saman*, for example, whilst it is clear that Shakuntala despises her father, she certainly has no desire to kill any ogres. On the contrary, she seeks them out as a means of liberating herself, both personally and sexually. On a political level, her intimacy with ogres is arguably an image of rebellion against feudal oppression, and certainly against unjust authority. Consider the following passage:

> I used to live in a girl's compound where all the girls danced. All around the compound were hills inhabited by giants: Buta Cakil, Buta Rambut Geni, Buta Ijo, Buta Terong, Buta Wortel, Buta Lobak. *Ferocious ogres.* They were both the enemies of and the butt of jokes by the *satria*, who dimissed them scornfully as bizarre, insignificant outlaws. But I fell in love with one of them.
>
> Because the giants would be killed like vermin if they set foot inside the compound, which was behind the *satria* quarters, I used to meet him secretly secretly under the *kepuh* tree. He slithered along on his belly, with the tail of a common snake. But the gardener caught us out and told my father. He gave orders for the *satria* to hunt down my lover and I was

[41] Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: the Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1976), p. 190.
[42] Hourihan, *Deconstructing the Hero*, p. 152.

exiled to this town.[43] (p. 120)

What is the significance of Shakuntala's attraction to these ogre-giants outside her dormitory? In answering such a question, perhaps a brief overview of *buta* or *raksasa* is beneficial. Nowadays, it has become a common sight to see wayang screens lit up with the battles and skirmishes between *ksatria* such as Arjuna and ogres such as Cakil and his cohorts. Brandon suggests that the ogres were introduced into the wayang in order to be incidental figures, to add variety, but due to their popularity and dramatic usefulness, they gradually became stock figures of major importance.[44] Sears discusses the ways in which ogres and ogre kingdoms were introduced into the plots of wayang performances at about the same time that the Dutch became heavily involved in the internal affairs of the Central Javanese kingdoms of the late 18th century.[45] Humorously resembling the Dutch, at the time the ogres were portrayed as bad-tempered, threatening, impatient and uncouth, often with clumsy Javanese. What is certain is that the ogres' aims were more often than not to usurp the wayang kingdoms, kill the *ksatria,* and kidnap the wayang princesses. Likewise, the aims of the wayang *ksatria* were undoubtedly to protect their kingdoms, kill the ogres and rescue the kidnapped princesses. Nowadays, almost every wayang performance includes scenes with ogres, and it would not be an exaggeration to claim that the inevitable

[43] "Aku tinggal di sebuah keputrian di mana semua anak menari. Di sekeliling komplek itu terbentang bukit-bukit yang ditinggali raksasa: buta cakil, buta rambut geni, buta ijo, buta terong, buta wortel, buta lobak. *Buta-buta galak.* Mereka adalah musuh dan olok-olok para satria, yang mengatai mereka sebagai buron aneh dan remeh. Tapi aku jatuh cinta pada salah satunya.

Karena raksasa akan dibunuh seperti wirok jika memasuki keputrian yang terletak di belakang kesatriaan, akulah yang mengunjunginya di bawah pohon-pohon kepuh. Belit-membelit seperti Naganini dengan seekor ular domestik. Tetapi tukang kebun melaporkan kami pada ayahku. Ia menyuruh para satria memburu kekasihku, sementara aku dibuangkannya ke kota ini.

[44] Brandon, *On Thrones of Gold*, p. 28.

triumph of the *ksatria* over the ogres dramatises the aggressive mastery of Indonesia's patriarchy. Shakuntala's enactment of *rapprochement* between the princess and her opponents is therefore highly subversive, not only rejecting the dominant role of the *ksatria,* but also the passive role of the princess, not to mention the ogres. Thus Shakuntala's creation of a kind of 'private' mythology is as much a form of personal empowerment as it is a radical move to forge new possibilities of narrative, space and voice for women.

The way in which Shakuntala conceptualises these ogres is highly suggestive. Initially it appears that she is convinced that she is communing with ogres originating from India (p. 134). Yet later, in a bizarre scene resonating with the fantasy of magic realism, it becomes apparent that Shakuntala's conceptualisation of ogre-giants is perhaps much closer to the designs of the shadow puppeteers and poets of the late 18th century Javanese courts. That is, the ogres may in fact be Dutch colonisers (p. 134), priests and sailors who have somehow inexplicably slipped into the 20th century through a rip in the space-time continuum. Confronted by a naked Shakuntala dancing out in the open, the Dutch 'ogres' still believe that they are in the 17th century. Later, when Shakuntala plans to relocate to the Netherlands, this ogre metaphor expands to include Westerners in general (p. 137), an association not developed in the earlier references to ogres (pp. 79-80). These images are powerful, and resonate deeply not only with feminist concerns but also postcolonial issues. Despite enduring tensions, feminist and postcolonial theory has followed what the authors of *The*

[45] Sears, *Shadows of Empire,* pp. 42-45.

Empire Writes Back call "a path of convergent evolution".[46] As explained by Leila Gandhi,

> Both bodies of thought [feminist and postcolonial] have concerned themselves with the study and defence of marginalised 'Others' within repressive structures of domination and, in so doing, both have followed a remarkably similar theoretical trajectory. Feminist and postcolonial theory alike began with an attempt to simply invert prevailing hierarchies of gender/culture/race, and they have progressively welcomed the poststructuralist invitation to refuse the binary oppositions upon which the patriarchal/colonial authority constructs itself.[47]

In her representation of Western men as *raksasa* and the West as a "tanah raksasa" [land of the giants] (p. 137), Shakuntala objectifies the West, inscribing it as an exoticised and uncanny 'Other' in opposition to the female Indonesian Self. Thus the familiar imperial hierarchy of the coloniser as Self and the colonised as Other, as well as the standard patriarchal norms encountered throughout the world, be it in Bali or New York, is interrogated.

Shakuntala's narrative ensures that no longer is the Indonesian woman destined to remain a voiceless bare-breasted handmaiden tempting unwary Europeans, as portrayed in *Saman* in the colonial-era transcription of 1625 presented by one of the Dutch *raksasa* (p. 135). Instead, after a brief sexual

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[46] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 249.
[47] Leila Ghandi, *Postcolonial Theory: a Critical Introduction* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1998), pp. 82-83.

encounter, we find a typically precocious Shakuntala engaging with this Dutchman in conversation, questioning his racist attitudes, informing him (ironically) of the strength of 'Eastern' values, and reminding him of the lax moral standards of his own kind (pp. 135-136). In the sense that Shakuntala presents an entirely different reality from the 17th century Dutchman's reality, her narrative helps complete an incomplete story. However, it should be noted that, in keeping with Shakuntala's rebellious nature, her narrative is by no means intended as a completion in itself, and her final comment in this striking passage is an ironic effacement of her previous comments: "Dan Timur dan Barat pastilah konsep yang amat ganjil, sebab kita berbicara tentang kesopanan sambil telanjang" [And surely East and West are absurd concepts, for here we are talking about politeness whilst naked]. (p. 136)

As a consequence, the key to understanding the full symbolic significance of Shakuntala's encounters with her Dutch *raksasa* may not be so much in what she says to them but rather in the symbolic act of loving them, at least in a sexual sense. From a postcolonial perspective, Shakuntala's encounters exploit the Dutch, in an important sense regaining a sense of self through romantically "fighting back" from the colonial margins. From a mythopoeic perspective, her allegorical enactment of rapprochement between the princess and the *raksasa*, all the while precluding the involvement of the *ksatria*, is an important statement in itself. Indeed Shakuntala's engagement with the mythical realms supports Leila Chudori's observation that Ayu Utami's novel is strongly imbued with feminism, not as an explicitly stated argument or an intellectual idea but rather as a lived

reality.[48] According to Chudori, the greatest achievement of *Saman* is that of "fulfilling our most basic desires: that of making a woman a human being".[49] By drawing upon the world of myths and *raksasa*, a predominantly male domain, Shakuntala's 'lived reality' is all the more empowering, as it is experienced in spite of what Hatley terms as "the old restrictions and taboos" that have held back Indonesian women for so long.[50] In effect, by inscribing herself as a 'princess' and a 'heroine' in her own radically reinterpreted mythological paradigm, Shakuntala's narrative is liberating and empowering, imaginatively appropriating and reinterpreting wayang archetypes in order to forge new narrative possibilities for Indonesian women.

Conclusion

Wisanggeni is regarded as one of several mythological embodiments of the *rakyat*, 'the people' of Indonesia, and as the rebellious son of Arjuna, it could be usefully argued that he represents the wayang equivalent of the post-Suharto generation. However in both Seno Gumira Ajidarma's *Wisanggeni Sang Buronan* and Ayu Utami's *Saman*, Wisanggeni's power of advocacy is limited, and in both texts his acts of resistance are met with stiff opposition, so much so that Wisanggeni's greatest act of resistance is to surrender himself and let fate run its course. In Seno's novel, through the creative usage of *suluk*, metafiction and the adoption of a fast-moving and action-packed plot in the style of a Chinese martial

[48] Hatley, "New Directions," p. 456.
[49] Leila Chudori, "Sosok-sosok dalam Roman "Saman": Menyajikan Hak Seksual Perempuan," unpublished paper presented at the book launch of *Saman*, Jakarta, May 13, 1998.
[50] Hatley, "New Directions," p. 458.

arts movie, spectres of horror, depravity, contingency and indeterminacy are ever-present. The denouement of Seno's novel, where Wisanggeni leaves the wayang world and becomes a mad vagrant in Yogyakarta, underscores the postmodern notion of the indeterminacy and lack of fixed identity of the 'reality' of contemporary Indonesia, both when Seno's Wisanggeni narrative was first written at the height of the *Petrus* killings, and when it was published in novel form, during the presidency of Abdurrahman Wahid.

Like Danarto's accompanying drawings, Seno's Wisanggeni is fully realised as a human being, with shifting emotions and heart-felt desires. Such is the depth of humanity in Seno's Wisanggeni that he clearly does not wish to die. Yet he agrees to give up his fight for justice upon Semar's insistence that it would be the innocent inhabitants of the wayang world - the birds, flowers, trees and villagers - who would be most negatively affected by Wisanggeni's continued rebellion against the gods. Therefore, just as Wisanggeni saves the *rakyat* of the wayang world by leaving it, Seno attempts to 'save' the Indonesian world by both borrowing the wayang and reworking it in the form of a literary counter-discourse against the wayang and the New Order regime. In effect, just as Wisanggeni must die, so too must the wayang be deconstructed and reinterpreted by Indonesia's latest generation of writers.

In *Saman*, where the mythology of the Wisanggeni legend is reworked to such a degree that few, if any, critics have noted the link, Wis realises - like Wisanggeni before him - that he cannot continue his fight against the powers-that-be, and he must flee not only South Sumatra but also Indonesia. By taking on a new life in the United States as Saman, he allows the narrative focus, and thus the ideological direction of Ayu's mythological reinterpretation, to shift.

Consequently, one of the women intersecting with Saman's life-story, the promiscuous outsider, Shakuntala, is handed the narrative reins. It is at this point that Ayu, like Seno before her, breaks free from the ideological chains of the wayang and all it stands for. This does not mean that the wayang is completely rejected. On the contrary, a fictional 'overcoming' of the wayang entails an even greater interaction between the two discursive domains. For example, Shakuntala embraces an eclectic array of mythological beings, including fairies, Hansel and Gretel, and a number of the more peripheral wayang characters such as Sugriwa, Dewi Drupadi and Cangik. Furthermore, she falls in love with the wayang's ogre-giants, who are perceived as both mythological and human entities.

Ultimately, by shifting narrative focus and style between Wis, Shakuntala and several other characters such as Saman, his lover Yasmin and a Dutch *raksasa*, Ayu Utami allegorically embodies what one might suggest is a postmodern *dalang*, presenting various voices in the one narrative monologue, where each voice differs from and challenges the other, ultimately deferring any real sense of narrative cohesion or unity in favour of an emphasis on egalitarianism and autonomous perspective. The ultimate hope of a such an ideologically-motivated narrative technique is that more 'post-Wisanggeni' characters, or even 'post-wayang' characters, will emerge, such as Shakuntala.

Significantly, just as Seno's vagabond laughs at the wayang, so does Shakuntala, who never treats herself too seriously. She chooses and adapts mythological archetypes freely and light-heartedly, always ensuring that what she embraces fits in with her lived reality of feminism, a reality she struggled to achieve while in Indonesia, where the paternalistic aspects of Indonesia's patriarchal society still dominate. Finally, both authors appear to be suggesting

that perhaps it is time for new 'post-wayang' Wisanggenis to be given a greater voice, in the mould of Ayu's Shakuntala and Seno's mad vagabond. As a final confirmation of this notion, consider the final scene of Arya Dipayana's *Wisanggeni Berkelabat*, where Pak Santai, who has been waiting without luck for the 'real' Wisanggeni to appear, delivers the following announcement:

> Ladies and Gentlemen, our apologies. We have already tried to find him with our utmost effort, but as you can see there is no Wisanggeni on stage. We can't possibly find him here. But it can't be denied, we both need and await Wisanggeni so that he can fix up this mess we have here. (Brief Pause) If Wisanggeni happens to be amongst you... or, rather, you are Wisanggeni, I would like to leave a message: look at what it has all come to. How long will you remain silent and let everything become even more uncertain?[51] (p. 32).

[51] "Saudara-saudara, kami mohon maaf. Kami sudah berusaha mencari sekuat tenaga, tapi ternyata di atas panggung ini tidak ada Wisanggeni. Kami tidak mungkin mencarinya di sini. Tapi tidak bisa dipungkiri. Kami membutuhkan dan menantikan Wisanggeni untuk membenahi segala yang porakporanda di sini. (Berhenti sejenak) Jika kebetulan ternyata Wisanggeni ada di antara saudara-saudara- atau boleh juga dikatakan: ada Wisangeni pada diri saudara-saudara, saya ingin menyampaikan pesan. Keadaan sudah sedemikian rupa. Sampai kapan saudara akan berdiam diri dan membiarkan segala-galanya jadi semakin tidak pasti?"

Conclusion

Shortly after the disappearance of the disgraced son of former President Suharto, Tommy Suharto, the mid-November edition of the *Tempo* current-affairs magazine was plastered with his photo under the banner "Dicari: Buronan Rakyat! Tangkap Hidup Atau Mati!" [Wanted: Outlaw of the People! Arrest Him Dead or Alive!]. Not long after this, Stephanus Kurdini, a young Arts graduate of Gadjah Mada University, wrote in an email the following comments about Seno Gumira Ajidarma's novel portraying another 'outlaw', Wisanggeni:

> I'll give you some comments about "Wisanggeni Sang Buronan." [...] Just to finish this novel which was only as thick as 90-odd pages, I was incredibly bored. There was almost nothing new and it was too close to the *pakem*. However, some very interesting entertainment occurred in the final chapter, "Free from the Wayang World." For me, the story really began from here. I developed the story below, taking out my "emotion and anger" towards wayang, because I regard wayang as a crony of feudalism, which was created for the interests of "the gods" in Java. Semar is just a form of opium for the masses, the same goes for Wisanggeni and Antasena (this character wasn't in "Wisanggeni Sang Buronan"), who are just empty promises for the *rakyat*. (The pity is, the story I want to tell is only in my own imagination, I should bring it to life in a novel). A brief outline of my emotion goes

something like this:

THIS IS MY RELIGION: a Reaction to "Wisanggeni the Outlaw"

This is my religion:

A thousand Wisanggenis won't be able to kill Guru

Because I'm the *rakyat*. Wisanggeni is just a bribe

Like Semar who is just a drug for those who are worried

And Krishna, a god for those in dream-land

But I'm the *rakyat*

This is my religion:

A thousand Wisanggenis won't be able to kill a thousand Gurus

Because Guru appears with his own religion to the point where even Tommy can hide

Whereas I am me and I am the *rakyat* I am wisanggeni

This is my religion:

A thousand wisanggenis won't be able to kill a Wisanggeni

Because I am the *rakyat*

seno gumira is just wandering. And pardjaya. Who is he?

Learn from Seno not Nugroho

to Enthus not Enthus not Enthus not Enthus because even Enthus has to go to hell!

Dead, all of you!

This is my religion:

I am Wisanggeni because I am the *Rakyat*

even if my right is only to laugh. Hahaha

Supposing I get the chance to transpose my imagination into a novel form I'll give it this title: *The Death of the Outlaw (a sequel to "Wisanggeni the Outlaw").*[1]

Kurdini's words and poetry, addressed to myself, have a certain irony about them. Taken together with the previous chapter of this thesis, and indeed this

[1] Saya akan beri komentar tentang *Wisanggeni Sang Buronan* [...] Untuk menghabiskan novel yang hanya setebal 90-an halaman saja, saya sudah sangat bosan. Hampir tidak ada kebaruan dan terlalu ke pakem. Hiburan yang sangat menarik terjadi pada Bab terakhir, "Lenyap dari Jagad Pewayangan." Bagi saya, cerita baru mulai dari sini. Saya mengembangkan cerita ini dan melampiaskan "emosi dan kemarahan" saya terhadap "wayang" karena saya menganggap bahwa wayang adalah antek feodalisme yang dibuat untuk kepentingan para "dewa" di Jawa. Semar sekedar candu bagi rakyat, demikian juga Wisanggeni dan Antasena (tokoh ini tidak ada dalam *Wisanggeni Sang Buronan*), mereka sekedar janji kosong bagi rakyat. (Sayangnya cerita yang saya kembangkan itu hanya imaginasi, seharusnya saya mewujudkannya dalan novel). Gambaran ringkas emosi saya kira-kira begini:

INILAH AGAMAKU: Reaksi atas Wisanggeni Sang Buronan

Inilah agamaku:/ Seribu Wisanggeni tak kan mampu membunuh Guru/ Sebab aku rakyat. Wisanggeni sekedar suap/Seperti Semar candu bagi yang samar/Dan Krishna dewa bagi yang lena/Sedang aku rakyat.

Inilah agamaku:/ Seribu wisanggeni tak kan mampu membunuh seribu guru/ Sebab guru selalu hadir dengan agamanya sendiri hingga tommy pun bisa sembunyi/ Sedang aku adalah aku adalah rakyat adalah wisanggeni.

Inilah agamaku:/ Seribu wisanggeni tak kan mampu membunuh/ seorang Wisanggeni. Sebab aku rakyat/ seno gumira cuma kembara. Dan pardjaya. Siapa dia?/ Bergurulah pada Seno bukan nugoho/ pada Enthus bukan enthus bukan enthus bukan enthus karena enthus pun/harus mampus/ Modar, *sia*!

Inilah agamaku:/ Akulah Wisanggeni sebab Aku Rakyat/ sekalipun hak-Ku hanya tertawa. Hahaha.

Andakata saya mendapat kesempatan untuk mewujudkan imajinasi saya dalam bentuk novel saya akan memberinya judul: "Matinya Sang Buronan" (lanjutan "Wisanggeni Sang Buronan").

thesis as a whole, they remind us of the paradox of literary appropriations of the wayang. By drawing upon the images, tales and themes of the wayang world, Indonesian writers can be accused of merely reflecting and strengthening the 'feudal' *kawula-gusti* values of the New Order ruling elite, values based on an essentially hierarchical political ideology deriving from Javanese cultural tradition. Ruth McVey has observed that the tales of the wayang were part of an ancient cultural borrowing by Javanese rulers, who saw conceptualisations of the state depicted in the Mahabharata and Ramayana epics as a means of strengthening their own claims to power.[2] Thus through the wayang tales, ideals of royal power, hierarchy and deferential behaviour have been transmitted from court to village over the centuries, a process that continues today. Wayang, then, can be seen, *par excellence*, as the expression of Javanese 'feudal' values.

As described in Chapter One, 'Wayang and Literature in the New Order' - the wayang world, as a nationalised expression of elitist Javanese values, norms and historical traditions, became one of the major cultural legitimations of the New Order regime, endorsing a political ethos that emphasised order, respect for authority and a strong disapproval of open dissent.[3] According to Pramoedya Ananta Toer, because the wayang emerged from the laps of the ruling elite, this sort of cultural expression merely served to deny any movement towards progress, both glorifying the past, eliding the present and legitimising the New Order.[4]

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[2] McVey, 'The Wayang Controversy," p. 21.
[3] van Langenberg, "The New Order State," p. 134.
[4] See Pramoedya Ananta Toer, "Sastra, Sensor dan Negara: Seberapa Jauhkah Bahaya Novel?," *Polemik Hadiah Magyaysay* (Jakarta: Institut Studi Arus Informasi, 1997), pp. 228-234.

Chapter Two of this thesis, 'Sumantri, Sukrasana, and Umar Kayam's *Para Priyayi*', extended the idea of the wayang as a cultural legitimisation of New Order ideology. By examining the interaction between Umar Kayam's *Para Priyayi* and the *Sumantri Ngenger* wayang tale, I tried to show the sociocultural background to the way in which a leader such as Suharto was able to legitimise his 'kingly' rule. That is, through the service and support of his loyal Sumantri-like ruling and bureaucratic elite, which included the Indonesian armed forces. As in the *Sumantri Ngenger* tale, where Sumantri's success in serving his king is underpinned by the help and sacrifice of his dwarf-ogre brother Sukrasana, the rise of the highly militarised New Order was only made possible by the massacres of hundreds of thousands of 'demonic' communists. Consequently, throughout the New Order the "communists" were closely associated with another term for the 'Other', the Indonesian *rakyat*. The remainder of the thesis attempted to not only trace the shadow of the 'demonic' Sukrasana in his many reincarnations but also make him human.

On the whole, Umar Kayam's *Para Priyayi* is a text that does not openly interrogate New Order notions of social and political hierarchy. However, the vast majority of the many wayang-based narratives appearing in the New Order era - and in particular the late New Order - are highly subversive. Consequently, Chapter Three of this thesis, 'Smells of Something Like Postmodernism: Emha Ainun Nadjib Rewriting the Mahabharata', acts as the beginning of a new direction in my discussion. This chapter discusses the socially liberating possibilities raised by the intersection between *wayang mbeling* and the 'postmodern' moment in the late New Order. Here, I tried to show the way in which a large number of Indonesian writers have translated the clown-servant

characters of the wayang into Indonesian literary texts as statements of counter-hegemonic postcoloniality. In Emha Ainun Nadjib's *Arus Bawah,* for example, the menial yet highly self-conscious clown-servants become embodiments of a 'postmodern' deconstruction of the highly stratified social structure of the wayang world of the Mahabharata, which is easily read as an allegory for late twentieth-century Indonesia. Emphasising their symbolic links with the Indonesian *rakyat,* which they see as a long-repressed marginal force, the clown-servants symbolically foreshadow and symbolically enact, both in their textual and thematic challenge to the subservient role of the *rakyat* in New Order Indonesia, radical sociocultural change.

The rebellious clownservants as a metaphor for the marginalised masses of Indonesia is a provocative image of cultural resistance. Yet in the hands of an expatriate Indonesian writer such as Pipit Rochijat the equally rebellious Kurawa can also be linked with the masses, confirming J.M. Coetzee's observation that "metaphors slide into (or interpret) other metaphors which slide into yet others, and so on".[5] In Chapter Four, 'Pipit Rochijat's *Baratayuda di Negeri Antah Berantah*: Resurrecting the Kurawa, Exorcising the New Order', I attempted to trace an unspoken aspect to Emha's metaphoric 'blueprint' for social and political reform, that is, the need to call up and interrogate the demons of the past. By depicting the deceased Kurawa in "hell-ville", Pipit has painted a particularly vivid metaphor for the way in which the 'evil' Kurawa of Indonesia's past, the massacred communists of the 1960s, have on the whole been treated with indifference in the ongoing conceptualisation of Indonesian state and society, in a

[5] Coetzee, *Giving Offense,* p. 184.

sense consigned to the dustbin, or "hell-ville", of Indonesian historiography. Even though the New Order government conceded the communists a place to play in Indonesian history and society, that is, as the initial and ongoing source of all evil in post-Independence Indonesia - not unlike the Kurawa of the Mahabharata - this position is ontologically a place apart, a *non*-place, a living Hell. Yet in Pipit's "hell-ville", after an initial settling-in period of a thousand years, the deceased Kurawa are not only existing, but even thriving: they while away eternity reading communist comics, making jokes, eating corpse satay, drinking beer, molesting movie stars, swimming in the lake of fire, and generally enjoying their new lease on life. Furthermore, by taking pleasure from their eternal torture sessions they make life hellish for their torturers, the gods. By examining the similarities between Pipit's literary poetics and the narrative techniques of a *dalang*, Pipit's resurrection and humanisation of the Kurawa can be regarded as a means of calling up and symbolically 'exorcising' the spectres of the New Order.

In Chapter Five, 'Metafiction in the Postmodern Wayang Novels of Putu Wijaya and Agusta Wibisono', I tried to show that in the late New Order many of the wayang characters appearing on the pages of Indonesian fiction became as self-conscious as their authors. That is, in the *wayang mbeling* of the 1980s, and in the 1990s in particular, it became a common occurrence to witness wayang characters taking on a greater sense of autonomy. This new-found personal agency was most startlingly demonstrated when characters would openly, and somewhat paradoxically, challenge the author and his wayang world. Elsewhere, characters would often address the reader directly as an even more shocking means of disrupting the wayang's heavily-stratified social structure. In effect, self-parodic representations of wayang characters become much more than mere

parodies, but rather conceptual 'humanisations' of previously two-dimensional puppets. By examining the role of metafiction or self-reflexivity in Putu Wijaya's *Perang* and Agusta Wibisono's *Balada Narasoma* and *Balada Cinta Abimanyu dan Lady Sundari*, I tried to show that these wayang characters' new-found self-consciousness or self-reflexivity acted as an intriguing indicator of emerging sociocultural change. By addressing both their authors and their readers directly, the almost-flesh-and-blood characters of these texts, which in some cases even included the narrator himself, established commonalities totally independent from traditional ideologies of hierarchy or status. In short, this chapter argued that the ontological fluidity between reader, writer and fictional character could arguably be considered as a 'democratisation' of the literary experience.

However, it appears that the writers of Indonesia felt that Indonesia's process towards *political* democratisation could not possibly begin in earnest until the 'evil king' of the New Order regime, President Suharto, was removed from power. Chapter Six, 'Indonesian Writers and the Ramayana in the New Order', examined the various ways in which Indonesian writers reworked the Ramayana cycle of tales as a means of undermining Suharto and imagining an alternative social system, where equality and egalitarianism rather than hierarchy and repression is the basis for social and political interaction. As observed by Virginia Matheson Hooker, associated with the concept of social equality, which also has the effect of undermining total loyalty to a ruler, "are the new relationships individuals can form with one another on the basis of their 'human-ness', their common humanity".[6] In a significant number of the literary reinterpretations of

[6] Hooker, *Writing a New Society* (St Leonards, N.S.W: Asian Studies Association of Australia in association with Allen & Unwin, 2000), p. 361.

the Ramayana, the 'human-ness' or 'common humanity' of the characters is emphasised as a means of differentiating the evil Rahwana or Dasamuka from either the lower echelons of the wayang world - such as the monkeys and demons of Sindhunata's *Anak Bajang Menggiring Angin* - or more democratically-inclined figures emerging from within the ruling elite, such as Martin Suhartono's pro-*reformasi* younger brother of Rahwana, Wibisono. As a lesson on the importance of egalitarianism and commonality, Suhartono's Wibisono is told that with the help of an updated 'Astabrata', a mystical text outlining the eight steps needed for good leadership, and the monkeys -metaphors for the pro-*reformasi* students - he can forge a society based on an alternative ideology to that of Rahwana's evil rule. That is, a pro-*reformasi* ideology based on social and political justice, a democratic system of government, a clean and transparent legal system, an emphasis on education and employment, and, most importantly, the eradication of corruption, collusion and nepotism.

If the texts discussed in Chapter Six rhetorically undermined Suharto's regime and symbolically foreshadowed the political events of 1997 and 1998, then the texts of Chapter Seven, 'Too Many Wisanggenis: Reinventing the Wayang at the End of the Century', foreshadow the new directions that the interaction between wayang and fiction may take in the post-Suharto era. For example, the Wisanggenis of Seno Gumira Ajidarma's *Wisanggeni Sang Buronan*, Teater Tetas' *Wisanggeni Berkelabat* and Ayu Utami's *Saman* are portrayed as figures of resistance, both against the wayang elite and the New Order powers-that-be. In Seno's novel, such is Wisanggeni's counter-hegemonic status that when he leaves the wayang world and emerges in present-day Yogyakarta, only to burst into uncontrollable laughter in the middle of a wayang performance, his laughter cuts

at several levels. On the one hand, his laughter mocks the *dalang*, who, like so many of the leading *dalang* of the New Order, can be seen as a mouthpiece for the New Order regime. On another level, his laughter is also directed at the puppets on the screen, the pompous wayang *ksatria*, who are also representative of the New Order bureaucrats. Meanwhile, through the character of Shakuntala, the novel *Saman* draws upon the wayang to provide intriguing ideological alternatives. Shakuntala also laughs at the characters of the wayang. She casually engages in sexual relationships with *buto*, and light-heartedly likens herself to an eclectic array of mythological figures, revealing her liberated sense of self and femininity.

The desire to steal back from the New Order regime the 'true essence' of the wayang, and Wisanggeni in particular - which underscores the work of Seno, Ayu and Teater Tetas - is encapsulated in the poem by Kurdini, with which I opened this conclusion. Like Seno's vagabond and Ayu's Shakuntala, in *Inilah Agamaku*, Kurdini also reveals a desire to laugh at the wayang world, and all it has come to stand for in contemporary Indonesia. Kurdini's poem, a statement outlining his "religion", has a bitter, malicious tone, as he responds to Seno's novel and the wayang world that it depicts. His poem not only savages all-powerful wayang gods such as Batara Guru, who is used to represent the 'god' of the New Order, Suharto, but also the popular symbols of the *rakyat*, Semar and Wisanggeni. Popular *dalang* such as Ki Seno Nugroho, Ki Parjaya and Ki Enthus Susmono are also attacked. However, as revealed through subtle narrative techniques such as the varying use of capital letters and lower-case letters for personal pronouns, Kurdini's poem also reveals alternatives for the future. The first stanza of the poem refers to Wisanggeni and Guru of the wayang *pakem* with

capital letters. However, in the second stanza of the poem, the capitals are replaced with lower-case letters. Here, the lower case letters suggest a move from the idealism of the wayang *pakem* to the reality of contemporary Indonesia. For example, the first line of this stanza proclaims that a thousand "wisanggenis" won't be able to kill a thousand "gurus". The violence and sociopolitical difficulties that the people of Indonesia have experienced since Suharto was forced from the presidency are testament enough to this. However, the last line of this stanza provides a glimmer of hope, in the figure of an alternative Wisanggeni, an entity referred to as "wisanggeni", who is aligned with the narrator, "aku", and the *rakyat*: "Sedang aku adalah aku adalah rakyat adalah wisanggeni" [Whereas i am me and i am the *rakyat* i am wisanggeni].

The penultimate stanza of *Inilah Agamaku* develops this notion, although in an unexpected way. The first line places both versions of Wisanggeni alongside each-other, with surprising results: "Seribu wisanggeni tak kan mampu membunuh seorang Wisanggeni" [A thousand wisanggenis won't be able to kill a Wisanggeni]. Here, we find that lower-case "wisanggenis" are in fact a false hope, just like "wandering" writers such as "seno gumira ajidarma" and *dalang* such as "pardjaya", "nugroho", and "enthus". However, by juxtaposing "wisanggeni" with Wisanggeni, Seno with "seno gumira ajidarma" and "seno nugroho", and Enthus with "enthus", Kurdini seems to be suggesting that at a conceptual or ideological level these characters and people do have an important role to play in Indonesia's future. For example, by looking beyond the literary experimentations of Seno Gumira Ajidarma, the showmanship of Ki Seno Nugroho or Ki Enthus Susmono, or the state manipulation of wayang characters such as Semar, the "true" Wisanggeni will be revealed. That is, not a cynical state-sponsored

wisanggeni, but Wisanggeni himself, or more precisely, "Aku": the *Rakyat*. In other words, the ordinary people of Indonesia: "Inilah agamaku:/Akulah Wisanggeni sebab Aku Rakyat/Sekalipun hak-Ku hanya tertawa. Hahaha." [This is my religion:/I'm Wisanggeni because I'm the *Rakyat*/Even if My right is only to laugh. Hahaha.].

That the Indonesian people should want to laugh, which is all they may be able to do, Kurdini seems to suggest, is only fitting. As I have argued throughout this thesis, in their *wayang mbeling*, or literary appropriations of the Javanese shadow theatre, Indonesian writers of the New Order period often used humorous and light-hearted literary techniques. These techniques included parody, satire, pastiche, metafiction, intertextuality, discontinuity, disjunction, *plesetan*, and *kérata basa*. These techniques can also be easily associated with postmodernism. After all, playful and irreverent *puisi mbeling* [anti-Establishment poetry] has been regarded as an artistic phenomenon bearing many of the markers of postmodernism.[7] Likewise, as we have seen, in many ways *wayang mbeling* can be read as a genre of fiction bearing many similarities with international postmodern fiction.

Encoding both subversive and postmodern strategies and techniques, literary appropriations of the wayang support the notion that the rise of postmodernism in Indonesia can be regarded as a challenge to the New Order's cultural and political hegemony. Of equal importance is the way in which *wayang mbeling* has subverted the notion that in the New Order period Indonesia's writers failed to address Indonesia's sociopolitical realities. By investigating the

[7] Nirwan Dewanto, *Senjakala Kebudayaan* (Yogyakarta: Bentang, 1996), p. 181.

ways in which various Indonesian writers translated the wayang into modern literary forms of expression, this thesis has highlighted the various strategies of mediation that allowed the writers of Indonesia to express dissent, interrogate the New Order rule, and engage with issues of social, historical and political importance. The literary strategies used were complex and numerous, and the literary mediums chosen were diverse, including novels, short stories, plays, newspaper columns, essays, poems, e-mails, songs and *pantun*. Ultimately, this study of *wayang mbeling* - be it translated as 'mischievous wayang' or 'anti-Establishment wayang' - has demonstrated that contemporary writers in Indonesia have played a important role in the ongoing conceptualisation of Indonesia's social, political and cultural identity.

Glossary

Abimanyu: son of Arjuna and Sembadra, father of Parikesit; slain in the Baratayuda by a barrage of hundreds of arrows.
Agni: God of Fire.
Aji: a magical formula, usually granting invulnerability.
Alengka: island kingdom ruled by ogre-king Rahwana in the Ramayana.
Amarta (Ngamarta): Kingdom of the Pandawas ruled by Yudhistira.
Anantaboga (Antaboga): God of Serpents and Snakes, also known as the Lord of the Snakes. Helped bring up the abandoned baby, Wisanggeni.
Anggada: monkey warrior, son of Dewi Tara and Subali.
Anila: blue-haired monkey warrior, Chief Minister of Kiskenda.
Antareja: son of Bima by Dewi Naganini.
Antasena: son of Bima by Dewi Urangayu.
Anoman (Hanoman):white monkey chieftain, son of Dewi Anjani and Bayu. An energetic and skilled warrior, he serves Rama in the Ramayana cycle and various characters in the Mahabharata cycle.
Arjuna: middle of the Five Pandawa brothers. He is a handsome, highly-skilled and lethal warrior.
Astina: chief kingdom of Java, ruled by Duryudana of the Kurawas but disputed by the Pandawas.
Aswatama: son of Durna and Dewi Krepi, went on a murderous rampage after the Baratayuda, killing Banowati and Srikandi in their sleep.
Bagong: third adopted son of Semar. Short and fat, is said to be the shadow of Semar.
Baladewa: King of Mandura, married Dewi Erawati. As a young man, known as Kakrasana.
Bambang: name often given to a younger male *ksatria* knight.
Banowati: wife of Duryudana, who before her marriage was in love with Arjuna. After Duryudana's death in the Baratayuda, she returns to Arjuna but is murdered by Aswatama in her sleep.
Beringin: wide-spreading banyan tree. Symbol of kingly authority and, more recently, Golkar.
Baruna: God of the Ocean.
Batara: title for a male deity.
Bayu: God of the Wind.
Bilung (Sarawita): portly clown-servant to the left faction of the wayang, such as Rahwana or the Kurawa. Unlike most wayang characters, he usually speaks in Indonesian.
Bima: second of the Kurawa brothers, spiritual son of the god Bayu. A large, blunt and powerful warrior, he has two or three sons.
Bisma: sage-warrior and mentor to the Pandawas and Kurawas.
Blencong: oil/electric lamp used to cast puppet shadows.
Brama: God of Fire.
Baratayuda (Bratayuda, Bharatayudha): the Great War, or the final war between the Pandawa and the Kurawa in the Mahabharata.
Buta: demons, ogres or giants.

Cakil: literally "Fang", a small *buta* or ogre, characterised by his *ksatria*'s body, flat head, squinting eyes and a jutting fang. He always dies by his own sword.
Candra: God of the Moon.
Cangik: skinny female clown-servant, mother of Limbuk. Is vain, and has a high, wavering voice.
Carangan: "branch" tales, or stories that lead away from the Indian Mahabharata and Ramayana tales, giving shadow puppeteers greater opportunity to incorporate new material into the wayang tradition.
Citrayuda: one of the Kurawa brothers.
Dalang (Dhalang): wayang shadow puppeteer, who narrates, sings, speaks dialogue, directs musicians and manipulates puppets all through the night.
Dasamuka (Dosomuko, Rahwana): literally the "Ten-Faced", because he can have ten heads when he transforms himself into a huge giant. King of Alengka and Rama's bitter enemy in the Ramayana cycle of plays.
Dewi: title for a princess or other female character of high birth.
Dresanala (Darsenala, Drestanala): daughter of Batara Brahma, wife of Arjuna in Heaven, mother of Wisanggeni.
Drupadi: wife of Yudhistira (or wife in common to the five Pandawas).
Dukun: magic specialist to whom people turn to for cures, advice and other medical assistance.
Durga: ferocious goddess and wife of god Kala.
Durna:wily priest and tutor to the Pandawas and the Kurawas. Was teacher of the Kurawas and Pandawas when they were children.
Erawati: daughter of King Salya, wife of King Baladewa (Narasoma).
Gamelan: percussion ensemble accompanying a wayang performance.
Gareng: second adopted son of Semar. Short, wears his hear in a ponytail, is cross-eyed with a bent arm and a lame leg.
Gatotkaca: son of Bima and Dewi Arimbi. A brave, powerful and clever warrior, can fly.
Gotama (Resi Gotama): priest of Grastina, father of Dewi Anjani, Guwarsi (Subali) and Guwarsa (Sugriwa).
Guru: son of Sang Hyang Tunggal, he is the head god and ruler of the gods' kingdom of Suralaya. He has an impetuous nature, which has led him into rash actions and statements.
Indra: God of Rain.
Indrajit: putative son of Rahwana and Dewi Tari. In fact, he was created from a cloud by Wibisana, and substituted for Dewi Tari's real child, Dewi Sinta.
Ismaya (Semar): a pre-Hindu Javanese god who is cursed and comes to earth in the wayang in the form of Semar.
Kahyangan (Mayapada): home of the gods, or Heaven.
Karna (Karno): son of Kunti and Surya, elder half-brother of the Pandawas but loyally allied with the Kurawas.
Kayon (Gunungan): tree/mountain shaped puppet, marks the end of a scene or can represent a forest, tomb, clouds, mountains, palace or other location.
Kérata basa: rhyming folk etymologies.
Keris: Javanese ceremonial dagger/sword.
Ki: male title of respect, usually used for a *dalang*.
Kiayi: title applied to highly respected males.
Krama Inggil: honorific vocabulary of Javanese.

Kraton: palace
Kresna: King of Dwarawati, an incarnation of Wisnu, scheming first cousin and advisor to the Pandawas.
Ksatria (satria): knight, warrior, member of the wayang ruling class, or more generally anyone who sets out to live by the *ksatria* code.
Kumbakarna: giant younger brother of Rahwana, with a ravenous appetite. Although he disapproves of Rahwana's behaviour, he loyally serves Alengka, fighting to his death at the hands of Lesmana and the monkey army.
Kunti: wife of Pandu, she is the mother of Karna as well as Yudhistira, Bima and Arjuna.
Kurawa: ninety-nine brothers and one sister who rule Astina. They are the puppets of the left faction in the Mahabharata, first cousins and enemies of the Pandawas.
Kuwera: God of the Earth.
Lakon: a tale or episode usually from the Javanised Ramayana or Mahabharata, serving as the plot for a single-night's wayang performance.
Lesmana (Laksmana): loyal younger brother of Rama in the Ramayana cycle.
Limbuk: fat and vain female clown-servant, with a deep voice, usually appearing in scenes set in the women's quarters of the palace.
Mahabharata: Indian epic about the conflict between the Pandawas and Kurawas.
Marcapada (Arcapada): According to ancient Hindu-Javanese beliefs, the universe was divided into three main elements: heaven, the spirit world and earth. *Marcapada* was the earth.
Nakula: fourth Pandawa brother. He has a twin brother, Sadewa.
Narasoma: child-hood name for King Salya.
Ngoko: low Javanese.
Pakem: "trunk" tales, or stories that closely follow the relatively fixed outlines of the Indian Mahabharata and Ramayana tales.
Pancasona: magic charm or mantra which ensures that its owner is unable to die, as long as some part of their body is touching the ground.
Pandawa: literally "sons of Pandu" (Yudhistira, Bima, Arjuna, Nakula, Sadewa) but can include their children and allies as well. They are the puppets of the right faction in the Mahabharata, first cousins and enemies of the Kurawas.
Parikesit: Abimanyu's son, Arjuna's grandson. He is the last Pandawa ruler of Astina.
Pasopati: Arjuna's supernatural arrow.
Patih: Chief Minister to a king.
Patet: musical "node" or "key" of gamelan music.
Patet manyura: third part of a wayang performance. Also indicates the key or node of gamelan music played in this part of the performance.
Patet nem: first part of a wayang performance. Also indicates the key or node of gamelan music played in this part of the performance.
Patet sanga: second part of a wayang performance. Also indicates the key or node of gamelan music played in this part of the performance.
Peci: traditional felt-cloth cap.
Pedalangan (padhalangan): the art of wayang puppetry.
Pertiwi: Goddess of the Earth.
Petruk: tall and lanky mischievous clown-servant to the right faction, second adopted son of Semar. He smiles a lot and has a slapstick sense of humour.
Punakawan: clown-servants or attendants to the refined knight or princess/queen.

Rama: husband of Sinta.
Ramayana: an Indian epic about Rama.
Raksasa (buta): Demon, ogre or giant figure.
Rahwana (Dasamuka): King of Alengka and Rama's bitter enemy in the Ramayana cycle of tales. Often portrayed as the embodiment of evil, lust and greed.
Reformasi: Pro-Reform.
Resi: hermit; ascetic holy man.
Rupiah: Indonesia's currency.
Ruwatan: ritual purification or exorcism.
Sadewa: the fifth Pandawa brother, the twin brother of Nakula.
Salya (Narasoma): King of Mandraka, married Setyawati, who bore him three daughters: Erawati (wife of Baladewa), Banowati (wife of Duryudana) and Surtikanti (wife of Karna).
Sang Hyang: alternative title to *Batara* for male deities.
Sastra: literature.
Satria (Ksatria): knight.
Sarpakenaka: daughter of Wisrawa and Dewi Sukesi, sister of Rahwana, Kumbakarna and Wibisana.
Semar: obese god and clown-servant who serves the right faction. Adopted father of Gareng, Petruk and Bagong.
Sengkuni: uncle of Duryudana and chief minister of Astina.
Setyawati: wife of Salya, who bore him three daughters: Erawati (wife of Baladewa), Banowati (wife of Duryudana) and Surtikanti (wife of Karna).
Sinta (Sita): Rama's wife in the Ramayana. She is kidnapped by Rahwana, but refuses to accept his sexual advances. She remains faithful to Rama, however after her rescue she is banished due to Rama's suspicion that she was unfaithful.
Siti Sundari: Kresna's daughter, wife of Abimanyu.
Sri: very exalted title, usually reserved for kings.
Subali (Guwarsi): son of Resi Gotama and Dewi Indradi, born as a human but later took on the form of a monkey.
Sugriwa (Guwarsi): son of Resi Gotama and Dewi Indradi, born as a human but later took on the form of a monkey. An ally of Rama, he married Dewi Tara, the wife of his brother Subali.
Sukrasana: dwarf-ogre son of Suwandagni, brother of Sumantri, served Batara Wisnu as the keeper of the celestial garden, Sriwedari.
Suluk: vocal lines sung by a puppeteer during a wayang performance.
Sumantri: son of Resi Suwandagni, loyal advisor to King Arjunasasrabahu of the Kingdom of Maespati, with the name of Suwanda. Killed by Rahwana.
Sumbadra: wife of Arjuna, sister of Kresna. She is faithful, patient and always polite.
Suralaya: Kingdom of Guru and other Javanese gods, on Mahameru.
Surya: God of the Sun.
Suteja: son of Wisnu and Dewi Pratiwi. He is also recognised as the son of Kresna, the avatar of Wisnu.
Tajungan: a wayang puppet's victory dance.
Tancep Kayon: literally, "planting the kayon" (in the banana log), occurs at the concluding scene of a wayang performance.
Togog: greedy, self-serving clown-servant in the wayang, usually serving the left faction with the help of Bilung. Considered as the brother of Semar, he has a deep voice.

Wahyu: a divine gift or a mystical boon sent by the gods.
Wayang golèk: three-dimensional doll-puppets, usually performed in West Java.
Wayang kulit: leather shadow puppet. In Javanese "wayang" literally means "shadow".
Wayang mbeling: literally, "mischievous wayang", humorous wayang parody in print form.
Wayang wong (wayang orang): Dance drama (literally, "people wayang", a human shadow play).
Wibisana (Wibisono): youngest brother of Rahwana, the only child of Resi Wisrawa and Dewi Sukesi with a human form. After the destruction of Alengka, he succeeded Rahwana as King of Alengka.
Wisanggeni: supernaturally gifted renegade son of Arjuna and Dewi Dresanala, hunted by the gods. Because of his ability to win the Baratayuda single-handedly, he enters Heaven without dying.
Wisrawa: priest-king of Lokapala, father (by Dewi Sukesi) of Rahwana, Kumbakarna, Sarpekenaka and Wibisana.
Yama: God of Death.
Yudhistira: eldest of the Pandawa brothers.Patient, rarely angry and never fights.

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