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What to make of this flesh:

# INTERROGATING INDONESIAN NEW ORDER'S NARRATIVE OF *GESTAPU*

## The Leftist Nobles and the Indonesian Communist Party in Umar Kayam's Stories

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### Abstract

Although the atrocity around the 1965 coup—better known as *Gestapu*, *Gestok* or *G 30 S PKI* in Indonesia—has been continually on the international humanitarian spotlight, its literary representation in Indonesia has been minimal. The strong hold of the New Order regime and their residue in the current political system must have something to do with this. Among a few vernacular writers coping with the aftermath of the tragedy but is less discussed as such is Umar Kayam. The four texts analysed in this article, “Bawuk,” “Musim Gugur Kembali ke Connecticut,” *Para Priyayi* and *Jalan Menikung: Para Priyayi 2*, interrogate the complexity of *Gestapu* victimization and narrative set by the New Order. The texts reflect the failure of the Javanese nobles (*priyayi*) in revitalizing their role as political leaders in the face of corrupt political system. Instead of resisting the corrupt regime, they play along in the political game to gain personal benefits. The Javanese nobles siding with the oppressed by joining the Communist Party's affiliated organizations are ostracized and marginalized. Despite Kayam's sympathetic representation of some communist figures in his fiction, his general representation of communist ideology is ambivalent. His figuration of communist poets simply as uncritical serfs of ideology, for example, shows his bias towards accepting the New Order cultural narrative. Despite his sympathetic description of those innocently accused of treason following *Gestapu* 1965, Kayam still portrays communism as an evil and foreign ideology much in the same way that the New Order regime had been narrating it.

### Keywords

*Lekra*, *priyayi*, persecution, postcolonial, third space, subalternization

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Approaching 1965, Indonesians witnessed the rise of a powerful Communist Party, PKI (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*), whose members were mostly peasants and labourers. The peasants who were sometimes considered as “ignorant, labouring men knowing nothing of the refinements which set man apart from the beasts” (Sutherland 126), were theoretically by this period—through their potential democratic role—on equal footing with other citizens in the young republic. Under the banner of fighting for equal justice, the Communist Party even started a unilateral action in 1964 in order to, in Anderson’s language, “force implementation of the rather mild Share-Cropping and Land Reform laws of 1959 and 1960” (231).

These brewing political tensions culminated in the failed coup d’état staged by a group that called themselves *Gerakan Tigapuluh September* (The 30th of September Movement, referring to the date of their action), allegedly masterminded by the Communist Party. Broadcasting an official statement the next morning at 7:20 A.M. through the Indonesia national radio broadcaster, RRI, the group announced that they had arrested a number of generals who had been planning themselves to carry out a coup d’état on October 5th under the code name of *Dewan Jenderal* (The Generals Council). It turned out that by the time of the broadcast they had killed six top army generals and an adjutant. The army under General Soeharto soon suppressed the coup and had the leaders of the *Gestapu* jailed or killed.

The army called the incident “Gestapu,” short for “Gerakan September Tigapuluh” (the movement of September 30th). The acronym was coined by Brigadier General Soegandi, the director of *Angkatan Bersenjata*, a daily newspaper published by the army (Langenberg 2). The purpose was obviously to associate the *Gestapu* movement with the atrocities performed by the Gestapo in Germany.

While the army employed the loaded term *Gestapu*, president Soekarno preferred a more neutral term *Gestok*, standing for *Gerakan Satu Oktober* and referring to the exact date of the incident. Not less contested than the acronym was the actual involvement of Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) in the attempted coup. The official narrative developed under the New Order (a new regime characterized by strong anti-communist stance under President Soeharto) was that the Communist Party masterminded the insurrection. However there are contradictory documents and analytical speculations suggesting that the incident might have been engineered by a faction within the army itself with some help from the C.I.A.<sup>1</sup>

The dubious incidents surrounding *Gestapu* and the alleged involvement of the Communist Party were in any case incommensurate with the murder of hundreds of thousands of communists or communist-suspects that followed the failure of the original coup and the counter-coup by the armed forces. *The New York Times* in its 19th June 1966 edition estimated that the number of the victims in the slaughter



committed by the army and anti-communist community was 500,000 (Dale-Scott 101). Since then the New Order regime has always referred to the movements as 'Gestapu PKI' and the atrocity that took place after *Gestapu* has become known as one of the world's bloodiest historical incidents.

Among the few vernacular writers whose stories deal with the legacy of post-1965 (and whose work is less discussed) is Umar Kayam. Kayam was born in a small town, Ngawi, East Java on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1932. His father was a teacher of HIS (*Hollandsch-Inlandsch School*, Dutch Native School), an elite school for *priyayi* (Javanese nobles), children who would be government officials. Kayam's education background is so rich because he was a Javanese *priyayi* who had been educated in the Dutch, Japanese and National system before finally going through the U.S. education system. Upon his return from the U.S. in 1965 he was appointed by President Soeharto as the Director General of Radio, Television and Film, staying in the position until 1969.

The four Kayam works relating their stories with *Gestapu* and its aftermath discussed in this article are "*Musim Gugur Kembali ke Connecticut*" ("Fall in Connecticut") (1967), *Bawuk* (1970), *Para Priyayi* (*The Nobles*) (1992), and *Jalan Menikung* (*The Winding Road: The Nobles 2*) (1999). "*Musim Gugur Kembali ke Connecticut*" and *Bawuk* were written when Kayam was the Director General of Radio, Television and Film from 1966 to 1969. The years when Kayam was the Director of the office of Radio Television and Film were the years when the New Order "sterilized" government departments by eliminating alleged Communist sympathizers from their former posts. Kayam, perhaps with an unconvincing show of naiveté, claims that his stories were an attempt to resolve the ambivalences of his position in his role as Director General of a key propaganda agency. Kayam reveals that those years were:

... tahun-tahun yang penuh dengan pesona petualangan, tetapi sekaligus juga kebingungan, ketegangan, dan kebimbangan. Sebagai pejabat muda yang mempunyai beban kekuasaan yang besar, dan kegairahan seorang doktor muda yang percaya akan datangnya suatu orde yang baru dan yang menggantikan orde yang lapuk, Umar Kayam membersihkan lingkungan kerjanya dari semua unsur orde yang lapuk itu. Akan tetapi, bersamaan dengan itu, ia menyaksikan juga korban-korban yang seharusnya tidak menjadi korban. Ia mempertanyakan siapakah yang menentukan "harus" dan "tidak harus" menjadi korban itu? Dalam kebimbangan dan ketidakmengertian itu, ia mencoba mempertanyakan lewat cerita pendek yang disusunnya. Maka lahirlah cerpen "*Musim Gugur Kembali di Connecticut*" dan "*Bawuk*".

... adventurous years filled with confusion, tension and uncertainty. As a young director with big power combined with his enthusiasm as a new Ph.D. graduate, Umar Kayam

was involved in sterilizing his office from the supporters of the Old Order. However, at the same time, he witnessed the victimization of the innocents. He questioned who had the authority of the discretion? In his uncertainty and incomprehension, he tried to question through his stories. That was how “The Fall in Connecticut” and “Bawuk” came into existence. (Rahmanto 9-10; translation mine)

The main character in those stories, Tono and Bawuk, are innocent victims of this political repositioning. Kayam tries to fathom the victimization of these innocent victims from their side. It reveals how the tragedy is devastating for them, even more so because they are unable to voice their own narrative against the injustice of their categorization as fabricated.

As for the title, “Fall in Connecticut,” Kayam mentions that there is a connection between what he felt during the autumn in Connecticut when he studied in the U.S. in the early 1960s and the gloomy atmosphere of the rubber plantation in some city in Indonesia where alleged *Gestapu* members were assassinated. Laksana, as quoted by Rahmanto, reports Kayam’s testimony:

*Saya ingat musim gugur, saya ingat orang mau dieksekusi. Cerita tentang PKI itu bermacam-macam, yang mati di kebun karet juga banyak. Lalu fantasi saya berkembang. Musim gugur di Amerika itu indah sekali. Masih dingin tetapi sudah tidak terlalu dingin lagi, langit beralih warna kemerah-merahan, daun-daunan begitu indah' pada berguguran berganti warna. Ketika mengalami musim gugur, saya membayangkan ada orang gugur di kebun karet. Itu peristiwa yang sangat dahsyat.*

Autumn always reminds me of those executed. There are various stories about the Communist Party and many of its members were executed in a rubber plantation. My imagination developed. Autumn in the U.S. was very beautiful. It was still cold but not too cold; the sky was reddish; the leaves falling changed their colour beautifully. In autumn, I imagined those killed in the rubber plantation. It was a shocking incident. (Rahmanto 10; translation mine)

Kayam also makes use of his own experience when writing *Para Priyayi*. His childhood memories, his extended family and his journey to a grown up *priyayi* stimulate him to write the novel. Kayam also claimed in an interview that:

*nama kota Wanagalih yang ada di dalam novel itu adalah nama kota imajiner yang mirip Ngawi tempat ia dilahirkan. Sebagai bahan novelnya, selain mengumpulkan ingatan, perbincangan, pengalaman Kakek, Ayah dan ia sendiri di masa lalu, Umar Kayam juga membaca disertasi Onghokham tentang Madiun, buku James Rust tentang perdagangan opium di Jawa, dan studi tentang Road to Madiun dari seorang pakar Cornell University.*

Wanagalih in the novel is an imaginary town that looks like Ngawi where he was born. He collected the materials for the novel from his memory, conversation, the experiences of his grandfather, father and he himself. He also read Onghokham's dissertation, James Rust's book on the opium trading in Java, and a study on *Road to Madiun* by a Cornell researcher. (Rahmanto 11; translation mine)

From this explanation, it is clear that Kayam himself thought that real people and places were essential in constructing his fiction. The reason for this might be Kayam's emphasis on the importance of faithfulness to life. Perhaps for the same reason his fiction tends to portray reality in a manner that develops without sophisticated plot structure but rather emphasizing the linear and contingent relationships that are a common perception of how real life is shaped.

*Para Priyayi* tells the story of a young man called Sastrodarsono who pioneers his family's social mobility from peasantry to nobility (*priyayi*). Although born peasant, Sastrodarsono succeeds in adjusting himself to the *priyayi* way of life and his children also become educated *priyayi*. Hardojo becomes a teacher; Noegroho becomes an army officer; and Sumini is married to a high government official *priyayi*. Kayam models Sastrodarsono and his family after his own life and the experience of someone who has been through Dutch colonialism, Japanese colonialism, and Independence. The difference is that Kayam was born *priyayi* while Sastrodarsono earns his status by studying and becoming a teacher.

Through the novel, Kayam wanted to "write back" to what social scientists from the West have written about *priyayi*. Kayam intended to fathom the world of *priyayi* from the insider's point of view in order to counter the view that *priyayi* is a static concept as some Western writers theorize. Kayam argues that although the most able Western researchers might be able to *speak* Javanese, they cannot really get inside and understand the symbolic nuances, wishes and disappointment of *priyayi* class in pursuing *kamukten* (prosperity) (Rahmanto 12). It is not clear which writers Kayam has in mind, but it is likely that he particularly means Clifford Geertz whose work *Religion of Java* (1960) divided Javanese society into three groups including *priyayi*. Kayam's point of view is still very relevant and interesting because he approaches the issue from a literary perspective and as an insider of Javanese society.

This internal analysis of the world of *priyayi* in Indonesian society continues in *Jalan Menikung: Para Priyayi 2*, Kayam's second full-length novel. As the title indicates, this novel is the sequel of *Para Priyayi* and tells about the third and fourth generations of Sastrodarsono's family, namely Harimurti, Tommi, Lantip, Eko, and Bambang. Written at the end of the New Order era in 1999, the story is set in the

heyday of the New Order when ideological debates were successfully mitigated and the interpretation of nationalism was the sole authority of the regime. This is the kind of nationalism which provided a more convincing and legitimating authority for the continuing dominance of an increasingly corrupt regime but which therefore also required the regime to control the notion of national identity and resist threats to its stability. These third and fourth generations of *priyayi* represent two sides of Indonesians in the New Order: those who thrive on the corrupt machinery of the New Order and those who are marginalized because of their idealism.

In the four stories chosen for the analysis, some of the *priyayi* characters are involved in Gestapu 1965 in various degrees. Bawuk in “Bawuk”, Tono in “Fall in Connecticut”, Harimurti in *The Nobles* and Eko in *The Winding Road: The Nobles 2* are related to the Communist Party each in a very problematical way. The problematic relation implies the complexity behind the criminalization of these characters in the aftermath of the 1965 coup. The following analysis seeks to explore the complex relation of the characters to the Communist Party in these stories and Kayam’s ambivalence towards the post 1965 regime in Indonesia.

### **BAWUK: THE FEMALE LEFTIST PRIYAYI AND THE GESTAPU**

Bawuk, the main character in the short story “*Bawuk*”, is caught unaware in sudden political turmoil and victimized by the drastic change that evolves. Bawuk’s brother-in-law is a high ranking army officer capable of saving the Communist suspects from persecution. However, how Bawuk gets trapped within the *Gestapu* dominant narrative and how she responds to her circumstances is surprising. In addition, the ideological debates pervading *Bawuk* are developed by fathoming further the complexity of *Gestapu* implication on the Javanese *priyayi* in terms of the sociological nuances of the *abangan* and the *priyayi*.<sup>2</sup> In other words, the position of the *priyayi* in the constellation of Java’s changing society when power in the political centre is radically refocused after *Gestapu* is depicted in terms of its polarized space of the *abangan* and the *priyayi*. While this polarization might be seen as the Kayam’s critique of the fluidity on the supposedly more rigid triadic category of Clifford Geertz’s *abangan-priyayi-santri*, the tension between the *priyayi abangan* and the elite *priyayi* within *priyayi* world also seems to depict the conflicting orientation of the *priyayi* class over time, from colonial period to post independent state.

Bawuk’s character is depicted to have a different trait that is absent in her siblings. She looks to be much more in touch with friends and people of lower stature since

her childhood, while her brothers and sisters are punctual and organized. Kayam allegorized the brothers as a mechanistic Westminster clock:

Their father was an *Onder* (a subdistrict head) and they lived under his strict governance. They were disciplined, serious, efficient and effective. They wrote neatly. Their day's routine followed the large Westminster clock in the corner of the lounge room. They did their home-work diligently and carefully and finished it by the hour set them.... They were an example to the children of other civil servants in particular, and to the school in general. (*Sri Sumarah Dan Bawuk* 86)

Bawuk is described by Kayam as a playful *kepodang* bird. In every aspect Bawuk is a good *priyayi* daughter who always gets good grades and has her school assignments done and yet unlike her siblings she enjoys her *babu* (female servant) and *jongos'* (male servant) accompaniment as much as she likes playing with the children of the village around the stable. Although Suryo, her father, is an observant *priyayi* in educating his children, including in observing their distance from *wong cilik* (common populace), he seems lenient when it comes to Bawuk's egalitarianism.

It is the same compassion and kind-heartedness that leads her to marry a high school dropout and sustain her decision to keep struggling with other Communist party members and searching for her husband although she knows for certain that it is a losing battle. Against the family stream of getting married to another *priyayi*, Bawuk is married to Hassan. Hassan is an Arabic-derived name and naturally we expect to see a portrayal of a devout Muslim in him but curiously he is described by Kayam as a communist, which is closer to being *abangan* rather than *santri* (devout Muslim) or *priyayi*. This certainly is another border-crossing that Bawuk has trespassed as regards the *priyayi* milieu of marital ideals. However, it does not mean that (as a feminist reading by Tineke Hellwig concludes) Bawuk has freed herself from patriarchal constraints of Javanese values, which I will elaborate later (108).

This border-crossing has cost Bawuk not only her *priyayi's* secure life but also her rightful citizenship of the republic when she is associated with PKI. Bawuk's alleged involvement with the Communist party is singly because of her marriage with a communist cadre. There is stronger nuance of Javanese milieu at play in Bawuk's decisions rather than ideological reason. Bawuk never formally joins the Communist party or any of its organizations. Her activities in helping the Communist party underground networking are driven primarily by her motivation to locate her persecuted husband and accompany him as a Javanese wife should. Bawuk's persecution is because she will not let go of her past (i.e. her committed life for the oppressed or of the Javanese wifely milieu). Although a means of salvation is at her disposal, she does not want to use it for the sake of her personal commitment.



She could have gotten rid of herself of the communist connection if she accepted her military brother-in-law's offer to stay put while he takes care of her paper works. A military *priyayi* figure similar to the one in *Fall in Connecticut* is capable of penetrating and influencing the bureaucracy that controls the *Gestapu* narrative. In spite of her siblings and mother's persuasion to stay, play safe and stop searching for her husband, which can be read as an invitation to return to her *priyayi* world by leaving behind the *abangan* world of Hassan, she is firm in her decision to find Hassan at whatever cost it may take. Her argument and firm decision when responding to her family's entreaties implicitly question the comfort zone of elite *priyayi* life that has benefited much from the unequal wealth distribution. This also confirms her adherence to the Javanese principle of wifely faithfulness and her compassion for the disadvantaged. Seen from this perspective Bawuk is closer to enlightened Greek tragic heroes or the wayang character Adipati Karna who insist on pursuing their cause in the face of an impending defeat.

What makes Bawuk's siding with *abangan* more complicated is that she was associated with *abangan* communist. This makes her "mistake" doubly sanctioned by the changing time. Not only does she transgress the caste category, but also political category tragically positioning her as victim instead of victor. In an elaborate speech by Bawuk, Kayam seems to suggest that Bawuk's transgressions, i.e. marrying a man of lower caste who is without position and qualification but filled with Marxist dreams, are a wrong move:

But what about me? I married a madman. I wasn't lucky like 'Mi and Syul, I didn't marry a noble. My man hadn't even finished high school. He dreamt that people could be important regardless of their position and qualifications. He was a fool... Instead he left school, became a Marxist, studied politics, plotted, dreamed and then plotted again, dreamed and then finally revolted. (*Sri Sumarah Dan Bawuk* 121)

This speech is dense with contrasting conditions between *priyayi* and *abangan* ways of life with some Marxist ideas embedded in *abangan* character. The seemingly unfavourable tone implied in the diction such as *pemimpi*, *gila*, and *tolol* (dreamer, madman, and fool) to describe an *abangan* communist might have something to do with the political atmosphere of the 1970s. Written and published during the heyday of *Orde Baru*, there was no option left for Kayam other than putting those siding with the Communist party in disfavour. Hassan is therefore labelled as a mad and stupid Marxist, a dreamer, and a renegade.

Bawuk, on the other hand, is described more sympathetically by Kayam because she is guilty only by association and therefore it provides some grey space for Kayam to sympathize with. She is described that although her husband is a communist

leader, she never officially joins *Gerwani*, a communist women's organization. She even seems to regret her marrying a communist cadre and a high school dropout.

Bawuk's decision to keep being on the run in search for her husband might be read at several different levels. Tineke Hellwig offers a feminist perspective on Bawuk's character when mentioning that Bawuk has released herself "from the role of the *priyayi* woman which her mother has played" (108). In Hellwig's observation while Ny. Suryo, Bawuk's mother, sacrifices herself for her husband out of obedience, Bawuk is more equal to her husband because her choice is a personal one and not dominated by her social position:

Bawuk has freed herself from her past and from the *priyayi* milieu. This means a release from the role of the *priyayi* woman which her mother has played. Ny. Suryo sacrificed herself and was loyal to her husband out of subservience and a forgiving nature. Bawuk is portrayed as more equal to her husband, independent and capable of actions. (Hellwig 108)

Hellwig's conclusion that Bawuk has released herself from female *priyayi* values in relating herself to her husband begs further scrutiny. It might be true that a generational gap exists between Bawuk and her mother as Bawuk herself admits that her world is now a world of *abangan*. However, this is more than just a generational gap since she also differs from her brothers and sisters in this respect. When Bawuk, a *priyayi*, combines her self-image with another category (i.e. *abangan*), two separate identities according to Geertz are unified. By identifying herself with the *abangan* world she prefers a world that is "*selalu resah dan gelisah*" (always restless and anxious) in contrast with a more secure and comfortable *priyayi* world of her brothers and sisters (*Sri Sumarah Dan Bawuk* 121).

Bawuk herself is unable to rationalize her decision. Her identification with *abangan* non-*priyayi* and decision to search for Hassan seems to be motivated more by romantic ideas of Javanese womanly love as exemplified by Sembadra, a wayang character. She re-enacts her mother's wifely sacrifice and their shared values make Nyonya Suryo the only one who understands Bawuk's decision. There is Javanese proverb saying that in relation to her husband, a Javanese wife is "*suwarga nunut, neraka katut*," meaning that a wife shall always be loyal to her husband no matter what. Instead of distancing herself from patriarchal *priyayi* milieu as Hellwig concludes, Bawuk shows a strong reproduction of that ideology in that brave decision.

The ending of this novelette is no less intriguing. Nyonya Suryo hired a *guru ngaji* (the Qur'an recital teacher) to teach Wowok and Ninuk, Bawuk's children, reciting the Qur'an. What is intriguing is although she does not know the meaning,



she thinks that this is the right thing to do—“*hal yang semestinya*” (it was right and necessary). Nyonya Suryo's view on Islam clearly reflects most *abangan* world view as also noted by Ricklefs: “But for most *abangan*, Islam was still the faith to which they adhered, however nominally, reluctantly or ignorantly” (103-04). Although Nyonya Suryo can understand Bawuk's insistence in returning to her *abangan* non-*priyayi* world, she does not want Bawuk's children to follow their mother's leftist footpath which, although she does not understand, is actually in line with the meaning of the *Fatihah* prayer that the grand children are reciting: not to be led astray. Nyonya Suryo thinks that Bawuk has gone astray because of her lack of religion. Her inviting a *guru ngaji* is Nyonya Suryo's symbolic decision signifying the importance of religious identity in the new political context.

If this new religious identity added to the *priyayi* identity is considered an antidote so that communist contamination plaguing Bawuk will not be passed on to her children, this does not really answer the question since Bawuk's sympathy for her communist husband is driven by compassion and *priyayi* milieu while her and Hassan's peripety or turning point is caused by political refocusing after Gestapu. The turn of Bawuk's fate is caused by political refocusing instead of moral degeneration usually associated with one's having no religion so that inviting the *guru ngaji*—practicing religious ritual—can be read as a political move rather than religious one to anticipate the socio-political categorization defined by the new authority. It is a common belief among most Javanese that communism is identical with atheism and therefore teaching the Qur'an since childhood will categorize these children into a theist group and hence noncommunist. Nyonya Suryo's move to invite a *guru ngaji* also indicates a new trajectory of *priyayi*'s preference that is different from colonial time. With Dutch colonialism gone, communism as fabricated by the new authority emerges as terrifying image for one to be associated with. The option for a pious Muslim imagery—although probably minus merchant image—becomes more alluring. And this seems to be the road taken by some *priyayi* like Nyonya Suryo in the aftermath of *Gestapu*.

#### “FALL IN CONNECTICUT”: LEFTIST PRIYAYI WRITER AND GESTAPU

Discussing literature and the Indonesian Communist party cannot be separated from the role of *Lekra* (People's Culture Institute), its cultural organization. In order to understand the complexity of the relationship between *Lekra*'s artists and the Communist Party at that time, it is important to understand the two faces of *Lekra*. The first face is the side of compassion for the disadvantaged that is considered the main ideology behind the creative process. At least this is what Boejoeng Saleh, a

*Lekra* exponent, thinks of the difference between *Lekra's* literature and the universal humanist works, as Foulcher summarizes:

In this discussion Boejoeng suggested that however positive were the developments taking place in the work of young poets like Toto Sudarto Bachtiar, Ayip Rosidi and W.S. Rendra, these poets showed an inability to look at everyday life around them ("realism yang sehari-hari") in a way which was more than simple observation. LEKRA poets, he said, usually had the ability to go beyond observation, towards a militant identification with ordinary people and everyday happenings. They combined this militancy with a vision of a better future for the Indonesian nation. He called this characteristic "aliran kerakyatan," *kerayatan* tendency. (49-50)

Since the idea to establish a better future for the Indonesian nation based on the compassion for the poor is the underlying ideology of *Lekra's* creative process, they considered that mere spontaneous expression of the poet was not enough because of this lack of commitment for social justice.

The second face of *Lekra* is its political practices that tend to be authoritarian by labelling the universal humanists as anti-revolution. This labelling has serious consequences because this leads to political action, such as the banning of the *Manikebu*, a manifesto by the liberal humanist. This totalitarian face is best represented by Pramoedya Ananta Toer:

Finally, in Pramoedya's opinion, 'political indecisiveness, which leads to the art and thought of mere vagrants, must be swept away, destroyed'. He vigorously denied that they should be given 'even the slightest room to move'. They must not be allowed 'to develop and spread the symptoms of this disease, which had continued to flourish to the present day.' (Mohamad 7)

The siding with the people gets a new interpretation when it has to conform to the Communist party's policy. The affiliation with the communist party turned the option for the oppressed into intolerant and threatening discourses with possible real political consequences within view.

In Kayam's short story of 1967, "Fall in Connecticut," Tono is an ex-political prisoner in "C category" for his involvement with the Communist Party. Category C was the least dangerous communist category, according to the government grouping. The other categories, A and B, were more serious: category A prisoners were the most dangerous and might be executed any time without trial in the *Kebun Karet* not far from the prison (*Musim Gugur Kembali Di Connecticut* 245). Previously, Tono belonged to B category but was downgraded to C due to his political connection with the triumphant anti-communist forces: Mayor

Sungkono, his brother-in-law and an officer in the army. As a political prisoner in C category, Tono has been released on probation and is temporarily staying at Mayor Sungkono's house.

His involvement in *Lekra* and HSI (Socialist Scholars) is the result of, among others, a curious reason: he wants to compensate for the loneliness he had when studying abroad. It seems that living in a Western country has stolen some part of his life, particularly that part which valued Eastern friendship and hospitality. In the community of *Lekra* and HSI, he regains that warm relationship. His friends are amazed at his ability to revive his proletarian compassion despite having graduated from a liberal education in the West. In his friend's words, Tono is a "a Western educated scholar with progressive and revolutionary views" ("*Musim Gugur Kembali Di Connecticut*" 251). Being a productive leftist writer, his works are published in the Communist Party-affiliated newspapers such as *Harian Rakyat*, *Bintang Timur*, and *Zaman Baru* and his article attacking *Manikebu*, the liberal humanist manifesto, is discussed widely in *Lekra* branches. This shows that Tono is an important intellectual in the leftist group.

After a while, Tono feels lost. He cannot write on the themes indoctrinated by *Lekra* and HSI anymore. The Proletarian ideology that has welcomed him is unable to cultivate his creative energy. He realizes that his activities in *Lekra* and HSI are just another stop in his journey as a writer and he decides to move on:

He knew, on the one hand, that the final choice was his own. He wanted to go his way, free of all ties – ideological, organisational and personal. ("*Musim Gugur Kembali Di Connecticut*" 251)

As a poet he believes that a scholar and an artist must behave spontaneously and honestly. The view of literature as a spontaneous and true expression of the poet had been the dominant theme in Indonesian poetry during the Pre-war Period (Aveling 2). One of the prominent poets of that time, J.E. Tatengkeng, argued that art is *gerakan sukma*, the voice of the soul (Jassin 324-25), and that art is for art (*seni untuk seni*), without pragmatic purposes. This is also the view that Chairil Anwar<sup>3</sup> upholds:

Using the expressive methods of his art, the artist must focus his efforts on his own emotions. The tools and devices with which the poet can express himself are the materials of language, which he uses *intuitively*. (Raffel 171)

In the story, Tono leaves *Lekra* and HSI, and his abandonment of the ideologically determined path proposed by these groups can be read as a turn from social realism to liberal humanism. His reason for this migration is that his enthusiasm in writing

for the marginalized groups such as farmers and laborers has been undermined by the ideological agenda that was promulgated by *Lekra* and HSI. When ideology is disbursed by means of indoctrination of the kind that Tono experiences, it is not what Foucault calls the productive power of ideology. In fact in Tono's case, it has turned into a writer's block because the indoctrination he has been receiving opposes diametrically his creative process.

Although the New Left interpretation of base-superstructure relations, as proposed by Louis Althusser, claims only that superstructures are influenced by material reality "in the last instance" and that a superstructure (such as literary production) maintains some degree of "relative autonomy" (91), in his story *Kayam* represents *Lekra* as seeming to believe that arts have to be for the direct service of society. In other words *Lekra* thinks the working of ideology is still enabled by means of domination rather than hegemony in the Gramscian sense. Therefore *Lekra* demands that the production of literature as part of the superstructure of production has to be determined by the material condition of the base — in which clearly the peasants' struggle should be prioritized over the gentry's. Not only that, *Lekra* also considers that the proper function of a literary work is as a means for socialist ideological propaganda. In the story, Tono is represented as fed up with the genre of socialist realism with its emphasis on the political propaganda; he says,

I'm tired of it, that's why. I'm sick of attacking capitalist bureaucrats, attacking Malaysia, attacking landlords and attacking the army. ("*Musim Gugur Kembali Di Connecticut*" 249)

This speech reflects how Tono has realized that his compassion for the poor has been misled for political goals beyond his initial motivation. Fighting against *kabir* (capitalists and bureaucrats), Malaysia, land lords, and the army are the main themes propagated by the Communist Party in their propaganda against so-called Western imperialism. Looking back at the history however, this anti-colonial discourse developed by the Communist Party on the eve of *Gestapu* seems to be loaded in its own interest, part of a propaganda war in which the underlying aim was to take totalitarian control of the nation's leadership in the name of a socialist nationalism. This can be seen from the Communist Party's insistence on establishing the *Angkatan Kelima* (the fifth force), a militia consisting of armed farmers and labourers. Although the reason put forward for this provocative move was to prepare for the Western aggression that had supposedly been building forces in Malaysia against Indonesia's independence, this move was suspected of being motivated by a desire to build an armed force to set against *Angkatan Darat* (the army). This proved to be a fatal move for the Communist Party because it was used by the army after the coup's suppression to relate the Communist Party and *Gestapu* to support of an armed insurrection.

That is why in the story Tono is described as finding the works of Hemingway, Faulkner, Steinbeck, Salinger, Bellow, and Updike inspiring. Although those works highlight humanism with some compassion for the down-trodden, they still maintain some degree of independence from ideological commitment. This opposes *Lekra's* social realism that, according to Tono, tends to be too ideologically pragmatic. Even the Javanese classics that he used to consider as feudal works, such as *Darmagandhul*, *Centini* and *Babad Tanah Jawi*, are now seen in a different light; although they were written for a feudal patron, the writers still had some kind of independence quite unlike his condition under *Lekra*.

Tono's change of political color comes too late and soon he realizes that he is trapped in a bigger narrative beyond his control. Within this narrative of insurrection, one constructed by the New Order regime, poets who are members of *Lekra* belong to the same part of society as the murderers of the army generals in the *Gestapu* incident. They are to be arrested and many are eventually executed without trial. Tono himself is arrested twice. After his first arrest he is freed on the ground that he belongs to C category helped out by his brother-in-law, the Major. Not long after he has started living outside the jail and while he is still coping with his trauma, Tono is rearrested. The army tells him the reason of his arrest: Communist Party members living underground are suspected of burning houses belonging to the supporters of two Muslim parties, N.U. (*Nahdlatul Ulama*) and *Masyumi*. Kayam develops this incident to represent how the New Order regime glosses over any distinctions between the extremists who were active during the *Gestapu*, members of the Communist Party generally, and those people who had been involved only at the cultural level, with *Lekra* and HSI, as seen from the following dialogue while Tono is being arrested by an unnamed officer:

“What does that have to do with me?”

“You were involved in the coup, weren't you?”

“No. I was a member of the Socialist Scholars' Association and the Culture Institute.”

“Same thing – Socialist Scholars', Culture Institute, the Communist Party, the group that organised the coup. Come on. Get dressed.”

(*Musim Gugur Kembali Di Connecticut* 100)

This glossing over of several distinct categories into one, *Gestapu*, is not an incidental logical fallacy. In fact this misconception is the way Kayam reflects on how the misnomer has been intentionally reproduced by the New Order in order to obliterate the Communist Party and all its affiliates, removing a political and ideological force that had been an adamant opponent of the army in national politics until 1965. *Lekra* and HSI were cultural and intellectual organizations under the Communist Party—although it is debatable whether they also knew, let alone agreed with, the events of 30 September. Equating *Lekra* members, or even



innocent villagers for that matter, with the Communist Party and hence with the complicit participants of the *Gestapu* is the typical logic of the New Order which this story is questioning. So frightening was the threat of being associated with the Communist Party that the government often used this labelling to effectively silence critical citizens, such as the poor villagers refusing to give up their land for Kedung Ombo project in Central Java in 1980s.

Tono's leftist view is driven by a desire to see a better and just state. That is why he takes the less disadvantaged side, such as petty farmers, laborers, and common people when writing fictions and poems. Although he finally decides to leave *Lekra* and its socialist realism that he feels to be too narrow for his creative impetus, his past personal view and writing activities are seen as very dangerous for his connection—no matter how problematic—with the Communist Party. Tono is an example of a *priyayi* figure without political ambition but trapped by political circumstances. His tragic turn, not unlike Bawuk's story, is not caused by some error of judgment or hubris but by sudden political repositioning.

Had President Soekarno and his *Nasakom* (Nationalism, Religion, and Communism) principle succeeded in reconciling the competing powers prior to *Gestapu*, all should have been well for citizens like Tono. As it turned out, the successful marginalization of Soekarno and the banishment of the Communist Party from national politics by the army after *Gestapu* has been such a turning point for all parties involved. The failure to find a workable political compromise dooms the fledging nation to a period of violent repression of alternative political views by the army and its political supporters. Those with ideological differences were humiliated and muted. Tono's fate reflects the fate of more than one million people. Soedomo<sup>4</sup> claims that the number is 1.9 million. that the New Order government under Soeharto categorized into either A, B, or C Communist political prisoners (Magnis-Sueno 6). Although in practice most of those categorized in the C group were released from prison shortly after arrest, as Tono is, their IDs were stamped with a special mark: 'OT' standing for *Organisasi Terlarang* (forbidden organization), indicating that they were former members of the Communist Party. For years to come, not only did the bearer of that ID suffer from discrimination by the state, but their children and grandchildren would also be labelled *tidak bersih lingkungan* (contaminated), meaning that they would be barred from many public services and government employment.

**PARA PRIYAYI : LEFTIST PRIYAYI ARTIST AND GESTAPU**

The figuration of a basically compassionate character who sides with the communist movements, like Tono, is re-created by Kayam in the figure of Harimurti in the novel *Para Priyayi*. The novel depicts Harimurti as a *priyayi* child who does not see his social status as something to be proud of. He easily mingles with the village children and this often makes his father worried that he might be influenced by their rude language and manners:

At school he plays with his school friends. And since the school was *HIS Siswo Mangkunegaran*, the school for Mangkunegara palace *priyayi* children, he gets along with *priyayi* children. But, at home Hari chose to play with the village children behind our house... most of the inhabitants in the village behind our house were factory workers, bicycle mechanics, batik painters, car mechanics, food peddlers and God knows what. (165)

Described as a child who is easily touched by others' suffering, Harimurti grows into a young communist critical of the unequal distribution of wealth in the young state.

His compassion for the disadvantaged makes him sensitive to any form of luxurious lifestyle, especially when such a style is supported by fraudulent means. Witnessing the grandeur of his military uncle Noegroho's party, he satirically comments: "Gosh, such an expensive party. How could my uncle pay for such a lavish party?" In his calculation, even with Noegroho's position at the moment, it is unlikely that his salary alone will be able to cover the cost.

Harimurti's compassion for poor people is translated into political actions when he joins an Indonesian Communist Party-affiliated students' organization. His activities in folk art, *ketoprak*, *ludruk*<sup>5</sup> and *gamelan*<sup>6</sup> performances involve making use of those cultural arts as a political tool to materialize his Marxist ideology. The Marxist ideology that Kayam represents through Harimurti is understood as the kind of Marxism that considers the connection between arts and material reality as direct and one-way. In this perspective the existing dominant artistic expressions are considered as the reflections and tools of the ruling class to continually subdue the working class.

As a leftist poet, Harimurti considers art as a medium of class struggle and a political tool:

Art for Gus Hari had become a part of politics and turned to a political tool.



“Now I know, art is a medium for class struggle. What we have grasped so far is the reality that art has been used by feudal and bourgeois class, Tip.” (*Para Priyayi* 259)

Adopting the view that art has to be at the service of politics Harimurti considers that art has to reflect the fight of the peasants for justice and equality.

In order to empower the working class, Harimurti believes that marginal *ketoprak*, *ludruk*, and *gamelan* may be used as a medium to educate them on the social injustice they are living in and motivate them to do something about it, as Lantip, his adopted brother, once commented of him:

He involves himself in the marginal *ketoprak*, *ludruk* and *gamelan* performances because they are arts by the people and for the people. They are arts as a medium for the working class to fight against the feudal class. (*Para Priyayi* 259)

After the drastic political refocusing following the *Gestapu* tragedy in 1965, Harimurti is suddenly categorized as the enemy of the state and the people. He is trapped in an Indonesian Communist Party narrative developed by the New Order, just like Bawuk and Tono. This seems to repeat the pattern that Kayam uses for the characters involved in *Gestapu*. They are portrayed as strong and compassionate *priyayi* characters who sympathize with the suffering of the peasant class. Their involvement with the Communist Party is shown to have been driven by this proletarian compassion. In the next phase, those characters are situated in a difficult circumstance when the Communist Party is accused of treason in the *Gestapu* incident. Their turning point is seen as the result of this political refocusing instead of the characters' own fault. Since the outside forces are beyond their control, their salvation is mediated by *deus ex machina*, i.e. a relative who happens to be a high ranking army officer. In *Para Priyayi*, Harimurti is also saved by Noegroho, an army officer.

Noegroho's material and political success contrasts with that of Hardojo, his younger brother, and Harimurti. Noegroho and Hardojo continue the pattern of a *priyayi's* career, in the sense that they live on their salaries as state officials. However, Noegroho takes the *priyayi* value system differently, leading him to neglect moral right by abusing his position to gain extra income. However, he successfully passes the turbulence of *Gestapu* tragedy and becomes an integral part of the New Order machine.

Harimurti does not take the typical *priyayi's* path by being a state official. He prefers to involve himself in a cultural arena belonging to the peasants. Ironically *priyayi* figures with some idealism like him have to suffer the stigma of becoming an enemy of the state as a Communist traitor. The presentation of the two characters,

Noegroho and Harimurti, with their contradictory endings, reflects the kind of characters surviving the post-independent state. Bawuk, Tono, and Harimurti are marginalized although they possess better characters. This seems to be Kayam's method of negotiating the position of the demonized Communist Party members in order to show that the reality is much more complicated than the New Order categorization.

The different endings which Kayam presents as happening to Noegroho and Harimurti also indicate that in the post-independence Indonesia, the postcolonial idea of a resistance not only replicates the colonial machinery, but also invents new ways of running a more just state when it fails to be materialized. What Harimurti tries to accomplish is to actually create a new postcolonial society where freedom is understood in a broader context that does not merely replace the foreign rulers with domestic ones but also generates the freedom for all citizens to access social mobility. Harimurti thinks that the social movement achieved by means of the existing political and social system is not sufficient. He thinks that both the colonial and the New Order systems fail to achieve the ideal of a just society. Given only the choice between such systems, even a good person like Sastrodarsono can be involved in involuntary oppression because he has committed himself to work within the constraints of an oppressive government. After 1942 when the Dutch no longer control Java, Sastrodarsono has to manoeuvre his *priyayi* identity within this new landscape by negotiating his *priyayi* values in relation to the legacy of colonialism and the spirit of nationalism. So much is at stake in his efforts to navigate his ambivalent position because he has to leave behind the comfort of colonial Dutch patronage and enter a democratic state in which political equality is prized above feudalism. This is a drastic move by which there might be much to lose and less to gain.

What is tragic in Kayam's depiction lies in the fact that the new alternative that Harimurti builds is labeled as communist. As such the very possibility of inventing another version of postcolonial recovery is undermined by the narrative of communist treason that has been fabricated in such a powerful grand narrative by the New Order. From the establishment of this grand narrative onward the only acceptable concept of progress and development is that which is formulated by the government. Any criticism against the government is seen as an effort to destabilize the state and is therefore outlawed.

It is interesting to note that Kayam is silent about another face of the *Lekra's* complex views on the creative process.<sup>7</sup> Kayam's reluctance to represent *Lekra's* less totalitarian attitudes to the relationship between literature and the writer indicates two important historical events. First, *Lekra's* more subtle view on the relation between the world, the artist, and the work has never been a dominant view in the

institute. Secondly, the New Order grand narrative of the *Gestapu* has become a productive constraint. Kayam unconsciously replicates the New Order narrative of *Lekra* through his representation of the struggles of his characters. This is not surprising because for thirty two years the New Order has successfully silenced narratives sympathizing with communism.

### **JALAN MENIKUNG: THE LEFTIST DESCENDANT AND THE LEGACY OF THE NEW ORDER**

*Jalan Menikung* (1999), written towards the end of the New Order period, is a longer piece that allows for extended discussion of the problem. As the sequel of *Para Priyayi*, *Jalan Menikung* tells about the life of the third and fourth generation of Sastrodarsono, the first *priyayi* in his extended family. Harimurti, who is working in a publishing house, has to tender his resignation because of his past involvement in *Lekra* and his only son Eko has to stay in the U.S. to prevent the same kind of political and social ostracism by the New Order regime. While the descendants of Sastrodarsono from his second oldest son, Hardojo's line, have to face political enmity from the New Order regime, the descendants of Noegroho, Tommi, and his sister Marie, are described as successful tycoons—rich businessmen owning a conglomerate of companies.<sup>8</sup>

The New Order regime is known to have used the Communist coup, *Gestapu*, in 1965 to justify the regime's totalitarian rule. Michael Wood mentions that the foundation myth of the New Order is closely related to the slaying of a demon, the Communist Party (148). The criminalization of the Communist Party and its supporters highlights the supposedly heroic role of the New Order founders. Furthermore, the New Order finds justification in the triumph over Communism, or justifies itself for taking over the state leadership from President Soekarno. Realizing the importance of maintaining *Gestapu* as the enemy in the new state in order to stay in power, the New Order repeatedly re-enacts the trauma by inventing new terms such as *tidak bersih diri* (directly involved in the Communist Party) and *tidak bersih lingkungan* (associated with the Communist Party because of familial relations).

In *Jalan Menikung*, this re-enactment is revealed by what happens to Harimurti and his son Eko. He is forced to resign from a publishing company because the owner is reprimanded by a member of the military intelligence for harboring an ex-*Lekra* member in the company. The fact that Harimurti has completed his jail term for his involvement with the Communist Party does not make him free

from the communist label. He is categorized by the government as polluted by communism—*tidak bersih diri*—and has to be ostracized.

This witch hunt for the ex-communists of the first generation is extended to the second generation who are categorized as the second degree pollution, *tidak bersih lingkungan*. Consequently Eko, Harimurti's son, belongs to this group and might be barred from many kinds of occupation and public service. This situation makes Harmurti decide to make Eko stay in the U.S. long after his student exchange program has ended. In exile, Harimurti believes Eko will be better off because if he returns he might be alienated by his own government:

I was afraid if he got a job, which should have been easy because of his summa cum laude grade, his superior might be reprimanded by the intelligence service, since Eko was the son of Harimurti who in certain time Before Christ had been a political prisoner for his involvement with *Lekra* and HSI. (*Jalan Menikung* 13)

The social persecution of the ex-communist throughout the New Order period certainly looks absurd considering the strong military presence up to the level of sub-district (*kecamatan*) in Indonesia and the fact that communism was ceasing to be a marketable ideology, especially after the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991. In the novel, the absurdity is expressed in Harimurti's statement:

Tip, what I did not understand was why they brought up again a case that had been settled with the help of my uncle long time before. Being categorized as a communist, I had contaminated all my family members. They would keep an eye on my parents and my brothers and sisters including you. The intelligence also monitored my work place. (*Jalan Menikung* 10)

This absurd condition reinforces an impression that Indonesia is a police state in which each citizen is constantly monitored for their possible subversive movements. Although Harimurti's affiliation with the Communist Party has been purged, the state needs to remind its citizens of the danger of communism, not so much for the real threat of communism itself but more to justify the New Order's existence. Citizens of the newly independent state need to be kept under scrutiny because of the potential for a foreign ideology (rather than foreign colonialism) to reappear. The novel questions this absurd policy, suggesting that considering the might of the Indonesian military at the moment it is ridiculous to keep prosecuting and ostracizing ex-communists. In the end, Lantip concludes that this "*tidak bersih diri*" policy is driven more by the New Order's paranoia than by reason. He says:

The government is scared and anxious of losing its power. The more powerful a person the more anxious he is of losing his power. Aren't fear and anxiety the two faces of the same coin? (*Jalan Menikung* 10)

That Kayam intends to connect this political condition to Indonesia's experience with the New Order is also obvious in his diction, with his use of '*semangkin*' instead of '*semakin*' (both mean 'the more'). '*Semangkin*' is President Soeharto's idiolect. Instead of '*semakin*' which is the correct and common pronunciation, he always said '*semangkin*' instead.<sup>9</sup> This deliberate reference to the main figure of the New Order by Kayam went uncensored because of course the novel was published after the downfall of the regime.

## CONCLUSION

Kayam questions the politics of subalternization employed by the New Order regime to render powerless those accused of supporting the Communist Party in the context of the biggest political turbulence in the post-independent period: *Gestapu* 1965. Kayam particularly interrogates the narrative of *Gestapu* by means of which the New Order regime *subalternized* not only the communists but also those critical of the regime. Kayam illustrates how *priyayi* figures who transgressed class boundaries by sympathizing with the *abangan* masses were seen by the regime as endangering state stability and were therefore silenced. Kayam's work suggests that the third space which might have accommodated a critical *priyayi-abangan* subalternity which might have had a crucial role in building the new state of Indonesia is not acceptable to a regime modernizing through a dictatorship.

Despite Kayam's sympathetic representation of some communist figures in his fiction, his general representation of communist ideology is ambivalent. His figuration of communist poets simply as uncritical serfs of ideology, for example, shows his bias towards accepting the New Order cultural narrative. Despite his sympathetic description of those innocently accused of treason following *Gestapu* 1965, Kayam still portrays communism as an evil and foreign ideology much in the same way that the New Order regime had been narrating it. Writing during the height of the New Order, Kayam was restrained by the political context of the time; his *Gestapu* stories are unable to portray an alternative third space beyond the obvious 'alternative' of a demonized communism. Consequently the New Order narrative is accepted as the dominant political dynamic, with its implied devastating consequences both for traditional and postcolonial values.

This situation is depicted by Kayam through the sustained domination of the corrupt *priyayi* in his last novel, *Jalan Menikung* as represented by Tommi, the third generation of Sastrodarsono from Noegroho's line. There is no ambivalence in his figuration and moral degeneration seems to be the only option he can take to survive in the current political system. The domination of corrupt *priyayi* and the marginalization of ideal *priyayi* in his later fiction can be seen as Kayam's critique of not only the corrupt politics of the New Order era, but also of Javanese cultural chauvinism whose uncritical reverence for traditional values is prone to manipulation. In the hands of the corrupt *priyayi*, these values are twisted for personal interests and only lead to another form of colonialism. This condition had sustained the New Order, the dominant political ideology of Indonesia post-*Gestapu*, with whose effects on people and institutions Kayam grappled in his fictions.

## Notes

1. Examples are the articles by Peter Dale-Scott "Peranan CIA dalam Penggulingan Soekarno" and by Desmond Crowley and John Rorke "Indonesia - the Coup and after?"
2. Ricklefs argues that *abangan* (red) is originally not a social class but a religious tradition (102). He contends that the association of peasants with *abangan* only takes place in the middle of the 19th century and when Geertz conducted his research, *abangan* had been considered as a long established category synonymous with peasants.
3. Chairil Anwar, a member of "1945 Generation" writers, was a prominent Indonesian poet whose works deal with the issue of individualism and existentialism. Leftist poets of *Lekra* considered him too westernized in his artistic expression not suitable with the revolutionary spirit of the time.
4. Admiral Soedomo was President Soeharto's right hand in purifying the New Order regime from the alleged contamination of the communist. He was the military commander responsible for restoring peace and order after the 1965 coup and the Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs in Soeharto's presidency.
5. Ketoprak and Ludruk are popular traditional theatres performed especially in the rural Central Java and East Java.
6. Javanese music orchestra
7. Foulcher mentions that *Lekra's* continuous arguments "over a 15-year period, that socialist art needed to struggle to reconcile the preservation of an artist's individuality with his or her collective commitment" is often neglected in the discussion of Indonesian literature (7).
8. Kayam might have intended the figuration of Tommi as an allegory for Tomi Soeharto, an infamous tycoon who enjoyed the state's corrupt support during the reign of his father, President Soeharto.
9. Jennifer Lindsay (2003) discusses the Javanizing of Indonesian terms, such as *semakin* into *semangkin* as Kayam's strategy to domesticate his ideas, while J. Joseph Errington in his article "His Master's Voice: Listening to Power's Dialect in Suharto's Indonesia" (2001) analyses the Javanese dialect in "*semangkin*" as a metonym for the New Order and Soeharto himself.



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