

*Indonesian Literature vs. New Order Orthodoxy: The Aftermath of 1965–1966.* By Anna-Greta Nilsson Hoadley. Copenhagen: Nias Press, 2005. xiii, 159 pp.

Since the Reformasi movement of 1998, which toppled the thirty-two year-long New Order government, historical narratives, fiction, memoirs, essays addressing the previously taboo subject of the 1965–66 communist cleansing events — which cost around half a million Indonesian lives — have been widely published. Books previously banned, such as those written by authors marked as having leftist orientation, and books on Communism and Marxism are on display. In this climate of reopening and confronting past issues, Anna-Greta Nilsson Hoadley's book on the literary depiction of the 1965–66 events and its aftermath cannot be more timely and pertinent.

The book discusses a dozen novels, one autobiography, a number of short stories and individual short story and poetry anthologies, published mostly in the 1980s and 1990s. Those literary works are written by well-known Indonesian authors, including three who had been marked as leftist and experienced imprisonment by the New Order government, i.e., Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Putu Oka Sukanta and Hr. Bandaharo. Thematically organized in seven chapters, including the introduction and conclusion, the book examines the literary depiction of political violence, the killings, the Indonesian Communist Party, the actors in their relations to Hindu-Javanese Culture, and to political leaders.

Employing the sociology of literature as its method, Hoadley digs out facts about the 1965–66 events, and its aftermath — which are absent in the official version (the National History text book) — from literary sources. These facts include the gruesome details of political repression, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and other inhuman treatments, the killing and massacre of civilians, either by the army or by other civilians, and the ostracization of ex-prisoners and their families. In the fourth chapter, Hoadley discusses the way the Indonesian Communist Party was depicted, and the strategies of

class consciousness raising which they employed, as seen in fiction. Most of the literary protagonists are portrayed as innocent victims of these political strategies, so in the next chapter Hoadley shows how the Hindu-Javanese cultural ideology of submission to authority, acceptance of fate and attraction to power explains the characters' susceptibility to political maneuvers. Another ideological explanation was the "urge to oneness" seen in President Soekarno's effort in uniting nationalism with religion and communism (known as the NASAKOM policy), which served as the "guiding star" of many protagonists, who became victims of the communist cleansing.

As a work in the sociology of literature, *Indonesian Literature vs. New Order Orthodoxy* is valuable in two ways. It gives a comprehensive, informative contextual background of the 1965–66 upheaval in Indonesia, and it succeeds in showing how, during the time of political repression, fiction served as a means of voicing that which was silenced, although they did not succeed in stirring up public discussion on the subject (p. 50). There is one crucial problem, however, which needs to be discussed further, that is, the ideological positioning of the literary voice vis-à-vis New Order orthodoxy. Prior to 1965, authors are divided sharply into two opposite camps, the arts for arts camp, which champions liberal, universal humanism, and those who dedicate arts to the people and politics. Although not officially related to the Indonesian Communist Party and its cultural division (Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat), writers from the second camp were persecuted and detained in the aftermath of the 1965–66 upheaval. Most of the literary works discussed in the book, except for the works of Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Putu Oka Sukanta and Hr. Bandaharo, were written by authors from the opposite camp, or those distanced (by generation or by affiliation) from the fallen camp. Therefore, their voices, although strongly sympathetic towards the victims of the 1965–66 events, were distinctly coloured by the negative, stereotypical representation of the Indonesian Communist Party and its 'manipulative' strategies. The antagonist force looming large behind and beneath many of the stories was not the army per se, but the spectre of the manipulative politics of the communist left. As such, Indonesian literature discussed in the book, unlike what is

suggested by the title, does not differ ideologically, let alone oppose the New Order orthodoxy.

Today, with the flourishing of leftist publication, workers' literature and the writing of the 1965 victims' memoirs, it remains to be seen whether a different ideological positioning has emerged. At the same time, given the present religious revivalism and right wing conservatism in Indonesia, it is intriguing to study whether the present discourse on the subject is not framed normatively, not unlike what is presented by Hoadley.

In this context, Hoadley's *Indonesian Literature vs. New Order Orthodoxy* will serve as an important reference for the continuing discourse of 1965–66 and its aftermath. As a work of literary studies, the book is at its best when it analyses the literary devices through which the subject of the 1965–66 upheaval is depicted in Indonesian literature (p. 49 and p. 83). Unfortunately this is not the main thrust of the book, although it promises, in the introduction, quoting Adorno's concept of art as "the negative knowledge of the actual world", to demonstrate how literature "crystallizes images out of its formal laws" (p. 3). The strongest contribution of Hoadley as a historian lies somewhere else, that is, in excavating realistic details of "what really happened" out of the fictional representation, which works well with realist fiction, but runs flat when dealing with Putu Wijaya's absurdist and humorous short story (p. 37).

As a pioneering work on one of the most controversial and darkest pages of Indonesian history, following the work of Keith Foulcher and others, the book is definitely an important contribution to Indonesian studies. With its comprehensive coverage, plus a list of abbreviations of political organizations and political terms related to the 1965–66 events, synopsis of literary works and notes on the authors, the book is most handy for historians, students and other scholars of Indonesian studies.

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