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Writing novels under the New Order: state censorship, complicity, and literary production in Indonesia, 1977-1986

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Citation

Hanafi, T. (2022, March 31). *Writing novels under the New Order: state censorship, complicity, and literary production in Indonesia, 1977-1986*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3281344>

Version: Publisher's Version

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Chapter 4

The Complexity of Censorship: Interlaced Systems of Author-Editor-Publisher Relations

“Our biggest challenge is to be constantly able to adapt in a clever, creative, and innovative way.”

Jakob Oetama²⁶⁸

On October 17, 1978, J.B. Kristanto, the chief editor of cultural desk in *Kompas*, received a telephone call from an official at the Ministry of Information. The person on the other end of the line was a state official directing his ire at Kristanto and expressing his objection to the fact that Yudhistira’s *Mencoba Tidak Menyerah*, which was run as *cerita bersambung* (a serial) in *Kompas* prior to its novel form, was accompanied with an illustration that according to him was not only offensive but also challenged the state ideology, i.e. Pancasila. In the illustration, a section of small hammer and sickle, the most common symbol of communism which was gradually adopted after the Russian revolution, appeared as a background overlaid with the non-realistic images drawn from a series of sharp lines. To the untrained eye, the illustration was already abstract enough; one could see three head figures, a shack, and a bicycle — all important elements in the story, but would definitely need an extra effort to actually notice the crossed hammer and sickle at the bottom left corner of the illustration. However, the symbol was more than noticeable to the eyes of the state official, who then grew irate. He delivered a curt reprimand over the phone and threatened to shut down *Kompas* unless the story and the illustration were removed. Kristanto did not haggle and simply hung up the phone as the conversation ended.²⁶⁹ But, as if living up to the title of the serialized story, Kristanto did not give in (*mencoba tidak menyerah*). Instead, he persisted in keeping the story and letting it continue to run as serial in his newspaper. In order to appease the state official, however, on the following day, which was the third day that *Mencoba Tidak Menyerah* appeared in the newspaper, Kristanto had the barely-visible hammer-sickle symbol removed, while the rest of the illustration remained in print.²⁷⁰

The anecdote above shows a piece of evidence of how meticulous state surveillance was and how the affected group responded to the ubiquitous panoptic towers that the state had established. A self-censorship practice, prompted by the dreaded telephone call, was performed by the editor in order to please the state or

²⁶⁸ Jakob Oetama (1931-2020) is the co-founder of and owner of Kompas Gramedia Group. This statement appeared in the Kompas Gramedia company profile (2000).

²⁶⁹ Interview with J.B. Kristanto, former editor of the cultural desk of Kompas daily, on October 3, 2017 in Jakarta.

²⁷⁰ ‘Mencoba Tidak Menyerah’. *Kompas*, October 18, 1978.

avoid possible reprisal without having to cancel the entire story. As indicated in Chapter 3, the state c.q. the Attorney General played out a coordinating game of surveillance by employing numerous agencies both state bodies and informal non-structural groups to carry out censorial tasks. In this chapter, the perspective shifts as I scrutinize surveillance from the point of view of the subjects of censorship. To return to the case of the problematic illustration above, Kristanto anticipated further by-phone-warning by directing the readers' attention, including the attention of the angry censor, from noticing the part of the illustration that was now missing. Not only did he remove the hammer and sickle, but he also instructed the illustrator to add a massive abstract image of a human head of an eleven-year-old boy on the bottom right corner of the illustration — the boy who in the story acts as both the protagonist and narrator. In this light, I will discuss how the affected groups responded to state surveillance and censorship by building complex systems of self-censorship that involved interlaced relationships among authors, editors, and publishers, playing along with the government-cum-censors in their surveillance game, and accommodating the power structure by employing self-censorship which could range from 'omission, dilution, distortion, and change of emphasis to choice of rhetorical devices by [authors, their editors, the publisher] in anticipation of currying reward and avoiding punishment.'²⁷¹ The complex interplays among authors, editors, and publishers contributed under these circumstances eventually to the success of production, circulation and distribution of the books.

In this context, I focus on the publishing companies *Kompas* and Gramedia, where the novels at the heart of this study, i.e. Yudhistira Massardi's *Mencoba Tidak Menyerah*, Ahmad Tohari's *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, and Ajip Rosidi's *Anak Tanahair*, were edited, printed, published, and serialized in the newspaper prior to their publication in novel form.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, *Kompas* was a leading newspaper with the biggest readership and among the few national newspapers to ever offer a special literary section. Furthermore, Gramedia, which began in 1972 and was initially assigned only for printing the highly-sought *Kompas* newspaper, grew to become known as the publisher that focused on publishing entertainment novels or literary works that were less serious. Almost every serialized story (with an exception of Ajip Rosidi's *Anak Tanahair*) that appeared in *Kompas* was later printed in novel form by Gramedia. This strategy was moderately assumed as an economic strategy but could also be seen as a way to have a preview of the response from censors before committing to publishing the novel.

This chapter investigates what the authors, editors, and publishers did to get their stories written, printed, distributed, and finally to appear in print and be read by the public. It explores how publishers/editors dealt with state surveillance and navigated through the ever-present and repressive mechanisms of state censorship. This included cultivating political and friendly ties and employing self-censorship in

²⁷¹ See Lee 1998, pp. 55-73. See also Skjerdal 2008, pp. 185-206.

the pre-publication phase. Furthermore, since the novels examined in this research, according to the literary critics of the time, fell under the category of popular novel as opposed to ‘serious’ literature, I argue that this categorization is an important aspect in the discussion, as the authors, editors, and publishers took advantage of pre-existing literary streams in the 1970s and 1980s Indonesia under the premise that popular novels received smaller attention from state censors than serious literary works. An elaboration on the literary streams in Indonesia in the 1970s and 1980s and how the authors played along with this will explain whether authors opted for one stream over the other in order to gain greater leeway in writing and getting their messages across and simultaneously avoiding censorship.

Cultivating Political Ties: the Publisher and the State

An examination of the publisher, together with its political significance, as well as affiliation, is crucial in order to explain how Indonesian literary situation was played out and why, eventually, the novels at the heart of this study survived repressive censorship. As indicated earlier, the novels *Mencoba Tidak Menyerah* (1979), *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* (1982), and *Anak Tanahair* (1985) were printed by the same publisher, namely Gramedia, and prior to their novel form, they were run as a serial in *Kompas* newspaper, except for Ajip Rosidi’s *Anak Tanahair*. On this particular condition and, in addition, due to the fact that there is an overlap in direction and leadership, I consider that *Kompas*, the leading and largest newspaper in Indonesia, and Gramedia, the largest modern publisher that prints popular novels, local newspapers, tabloids, and magazines, are both inseparable and interchangeable.²⁷² What is more, the two form the main pillars of the largest media conglomerate in Indonesia, namely the Kompas Gramedia Group (KKG) holding company.

In his dissertation that delves into the company’s long relationship with power holders, Wijayanto (2019) finds that fear has not only been a running theme but also become the main reason that the company survived authoritarian regimes, especially the three-decade reign of the Suharto government. He argues that the company was born into ‘a culture of fear’ that stemmed from, on the one hand, constant threats of bans whenever it was considered to be critical to the powerholders and, on the other hand, the practices of discrimination associated with the Chinese and Catholic identities of their founders.²⁷³ This lifelong apprehension which the company internalized over decades of authoritarian regimes was decisive for the course that the company took — in short, Kompas Gramedia Group (KKG) sought a cautious and tricky balance between appeasing government censors while informing the readers about developments in the country.

Drawing from this culture of fear and the impact it has on the company, Wijayanto coins the term ‘*jurnalisme rasa*’ (journalism of feeling), a journalistic practice exclusively developed by *Kompas* that entails anxious compromise or

²⁷² Kompas Gramedia Group 1995, p. 17.

²⁷³ Wijayanto 2019, p. 41.

submission to state power. Along this line of reasoning, my research, however, finds that *Kompas* and Gramedia played a bigger and even more important role which demonstrates an agency of its own. This was first evident in a statement made by D.J. Tampubolon, the state censor at the SUBDITPAKEMBARCET of the Attorney General Office in Jakarta. On October 25, 2017, prompted by a question on the publication of Tohari's *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, D.J. Tampubolon informed me that “*mereka adalah teman dekat kita* — they are close friends with us,” with reference to *Kompas* Gramedia. In fact, as I investigated further and with the permission from D.J. Tampubolon to briefly skim invitation letters (*Surat Keluar*) which were compiled in several black Ordner binders, I found that the director of Gramedia had been on regular invitation lists for a series *Forum Rapat Koordinasi Politik Keamanan*.²⁷⁴ In these meetings, the director of Gramedia or his delegates, together with 19 other analysts from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the State Intelligence Coordinating Body, the Coordinating Agency for the Maintenance of National Stability, the Armed Forces Intelligence Agency, and academics, came together and brainstormed to carry out censorial tasks that included but not limited to examining printed matters, writing analyses, and making recommendation for censorship or bans.²⁷⁵

In this sense, different from but still along the lines of Wijayanto's notion on the company's submission to power due to fear, my research shows that *Kompas* Gramedia played an accommodating role with regard to censorship to satisfy the need of both the state and the company. Assigned by the state, the company became an inherent part of the censorship machinery — making it both the subject of censorship and, simultaneously, the censor. Indeed, fear played a substantial part in the production of censorship in the concerned media organization. That said, its direct relationship with the state and the advanced knowledge it had on the censorship mechanism made the company possess a broader understanding in anticipating the eventual selection and de-selection of manuscripts, their editing, and to help navigate towards publishing manuscripts that were potentially controversial. Hence, a good example of well-calculated self-censorship.

Moreover, the fact that these people all knew each other personally, saw each other regularly, and had cordial relationships casts this notion of ‘fear’ in a different light, and suggests some nuance is needed to grasp how influence functioned in practice. This might help explain how certain works successfully navigated the obstacle course of censors, and were published. Clearly, publishers had different priorities and enjoyed a different relationship with the public than the military government did, with its myriad, diffuse institutions of censorship. But the level of coordination between this private publisher and government censors, combined with

²⁷⁴ Interview with D.J. Tampubolon (pseudonym) on October 25, 2017 in Jakarta. D.J. Tampubolon showed me extensive dossiers of *Surat Masuk* (incoming letters) and *Surat Keluar* (outcoming letters) which comprise invitations to meetings organized by the Attorney General Office, recommendation letters from state bodies and the public on supervision for certain publications in Indonesia from 1980s to 1990s.

²⁷⁵ ‘Undangan’. Arsip SUBDITPAKEMBARCET, Kejaksaan Agung Republik Indonesia, Jakarta.

the personal relationships cultivated over years on both sides of the aisle, suggests a far more ambiguous and complex story than merely one of a trepidatious independent publisher responding to threats by powerful government censors.

Kompas

Under the regime of Sukarno the period of the 1960s was marked with partisan politics, characterized by sharp divisions among political forces, namely the nationalists, religious, communists, and the military. In this decade, almost all newspapers and publications were close to one of the major political parties, be it for ideological reasons or religious convictions. *Suluh Indonesia* (founded in 1953) and *Merdeka* (founded in 1945) were in line with the nationalist party (*Partai Nasional Indonesia* – PNI), while *Duta Masyarakat* (1955) affiliated with the Nahdlatul Ulama, *Harian Rakjat* (1951) with the communist party (PKI), *Abadi* (1947) with Masyumi, *Pedoman* (1948) and *Indonesia Raja* (1949) with the socialist party (*Partai Sosialis Indonesia* – PSI). This condition resulted in a strong interdependence between political parties and media companies. Political parties needed the media to promote their programs and platform to their constituents, while the media companies need the political parties for political protection and readership.

Kompas came out on June 28, 1965 amidst the rising temperature of the political crisis, which culminated on September 30, 1965 with an aborted coup. Its origin could not be detached from the role of the then Chief of Staff of the Indonesian Army, Lieutenant General Ahmad Yani, who advised Frans Seda, a Catholic and minister in Sukarno's cabinet, to start a weighty publication to counter the communist media which during the period were not only growing stronger but also offensive against other media. Looking back, on June 28, 1980, Seda himself admitted that the motivation behind the founding of this newspaper was for the catholic group to balance or curb the PKI and its allies.²⁷⁶ He further clarified and promulgated this anti-communist stance in a featured video which *Kompas* released in September 2015 called "*Jakob Sang Kompas*" (Jakob the *Kompas*). In the video, Seda said that "*Kompas* news fulfills what the people want. People who want to be free, who are free, who despise the PKI, who shun communism."²⁷⁷ With this idea in mind, Seda brainstormed with his colleagues from the Catholic Party Ignatius Joseph Kasimo Hendrowahjono, popularly known as IJ Kasimo, and, afterward, urged that Chinese Indonesian Petrus Kanisius Ojong (born Auwjong Peng Koen) and Jakobus Oetama, two Catholic journalists who were then already running the monthly magazine *Intisari*, start making preparation and run the newspaper. Even though in the beginning, Ojong and Oetama hesitated due to the economic and political nature

²⁷⁶ See *Sepanjang Jalan Kenangan* (Along the Memorial Road), an article that Seda wrote in *Kompas* on June 28, 1980, to commemorate its anniversary. See also Ishwara 2014, p. 214. See also Wijayanto 2019, p. 48.

²⁷⁷ Wijayanto 2019, p. 50.

of the period, in the course of history, these two figures became the determining factors in realizing Yani's idea.²⁷⁸

This new media was initially to be named *Bentara Rakyat*, but later changed into *Kompas* based on the suggestion from President Sukarno. The initial capital came from the three founders: I.J. Kasimo donated a pick-up truck, Oetama donated a radio, and Ojong handed over a typewriter. The houses of Oetama and Ojong were even used as *Kompas* offices. During the first few months of its operation, *Kompas* was often ridiculed as *Kompas Morgen*, since it always arrived in readers' hands on the following day. The communists mocked the newspaper and called it '*komando pastor*' (priest's command) because its founders, I.J. Kasimo, P.K. Ojong, and Jakob Oetama, were prominent members of the Catholic party.

Kompas' affiliation with the Catholic Party lasted until 1971, when the New Order government cut ties between newspapers and political parties and removed their close loyalty and primordialism. In 1973, the government abolished the identity of old political parties. Nine parties participating in the 1971 election (except Golkar) were forced to fuse to simplify the party system and strengthen Golkar.²⁷⁹ Two political parties participating in the election were the United Development Party (PPP) that housed former Islamic parties; and the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) for Christian, Catholic, and nationalist parties.

Kompas' relationship with the Catholic group later grew tenuous although the Catholic influence was still felt. The owners of *Kompas* began to realize the importance of a newspaper eliminating a partisan attitude and highlighting the business aspect in order to be able to advance. From the very start, Ojong and Oetama had actually been implementing the modern management concept in running *Intisari* and *Kompas*, as well as other business units, but official implementation only began in 1980 when *Kompas* Gramedia Group first introduced the Management by Objective (MBO), a work ethic then exclusive to *Kompas* Gramedia Group which emphasized performance-based incentives.²⁸⁰ Ojong and Oetama's choice to implement modern management in handling the company was a courageous breakthrough because, at the time, media companies and the press prioritized political ideals and struggle rather than business mission due to the influence of *Pers Perjuangan* (press of political struggle).

The choice that Ojong and Oetama made did not only affect the company's internal affairs, but also the pragmatic attitude of the company in dealing with the authoritarian New Order government. Especially for *Kompas*, Oetama established a technique of news writing that was less common, which involved softening the message by using euphemisms and inviting readers to read between the lines for the

²⁷⁸ In his eulogy to the passing of Ojong, published in *Kompas* June 2, 1980, Oetama wrote that they "felt hesitant to accept the request to publish *Kompas*. The economic and political environments, as well as the infrastructure, were not supportive. But the request was urgent and came at a time when some newspapers were labeled BPS (Badan Pendukung Sukarno) while some who had anti-communist stance were shut down." Cited in Ishawara 2014, p. 317 and in Wijayanto 2019, p. 50.

²⁷⁹ Yanuarti 1997, p. 18.

²⁸⁰ *Kompas* Gramedia Group 1995, p. 17.

subtly implied message. There may be an aspect to this that is self-serving, the sort of justification one might use to rationalize difficult choices in conforming to censorship. Rosihan Anwar, Indonesia's renowned journalist, author, and former editor of the socialist party newspaper *Pedoman*, mocked such technique and called it '*jurnalisme kepiting*' (crab journalism) for lack of courage and integrity in delivering the news.²⁸¹ Like a crab, *Kompas* walked sideways, instead of courageously moving forward.

Oetama defended this technique and argued that criticism could be delivered in an honest, polite, and responsible manner.²⁸² It accommodated the wishes of the ruler and benefitted the companies in both the short and long terms. Furthermore, the function of criticism and press control were the manifestation of the commitment and support for the government. And after all, direct criticisms and ideological challenges would only lead to the closing of the newspapers (or worse) by the authorities. Despite its indirect and complicated news writing style, *Kompas* remained in high demand due to its in-depth news coverage and language.

Gramedia

Gramedia publishing house served as the backbone of print industry. Prior to the establishment of Gramedia, *Kompas* relied on publishing houses run by other companies. *Kompas* was first printed in PT Eka Grafika that also printed other newspapers in Indonesia. This situation explained the delayed circulation of *Kompas* in the first few months of its publication. *Kompas* tried to overcome this issue by getting the newspaper printed at a more advanced publishing house, Percetakan Masa Media. As circulation grew, Percetakan Masa Media could not meet *Kompas*' demand to increase the number of its copies. It then moved to another printing company, Kinta Printing. The same issue occurred. Finally, on March 12, 1972, Ojong and Oetama established their own publishing house, PT Gramedia. The initial aim of this company was to meet the ever-increasing needs of the newspaper, especially since in 1972 *Kompas* circulation already reached 115,655 copies.

In the same year, Ojong and Oetama purchased a modern British printing machine with the help of a government loan. This loan was part of the New Order's strategy to help boost publications while at the same time control the press and publications by creating dependence on the government.²⁸³ The former Director of Radio, Television, and Film at the Ministry of Information, Ishadi, S.K., said that under the New Order the print industry received facilities in the form of subsidies, investment, credit, reduced prices for prints, and cash lump sum for journalists who made positive coverages on state project, all of which making the press and print industry "agent of government."²⁸⁴ The purchase of the modern printing machine,

²⁸¹ Fachruddin 2019, p. 18.

²⁸² Kompas Gramedia Group 1995, p. 17.

²⁸³ Oetama 2001, p. 313.

²⁸⁴ Ishadi 2014, p. 10.

therefore, marked not only the shift in publishing technology into the new era of modern printing, but also the stronger state cooptation in the publishing industry by means of favoritism towards certain media, *budaya telepon* (state warning via telephone calls), and discriminatory printing permits.²⁸⁵ A *Kompas* senior journalist, who worked at a culture desk in the 1980s, confirmed such cooptation which, according to him, had created a working environment steeped in fear and suspicion. Distrust among colleagues became prevalent, especially after not really knowing which colleague worked solely as journalists or as government agents stationed in the said office. This later indirectly resulted in his temporal dismissal by his superior, the owner of *Kompas*, due to pressure from the state official at the Ministry of Information who had discovered that the journalist's father was a member of the Communist Party in 1965.²⁸⁶

P.K. Ojong and Jakob Oetama

Ojong and Oetama were central in turning *Kompas* Gramedia Group into Indonesia's largest media conglomerate. They not only established the group, but also became the leaders and zeitgeist of the company. They were the ones to first lay the company foundation.

Petrus Kanisius Ojong, born Auw Jong Peng Koen in Bukittingi West Sumatera on July 15, 1920, came from a family of traders. He received elementary and middle school education in Padang before he was enrolled in a vocational school for teachers in Jatinegara, Jakarta. After graduating high school, Ojong studied law in Universitas Indonesia and graduated in 1951.²⁸⁷ According to Ishwara, Ojong was an intellectual who had a very deep concern for and attention to the state, as well as legal and social issues, and became an influential figure in a number of areas. He served in the Legal Aid as curator and public advocate, the forerunner of the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI).²⁸⁸ He also served as member of the central committee of the Catholic party, was on the central board of the newspaper union (*Serikat Penerbit Surat kabar* – SPS), the treasurer at the Yayasan Indonesia which published the literary magazine *Horison*, became the coordinator of the International Catholic Union of the Press (UCIP) for Indonesia, helped established a Catholic news agency in Hong Kong, and ran the Yayasan Tarumanegara, which founded Universitas Tarumanegara in Jakarta.

Jakob Oetama was born on September 27, 1931 in Howahan, a small village situated near Borobudur temple in Central Java. He went to a seminary in Yogyakarta in 1951, completed a degree in history and journalism from both

²⁸⁵ Ishadi 2014, p. 10; Dhakidae 1991, p. 250; Ardimas 2002, p. 118.

²⁸⁶ The journalist was removed from his position, and transferred to *Kompas* Gramedia subsidiary in Aceh. Several years later, he was reinstated to his original position in *Kompas* culture desk. Interview with Budiardjo (pseudonym) on September 26, 2017 in Jakarta.

²⁸⁷ Ishwara 2001, p. 337-339.

²⁸⁸ Ishwara 2001, p. 337-339.

Perguruan Tinggi Publisistik in Jakarta (1959) and Universitas Gadjah Mada in Yogyakarta (1961). His journalistic career began when he was accepted as an editor at the Catholic weekly magazine, *Penabur*, in Jakarta in 1955. In 1965, he worked as chief editor at *Kompas*, while Ojong was the president director. When Ojong died in 1980, Oetama assumed the position, making him both the chief editor and president director of *Kompas* Gramedia Group, the positions he held until 2002. In press organizations, Oetama was the advisor to the Confederation of ASEAN Journalists, member of the International Press Institute. As in politics, Oetama served as a member of parliament (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat – DPR) representing Fraksi Pembangunan Karya or Golkar from 1966 to 1977. In 1977, he served in the People’s Consultative Assembly (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat – MPR), the highest governing body in Indonesia. His path was followed by one of his senior journalists in *Kompas*, Ansel da Lopes, who also became the representative from Golkar.

The closeness of the *Kompas* Gramedia top executives was not limited to their membership in the Catholic Party. They were also active in the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a think tank on social, international, political, and economic issues that played a pivotal political role in the 1970s and 1980s, and became the main supporter of the New Order.²⁸⁹ Oetama had also been the core administrator of the Indonesian journalist association (*Persatuan Wartawan Indonesia* – PWI); chair of the Press Council (*Dewan Pers*), and chairperson of Indonesian newspaper union (SPS), the positions of the New Order era which were only given to intellectuals and community leaders whose thoughts and political understandings were in line with the government's views. This gave rise to Benedict Anderson’s characterizing *Kompas*’ style as determined boringness and his description of the newspaper as the New Order media par excellence.²⁹⁰ Even the censors with whom I have established rapport at the Attorney General Office assumed a close relationship between the office and *Kompas* Gramedia.²⁹¹ This was later confirmed by his superior who said that the relationship between the two has been established since censorship practice under the New Order began to take place and became more intimate in the 1980s.²⁹²

Ojong and Oetama were not only journalists, but also intellectuals, entrepreneurs, and political enthusiasts who were able to adapt to every political condition of each era. Motivated by the predicament of being Chinese-Indonesians, concocted with the worldwide Catholic networks they maintained as well as the shared experience of having two of their earlier newspapers (*Keng Po* and *Star Weekly*) shut down on August 1, 1957 and October 7, 1961 respectively, they developed an accommodating attitude in their business practice — the very ability

²⁸⁹ Hill, D. T. 1994. p, 63.

²⁹⁰ See Anderson 1994, p. 140. See also Hill, D.T., 1994, p. 84.

²⁹¹ Interview with D.J. Tampubolon (pseudonym) on August 15, 2017 in Jakarta.

²⁹² Interview with S.H. Pasaribu on August 15, 2017 in Jakarta.

that helped them protect their businesses, and even befriend the state censors, as made explicit by the official from the Attorney General Office in Jakarta.²⁹³

Categorizing Novels: Serious vs Popular

According to Boen S. Oemarjati, the New Order era was marked with a change in the socio-cultural conditions in Indonesia which allowed rapid growth in literary writing as the government priorities were to provide social stability and to recover economically.²⁹⁴ Unlike authors under Sukarno's Guided Democracy who were coached on state ideology and expected not just to reflect society but to guide it in its function as a servant of the people in their struggle to complete the revolution, authors in the New Order enjoyed more space to breathe and were given opportunities for creative freedom. Oemarjati stated further that under Guided Democracy, 'the term 'experimentation', for instance, was one-sidedly interpreted as 'imperialistic', whereas under the New Order experimental forms have gone to such an extent that 'improvisation' "has become the last cry in the recent Indonesian literary movement."²⁹⁵ This – very relative – creative freedom was further equipped with government sponsorship, literary training and education, mass media, and potential readership.

In view of the socio-cultural conditions, two main streams in literary writing, mainly prose, took shape: the first stream being the 'serious' novel — or novel *sastra* (literary novel), whereas the second was termed 'popular' novel. The distinction between the two was unclear; critics, however, have deliberately made distinctions between the two.²⁹⁶ Novel *sastra* or serious novel, according to Jakob Sumardjo, centers its theme on virtuous qualities in life and its complexities. It employs all intrinsic elements of the novels i.e. plot, characterization, setting, and point of view, all of which were used to make the story well-developed; and it discusses narrative in depth using standardized language.²⁹⁷ Umar Kayam, a literary critic and writer, made a similar distinction. According to him, a 'novel that is 'literary' does not only capture reality, but it also problematizes it by means of craftsmanship, manipulation, and linguistic taste. It discusses life and includes all possibilities of it.'²⁹⁸ In contrast, the popular novel, which finds its traces in 1930s, 1950s, and 1960s and was formerly termed as *roman pitjisan* (dime novel) due to its relatively low selling price, was intended for mere entertainment, and commercial gain, and confined to its

²⁹³ See Eduard Kimman and Michael Traber. (1979). *Beyond the Catholic Market: A report on cooperation possibilities of the six catholic publishing houses in Indonesia*. Jakarta: Episcopal Commission for Social Communications and Aachen-Federal Republic of Germany: Catholic Media Council. This report details a consensus about the need for an outside consultant to advise what can be done in making the Catholic publishing houses more self-supporting. P.K. Ojong and Oetama participated through internship program conducted in their publishing house. p. 338.

²⁹⁴ Oemarjati 1979, p. 134.

²⁹⁵ Oemarjati 1979, p. 134.

²⁹⁶ Even Teeuw himself said that it was difficult to draw a strict dividing line between the two novels. See Teeuw 1967, p. 12.

²⁹⁷ Sumardjo 1979, p. 10-11.

²⁹⁸ Kayam 1980, p. 6.

spatial and temporal context, often emphasizing petty romance.²⁹⁹ In the late 1930s, popular novels were mushrooming in Medan, the capital of North Sumatra. These novels were printed by private publishers who found financial opportunities in publishing stories that revolved around the topics of sex, supernatural power, petty romance, and sensation, which attracted a large number of readers.³⁰⁰ The emergence of *roman pitjisan* began as an adaptation, if not simplification, of literary novels that had begun earlier, initiated by Eurasian and Indonesian-Chinese authors and journalists in the nineteenth century, who were the first to begin the serialization of popular novels in 1924.³⁰¹

This trend, however, was halted during the Japanese occupation (1942-1945). Literary writings were then produced generally to generate sentiment against the Dutch and mobilize support for Japan as the leader of a new Greater Asian awareness, or pan-Asian loyalty. The Cultural Center that the Japanese colonial government established forced artists and authors to write literary works that supported the politics of the Japanese government. *Tjinta Tanah Air* (1945) by Nur Sutan Iskandar and *Roman Pantjaroba Palawidja* (1945) by Karim Halim printed and published by Balai Pustaka, the state publishing house, were two novels among many. Due to tight censorship and limited themes for writing, only few novels could be published under the Japanese occupation.³⁰²

After Japan left, and against the backdrop of World War II, publishing began to pick up pace again. The number of publications began to increase, especially literary novels. Almost all works written by authors of the Generation of 45 were published by the state-sanctioned Balai Pustaka and Pustaka Rakyat.³⁰³ Within five years, new publishers emerged, focusing on literary quality manuscripts that could not entirely be published by both Balai Pustaka and Pustaka Rakyat. First, Pembangunan; followed by Nusantara, and then Gunung Agung. To accommodate readings that were not considered serious, private publishers were also flourishing, such as Bwan Niaga, Mega Bookstore, Aryaguna, and Wilendra.³⁰⁴ This is when *roman pitjisan* made its comeback in Indonesia.³⁰⁵ Slightly different from 1930s *roman pitjisan*, the first half of the 1950s *roman pitjisan* shifted its theme to the romantic lives of young people against the old fashioned tradition of their parents – the story of a generation gap.³⁰⁶

²⁹⁹ ‘Seni populer merupakan hiburan bagi pembaca karena ia dibiarkannya asyik dengan dirinya sendiri dan segala sesuatu yang telah dikenalnya’, Damono 1979, p. 210.

³⁰⁰ Damono 1979, p. 210.

³⁰¹ Lan 1962, p. 23.

³⁰² See Jassin 1975. Also Mark 2018.

³⁰³ *Angkatan 45*, Generation of 1945, refers to the Indonesian authors who had first published their texts during the Japanese occupation and the years of the national revolution, irrespective of their politico-cultural affiliation. The works of Angkatan 45 were often more realistic, as opposed to those of the earlier group, known as the Pujangga Baru, which were more romantic and idealistic. See Teeuw 1967, p. 122. Also Heinschke 1999, pp. 145-169.

³⁰⁴ Teeuw 1967, p. 224.

³⁰⁵ Roolvink 1958, pp. 171-179.

³⁰⁶ Roolvink pp. 173-179.

Entering the 1960s, literary publishing was sluggish. In addition to economic hardship, reading interests of the larger public in serious books were not well established. It should also be added that in this period, like the press, literary writings were ‘party-bound’ as they could be expected to be influenced to some degree by one party or another, either through direct supports or through associations of the writers.³⁰⁷ This was evident in the emergence of LEKRA which was affiliated with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI); the National Cultural Institute (LKN) with the Indonesian National Party (PNI); Muslim Art and Cultural Institute (Lesbumi) with the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Writings produced by writers affiliated to any of these party organs were heavily colored by political agendas, becoming very serious and, therefore, losing the interests of general readers who sought entertainment. *Roman pitjisan*, however, thrived. Motinggo Busye’s popular novels became bestsellers, making other authors change course and follow his lead.³⁰⁸ His books revived the original tradition of *roman pitjisan* and were jammed with sex and sensation. The books came out in pocket size with lavishly illustrated covers which did not always describe the content of the story.³⁰⁹

Due to the political turmoil in 1965 after the attempted coup, *roman pitjisan* temporarily stopped only to re-appear in 1966. The number of popular writers grew exponentially, to name but a few Asbari Nurpatia Krisna, Motinggo Busye, and Abdullah Harahap. Pierre Labrousse in his study on the sociology of *roman pitjisan* stated that in the period of 1966-1973, official literary novels were considered to be rare while popular novels dominated and controlled the market.³¹⁰ Balai Pustaka shifted focus and became engrossed with printing and distributing textbooks under the state sanctioned book procurement project, popularly known as Proyek INPRES.

In response to this situation, in 1971, a group of literary authors with the financial help of Yayasan Jaya Raya established a new publishing house, Pustaka Jaya, chaired by Ajip Rosidi. This publishing house was dedicated to publishing literary novels and translation, as well as children’s literature. Immediately after its establishment, Pustaka Jaya became Indonesia’s main publisher for literary writings — publishing serious novels written by many, including Mochtar Lubis (1922-2004), Iwan Simatupang (1928-1970), Nh. Dini (1936-2018), and Ajip Rosidi (1938-2020).³¹¹ The publication grew even more robust as the training and education centers for arts, such as Jakarta Arts Council (DKJ), organized fiction writing contests on regular basis. In addition to such art centers, mass media, newspapers and magazines, such as *Kartini*, *Femina*, and *Gadis*, organized similar writing contests.

³⁰⁷ Crawford 1971, p. 160.

³⁰⁸ Some of Motinggo Busye’s novels are, to name but a few, *Bibi Marsiti* (Aunt Marsiti), *Dosa Kita Semua* (Our Sins), *Perempuan itu Bernama Barabah* (The Girl Named Barabah). Some of Motinggo Busye’s novels are, to name but a few, *Bibi Marsiti* (Aunt Marsiti), *Dosa Kita Semua* (Our Sins), *Perempuan itu Bernama Barabah* (The Girl Named Barabah). See Rosidi 1979, p. 19.

³⁰⁹ Rosidi 1979, p. 19.

³¹⁰ Labrousse, 1974, p. 241-250.

³¹¹ According to Sumardjo, serious literary works were overlooked by publishers due to limited resources. What’s more, authors of serious novels would never want to get their novels published elsewhere. Sumardjo 1979, p. 143.

Furthermore, Yayasan Buku Utama (foundation for fine books), a state-sanctioned organization first established in 1973 responsible for literacy and the development of literary production in Indonesia, gave awards to writers and publishers for their literary merit in the writing industry.

In line with a more general trend in literature, the tradition of *roman pitjisan* remained, but was now refined and generally known as novel pop or popular novel. The year 1973 saw the establishment of Gramedia Pustaka Utama, an equally important publisher that contributed to the development of creative writing in Indonesia. It began publishing pop novels, the first of which was *Karmila* (1971) written by Marga Tjoa, which had been previously run as serial in *Kompas* newspaper. The novel was soon followed by numerous other popular novels, such as *Cintaku di Kampus Biru* (1974), *Badai Pasti Berlalu* (1974), and, the novels of the authors central in this thesis: *Mencoba Tidak Menyerah* (1979), *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* (1982), *Lintang Kemukus Dini Hari* (1985), *Jentera Bianglala* (1986), and *Anak Tanahair* (1985).

The generic criteria of popular novels, however, did not seem to fit Yudhistira's *Mencoba Tidak Menyerah* (1979), Tohari's *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* (1982, 1985, 1986), and Rosidi's *Anak Tanahair* (1985). They did not center their themes on light romance and their characters were round and fully developed throughout the course of the novels. Furthermore, these novels better fit Kayam's description of the serious literary novel in that they did not only 'capture reality, but it also problematized it by means of a craftsmanship, manipulation, and linguistic taste.'³¹² In regards to literary quality, *Mencoba Tidak Menyerah* won the Dewan Kesenian Jakarta award in 1977, while *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* won the Yayasan Buku Utama awards. Funachi Megumi translated *Anak Tanahair* into Japanese for similar reasons that *Mencoba Tidak Menyerah* won the Dewan Kesenian Jakarta's award. Foulcher (1990), Hoadley (2005), Taum (2015), and Scherer (1981) argue that these novels were the first literary novels to ever speak about political incidents that were never spoken of before, against the New Order orthodoxy while posing literary 'resistance' to the widely shared narrative about the 1965-1966 killings in Indonesia, as opposed to the said light romance. However, they fail to see that these novels were printed and eventually put by critics and indirectly by the publisher under the category of popular novels.

Literary scholars and critics admitted that the popular novel was a genre that was constantly overlooked by both critics and the government even though some of them recorded an excellent number of sales and dominated the literary scene in Indonesia in 1970s and 1980s.³¹³ In connection to this, based on the lists of banning decrees compiled by the Attorney General Office in 1991, no decree was ever issued to ban popular novels. The fact that the novels at the heart of this study were published by Gramedia, a publishing house known for printing popular novels in the

³¹² Kayam 1980, p. 6.

³¹³ Damono in *Sosiologi Sastra* p. 81 argued that popular novel is not situated within literary genre. It resides only in family or entertainment magazines. See also Sumardjo 1979, p. 143.

1970s and 1980s, implies that the decision to print the novels as such was likely an attempt by the publisher to get these novels to stay under the radar or to get as little attention as possible in order to avoid direct state censorship and any undesirable consequences which once befell the hyped *Bumi Manusia* in 1981. Looking at the advantage of this categorization of genre which indicates that the state mingled, intervened, or even paternalized the publishing industry and helped define the character and aims of popular versus serious novels, the decision to choose one category over another marked the beginning of self-censorship by the publisher.

Self-censorship: from Manuscripts to Prints

In the 1970s and 1980s, Jakarta was pivotal in the Indonesian literary industry. It housed more than one-third (34 percent) of the total 300 authors,³¹⁴ making it a Mecca for creative publications. Various publishers, both large and small, with and without publishing permits, threw themselves into the field of creative publishing. Few, however, recorded a large nationwide readership, such as Pustaka Jaya (founded in 1971), Cypress (founded in 1972), and, especially, Gramedia, a wholly-owned subsidiary of *Kompas* Gramedia Group, which printed, published, and distributed the novels at the heart of this study.

The fact that Gramedia was one of the biggest publishing houses with a large audience led to two outcomes: first, it had to look for quality manuscripts for good publications in order to maintain or even increase the already great number of readers; and, second, it simultaneously attracted authors to get their manuscripts printed, published, and distributed by this publisher. In publishing a novel, Gramedia, like other publishers, thoroughly considered at least five important aspects of publication: collecting and selecting manuscripts, making graphic design, printing, marketing and distribution, and building relation with authors, all of which determined the success of publications. However, as marketing and distribution did not directly concern the authors, the discussion in this section will be limited only to the process of literary production that involved the publisher, editor, and most importantly, the author. Furthermore, it is within these aspects that extensive use of self-censorship was disclosed on the part of the publisher/editor, and perhaps as well, the authors.

Collecting and Selecting Manuscripts

This process, which consists of collection, selection, and editing processes, is the first and most important aspect of literary production as it entails the decision makings of the publisher on whether and how to publish the novels.

Collection

³¹⁴ While 36 percent lived in other large cities on Java, and 30 percent lived outside Java. See Sumardjo 1979, p. 114.

A generally shared notion of a good publisher in Indonesia in the 1970s and 1980s is that one should not wait for the manuscript to be handed in by the author. Instead, the publisher should actively seek out authors to provide manuscripts for publication. To get the manuscripts, publishers would use two approaches: first, the publishers had the editorial staff contact the author directly; second, the publisher could obtain manuscripts through writing contests that they organized. This second approach was normally taken by Indonesian publishers that also ran newspapers or magazines, such as Gaya Favorit Press, with its monthly magazines *Femina* and *Gadis*, or Variasi Jaya Kartini Group, with its monthly magazines *Kartini* and *Puteri*.

Outside the publishers, the Jakarta Arts Council (*Dewan Kesenian Jakarta*) and Yayasan Buku Utama which had established connections with IKAPI and, in particular, Gramedia, organized writing contests and giving awards for quality books on a regular basis —the most prestigious of which was *Sayembara Novel Dewan Kesenian Jakarta* (Jakarta Arts Council Novel Competition) which began in 1973.³¹⁵ As this competition became the best channel for authors to get exposure to the Indonesian literary scene, *Dewan Kesenian Jakarta*, which annually hosted the competition, shelved a great volume of original manuscripts, only five of which won the awards. Manuscripts that were considered to have literary quality but did not win the contest were archived in a manuscript bank while waiting to be published by affiliated publishers.

In the case of *Mencoba Tidak Menyerah*, the collection phase was slightly different. In an interview that I had with Yudhistira in 2017, he claimed that he had completed the manuscript in 1976 with the original title *Aku Bukan Komunis* before he sent it to the writing contest organized by *Dewan Kesenian Jakarta*, and then won the award in 1977. He jokingly said that the main motive behind it was purely financial — no ideals or political aims whatsoever ever crossed his mind. At the time Yudhistira submitted to the competition, the first prize of the contest was equal to four months' salary for the average worker in Indonesia, and represented more than enough for him to live by.³¹⁶ According to J.B. Kristanto, when Yudhistira first moved to Jakarta, he was destitute. Also according to him, the fact that he was in such predicament was likely due to his inability to acquire any profession for not being '*bersih diri*' (personally clean or untarnished), a term which insinuated that one was free from the influence of, and association with, the outlawed Communist

³¹⁵ In a report by the secretary of Yayasan Buku Utama, A.S. Nasution, which was addressed to the Minister of Culture and Education, Gramedia was mentioned as a regular donor, among 9 Indonesian publishers, to the Yayasan Buku Utama. In five consecutive years, from 1973 to 1978 when the report was written and signed, Gramedia donated Rp. 200.000 annually which was spent by the Yayasan Buku Utama to award authors of quality books in Indonesia. See Yayasan Buku Utama 1980.

³¹⁶ Interview with Yudhistira Massardi on July 22, 2017 in Pekayon, Bekasi. See also report on "*Sayembara Mengarang Roman DKJ 1977*" via <http://dkj.or.id/articles/sastra/sayembara-menulis-novel-dari-masa-ke-masa>. It is interesting to note that one of the judges in this writing contest was Boen S. Oemarjati, one of the authoritative figures in Indonesian literary criticism who made the categorization of popular and serious novels.

Party.³¹⁷ This was also confirmed by Savitri Scherer in her essay ‘Yudhistira Ardi Noegraha: Social Attitudes in the Works of a Popular Writer’ (1981).³¹⁸ In a letter that he sent her, Yudhistira wrote that from 1973 to 1975, he and Noorca, his twin brother who was also a writer and poet, lived like ‘*gelandangan*’ or homeless, literally in the streets of Jakarta. At night they slept inside various luxury cars parked behind the state-run department store, Sarinah. The cars were owned by nouveaux riches that still lived in areas with small narrow alleys. In order to guard these luxurious cars from being vandalized at night, the owners arranged to have homeless teenagers to sleep in them for a fee. During the days, Yudhistira and his twin brother spent their time in the Bulungan Youth Forum, one of the best art centers for youth in Jakarta and only a 5-minute walk from the Attorney General Office where his novel likely went through a lengthy discussion in a *Rapat Koordinasi Polkam*.³¹⁹

After winning the competition, Yudhistira did not intend to send it to any publisher until it was collected by *Kompas*, via J.B. Kristanto, who was the chief editor for cultural desk in *Kompas*. Kristanto’s initial intention for it was to get it printed as a novel by Gramedia. However, it came out as a serial in *Kompas* newspaper instead, with its first appearance on Monday, October 16, 1978. Instead of objecting to it, Yudhistira saw this as an advantage to his financial situation. With it being serialized in the newspaper, Yudhistira would get regular income from the publication. From the publisher’s perspective, *Kompas* Gramedia would know the public reception of the story which then would help *Kompas* and Gramedia to decide whether to publish it as a novel. A year later, Alfons Taryadi (1936-2013), J.B. Kristanto’s colleague and editor for Gramedia, had Yudhistira’s manuscript published as a novel. Again, for Yudhistira, the deal was purely financial—there was no ideological idea or political objective behind his story, so he claimed.³²⁰

As for *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, after Tohari completed the manuscript in 1980, he personally handed it in to the young Listiana Srisanti (1954-2010), the chief editor at Gramedia, who had it published as a trilogy — consisting of three short novels, namely *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk: Catatan Buat Emak* (1982), *Lintang Kemukus Dini Hari* (1985), and *Jentera Bianglala* (1986). Similar to Yudhistira’s *Mencoba Tidak Menyerah*, Tohari’s trilogy first appeared in *Kompas* newspaper as a serial. The first of the trilogy appeared daily between July 17, 1981 and August 21, 1981; the second between September 24, 1984 and October 27, 1984; the third between September 25, 1985 and October 26, 1985.

By then, Tohari was already known as an award-winning novelist. His ‘second’ novel *Kubah* (1980) was published, without having to go through any editing process, by Indonesia’s prestigious literary publisher, Pustaka Jaya, which

³¹⁷ Interview with J.B. Kristanto on October 3, 2017 in Jakarta. This is similar to the case of the senior journalist that I mentioned earlier in this chapter. Even more surreally similar is the fact that the journalist also lost his father after he was disappeared by the military in 1965 due to his affiliation with communists.

³¹⁸ Scherer 1981, pp. 31-52.

³¹⁹ Scherer 1981, pp. 31-52.

³²⁰ Interview with Yudhistira Massardi on October 10, 2017, in Pekayon, Bekasi.

was owned by Ajip Rosidi. *Kompas* Gramedia, however, did not initially seem to be very interested in Tohari's latest manuscript, *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*. Unlike Massardi's *Mencoba Tidak Menyerah*, Tohari's *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* it had to go through repetitive massive editing processes. According to Tohari, it was so massive that Tohari gave up and told Gramedia that he himself lost interest in getting his novel published.³²¹ Knowing that Gramedia had a larger readership than Pustaka Jaya, he was hoping that the publication *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, which came out at a time when literary works with similar themes were scarce, would alleviate the trauma that originated from him witnessing the mass killings of 1965-66 and, simultaneously, educate the public about the injustice that the government directed against particular members of society. The story and nature of Tohari's manuscript editing will be elaborated on in the section, Editing.

Completely different from the aforementioned novels is Ajip Rosidi's *Anak Tanahair*. According to Rosidi, in an interview in Bandung in 2017, *Anak Tanahair* was intended to be published by Pustaka Jaya, the literary publisher which he himself ran. The manuscript, however, was finally published by Gramedia in 1986 after it had been 'stolen' from his apartment in Kyoto, Japan when an editor from Gramedia paid him a visit.³²² The novel was the first and only novel that Ajip Rosidi had ever produced, even though he had written hundreds of short stories and essays. Knowing that Ajip Rosidi was already a big name in the Indonesian literary scene and also in publishing industry, it seems that Gramedia intentionally skipped the two generic approaches that a publisher would use in order to obtain a manuscript of a novel. Gramedia did not request the author to provide the manuscript nor did it collect the manuscript from the competition organizer that the publisher was affiliated with. Moreover, Ajip Rosidi was the *Ketua Dewan Pekerja Harian Dewan Kesenian Jakarta* (chairman of the Jakarta Arts Council) who regularly delivered the annual decision and announced the winners of the writing competition that DKJ organized. In short, in Ajip's own words, the manuscript was "*dicuri*" (stolen).³²³

Unlike manuscript collection elsewhere, especially in Western countries, in the 1970s and 1980s Indonesia, manuscript collection did not involve literary agents and scouts who work for a publisher, search for manuscripts, and pass them on to the editorial board, while literary agents work for the author to get his or her work recognized and published by the publisher.³²⁴ In the Indonesian publishing industry, it seems that publishers would not want to include scout's fees to entire production costs, while authors preferred to have a direct relationship with the publishers

³²¹ Interview with Ahmad Tohari on November 6, 2017 in Jatilawang, Banyumas. See also Riyanto 2006, pp. 43-57 Yudiono 2003, p. 6.

³²² Interview with Ajip Rosidi on July 25, 2017 in Perpustakaan Ajip Rosidi, in Bandung. He claimed that when an editor from Gramedia paid him a visit in Kyoto, he took the manuscript back to Indonesia without Ajip's permission and then published it as a popular novel. This must have taken place sometime around 1983-1986 in between his appointment as Professor Extraordinary at the Tenri Daigaku, Nara, and Kyoto Sangyo Daigaku, Kyoto.

³²³ Interview with Ajip Rosidi on July 25, 2017 in Perpustakaan Ajip Rosidi, in Bandung.

³²⁴ Smith 1975, pp. 58-59.

without any intermediary. According to Oemarjati, an Indonesian literary scholar who was also one of the judges who awarded Yudhistira's *Mencoba Tidak Menyerah* as the winner of the Jakarta Arts Council Novel Competition in 1977, publishers in Indonesia in these two decades might have had a sufficient number of manuscripts due to their affiliations with art institutes like the *Dewan Kesenian Jakarta*, and due to growing initiatives from authors who, under the new government, had relatively wider space and more topics to address in their writings.³²⁵

Selection

In an interview in August 2017, when questioned about the main requirement for a novel to be published by Gramedia, the fiction manager Anastasia Mustika gave a normative answer and mentioned that the novel must be in accordance with the state ideology, Pancasila.³²⁶ When pressed further, she went on to explain that the selection process was conducted by an editorial board consisting of at least three editors. This process includes work such as assessing and weighing the manuscript prior to making a decision whether the text is to be published, rejected, or postponed. In assessing and weighing the manuscript, Gramedia formulated the following standards:

- a. Authenticity. This is to ensure whether the manuscript was original, an adaptation, or a product of plagiarism.
- b. Recognition. In this regard, the literary status of the author is considered to be an indication of publishing success, sometimes despite the content.
- c. Content. The editorial board will consider whether the content would please the changing tastes of the readers, as this will greatly affect the distribution of the novel. Content consideration would also include analysis of the theme, plot, setting, and characterization in the manuscript.
- d. Reading benefit. This refers to the literary benefit that readers could get from reading the novel. This consideration would normally become the greatest concern for a literary publisher.

Since Pancasila was at the center of the publication process, the considerations above were made to meet or to adapt to the basic criteria for novels that the New Order government had established – and that shows that the ‘creative freedom’ the New Order promoted was in reality very limited. Good novels should:

- a. use standardized language
- b. present an interesting story
- c. promote decency, not pornography
- d. spread truth

³²⁵ Oemarjati 1977.

³²⁶ Interview with Anastasia Mustika on September 11, 2017 in Jakarta.

- e. contain a logical storyline
- f. promote development
- g. not contain slander, provocation, or propaganda.³²⁷

According to Mustika, despite the formulated standards and criteria, assessing a manuscript was not an easy task. At least three editors worked together to provide a more objective assessment.³²⁸ Suggestions could also come from other publishing units, such as the production department, marketing, and distribution. Sometimes the director of the publisher, or even the owner, would be involved in deciding whether one manuscript should be published or rejected. This selection process, however, could be overlooked if the manuscript had already been recognized for its literary quality, perhaps by winning a writing contest organized by a bona fide institution, such as the Dewan Kesenian Jakarta.

In regard to authenticity, Gramedia did not seem to have any difficulties in deciding to choose Yudhistira's *Mencoba Tidak Menyerah*, Tohari's *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, and Rosidi's *Anak Tanahair* for publication. Even though Yudhistira was a newcomer to Indonesia's cultural sphere, on November 19, 1977, *Mencoba Tidak Menyerah*, formerly *Aku Bukan Komunis* won the award from the Jakarta Arts Council, which meant that the manuscript had been carefully weighed and assessed and, therefore, was guaranteed to be original and of literary quality. In addition, the committee of judges who assessed the manuscript consisted of Indonesian prominent scholars and literary authorities, namely the above mentioned Boen S. Oemarjati (1940-2011), author and professor at the Faculty of Arts University of Indonesia, M. Saleh Saad (1930-1982), academician, Benny H. Hoed (1936-2015), linguist and professor at the Faculty of Arts University of Indonesia, Rusman Sutiasumarga (1917-1977), author and editor at Balai Pustaka, and Dodong Djiwapradja (1928-2009), Sundanese poet and translator of works by Tolstoy, Saint-John Perse, W.H. Auden, and Charles Madge.³²⁹

It is interesting to note that while Boen S. Oemarjati was the literary scholar who made the categorization of popular versus serious novels — the literary compartmentalization which in time was used by publishers to get their products received by readers and simultaneously to avoid censorship, Dodong Djiwapradja had been an active member of LEKRA and was a regular delegate of Indonesian authors to attend Asian-African Authors Conferences from 1958 to 1962, together with Rivai Apin, and Utuy Tatang Sontani.³³⁰ However, unlike Rivai Apin who was imprisoned from 1965-1979 for his affiliation with LEKRA, or Utuy Tatang Sontani who was exiled for life from 1965 until his death in Moscow in 1979, or Yudhistira, who was forced to live a destitute life for not being 'personally clean' during the

³²⁷ In the case of Tohari, Tohari often used non-standardized language in his *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*. In addition, pornographic or indecent episodes also appear in the novel. Massardi and Rosidi also did not always follow these guidelines.

³²⁸ Interview with Anastasia Mustika on September 11, 2017 in Jakarta.

³²⁹ Pusat Bahasa Departemen Pendidikan Nasional 2003, p. 103.

³³⁰ Pusat Bahasa Departemen Pendidikan Nasional 2003, p. 102.

second half of the 1970s, Dodong Djiwapradja actually enjoyed the complete opposite situation of a pleasant life being in the center Indonesia's literary scene. Due to their closeness, Ajip Rosidi in his anthology of Sundanese authors, *Apa Siapa Orang Sunda* (2018), even wrote a section on Djiwapradja without ever mentioning his obvious involvement in LEKRA.³³¹

To add to the complexity of the situation, a year later, one of the members/judges of the Jakarta Arts Council who selected Ahmad Tohari's novel *Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak* was Saleh Iskandar Poeradisastra, a.k.a. Buyung Saleh. He was a writer and former lecturer at the University of Indonesia, and belonged to the Communist Party. On February 13, 1985, the Attorney General Office issued a confidential circular, signed by the head of the directorate of social and politics, Adam Nasution, SH. This circular was addressed to Indonesian IKAPI and its members, basically stating that all manuscripts written by 41 authors listed in the circular should never be published due to their alleged affiliation with the disbanded Communist Party and its teaching. The circular also urged the publishers to remain alert in the event that the authors would use a pseudonym, such as Saleh Iskandar Poeradisastra alias Buyung Saleh, and Hesri Setiawan alias Anom Sosrohardjo. Furthermore, the circular referred to the Instruction of Minister of Domestic Affairs No. 32 tahun 1981 on the re-education and supervision of former political prisoners tied in to the Communist Party, and stated that the publishers must not give employment to former political prisoners or those affiliated with them.³³²

Selecting *Anah Tanahair* for publication was equally easy for Gramedia, particularly because by then Ajip Rosidi was already a big name in Indonesia's cultural sphere. He had been a prolific author 'with his first story published in the children's section of the newspaper Indonesia Raya at the age of 12. By 15, his poems and short stories had been published in prominent magazines like *Siasat* (Strategy), a literary magazine run by an Indonesian poet of the 1945 generation, and *Zenith* (Zenith), a cultural monthly under the editorship of the Indonesian literary custodian, Hans Bague Jassin (1917-2000). 'Researcher Ulrich Kratz said in 1988 that Ajip was the most productive writer in Indonesia, with 326 works published in 22 magazines before 1983, with dozens of titles having been translated to languages like Dutch, Chinese, Japanese, English, French, Croatian, and Russian.'³³³ In addition to writing, he also ran Pustaka Jaya, a well-known publishing house which

³³¹ See Ajip Rosidi 2018, p. 118 Djiwapradja had also been close to H.B. Jassin, who edited and compiled his poems in *Gema Tanah Air* (1948) and later became his teacher at the Faculty of Arts University of Indonesia in Jakarta from 1951-1952. He also worked as an illustrator for Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana (1908-1994), founder of Pujangga Baru, prominent member of Indonesia Socialist Party, a progressive author of numerous books on a range of subjects, and an honorary member of KITLV (1976). In addition, he was also close to W.S. Rendra who with his great admiration lauded Djiwapradja as a poet who was very '*waspada*' (cautious) of his surroundings and observant. See Rendra's introduction to Djiwapradja's poem anthology *Kastalia* (1997: ix).

³³² 'Himpunan Peraturan.' Arsip SUBDITPAKEMBARCET, Kejaksaan Agung Republik Indonesia, Jakarta.

³³³ 'Ajip Rosidi: A prolific author, spirited literary activists passes away' in *Jakarta Post*, Friday, July 31, 2020.

in the 1970s and 1980s focused on publishing major pieces of Indonesian literature, replacing Balai Pustaka which from the 1970s had shifted focus to printing and publishing textbooks for elementary and high school students in Indonesia. Furthermore, he served as the chairman of the Jakarta Arts Council (DKJ) for three consecutive periods from 1972-1981 while also chairing the IKAPI from 1973 to 1979. In terms of fame, Rosidi's literary status was already an indication of publishing success.

While it was easy for Gramedia to choose to publish *Mencoba Tidak Menyerah* and *Anak Tanahair* — because the publisher did not have to make extra effort to evaluate the content and edit the manuscripts, since both manuscripts had either won awards or were written by a literary giant — *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* was neither famous nor award-winning. The reason that it was written was because the author wanted to overcome his trauma from witnessing the mass killings of 1965-66, something that was common but never openly discussed or recounted. Since writings on the killings were virtually non-existent due to its sensitive nature, *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* was considered to be a courageous breakthrough, and therefore worth publishing. Content-wise, the manuscript offered a new story that would give new insights to Indonesian readers who had been accustomed to the state narrative on 1965 and/or had never heard of the aftermath killings. In other words, the selection of this manuscript relied solely on the imagined 'reading benefit' that readers might get from the novel.

The same sensitive topic was also brought forth by Yusuf Bilyarta Mangunwijaya, popularly known as Romo Mangun (Father Mangun), a writer-cum-Catholic religious leader, in his novel *Durga Umayi* (1991), through which one can also discern the politics of representation and gain insight into the remembrance of the 1965 coup as well as social and political conditions under the New Order regime in Indonesian literature.³³⁴

Although Mangunwijaya's articles had regularly appeared in *Kompas* daily since 1967, and even his trilogy of *Rara Mendut* (*Rara Mendut*, *Genduk Duku*, and *Lusi Lindri*) was run as a serial from 1982 to 1987, *Kompas* Gramedia did not take the opportunity to choose *Durga Umayi* for publication. Instead, the manuscript was printed and published by the *Tempo*-owned publisher, Pustaka Utama Grafiti which only began in late 1980s and published works written mostly by friends of Goenawan Mohamad, the founder of *Tempo* and one of the signatories of *Manifes Kebudayaan*. Interestingly, while *Tempo*, which was also printed by Pustaka Utama Grafiti, was banned in 1994 for reporting about an internal government split over the apparent corrupt purchase of old East German warships ordered by Habibie, the Minister of Research and Technology and a close friend of Mangunwijaya, *Durga Umayi* managed to slip through the censor's gaze and circulate without any

³³⁴ Mangunwijaya 1991. The historical background on which the novel was based made this novel categorized also as historical novel. See Taum 2010, pp. 29-48.

repercussions, similar to *Mencoba Tidak Menyerah* and *Anak Tanahair*.³³⁵ Apart from the language play that this novel employed, the assumed ‘laziness’ of the state censors contributed to the fact that this novel escaped the net of censorship.

Editing

As indicated above, *Mencoba Tidak Menyerah* and *Anak Tanahair* did not go through massive editing. As a matter of fact, if we rely solely on Ajip Rosidi’s recollection in 2017, *Anak Tanahair* did not go through any editing process at all. Upon arrival in Jakarta after it was ‘stolen’ from Kyoto, the manuscript was immediately sent for publication.

Mencoba Tidak Menyerah was a similar case. Considered to have gone through editing processes during the evaluation and assessment by a team of judges from the Jakarta Arts Council, *Mencoba Tidak Menyerah* only went through minor revisions prior to publication, both as a serial in the *Kompas* newspaper and then in novel form. In the original manuscript that was completed in Jakarta in July 1977, editing occurs only in few cases of omitting possessive adjectives and correcting prefixes, relative clauses, conjunctions, indirect objects, and minor spelling errors.

³³⁵ Batubara 2001, p. 3. McCargo, p. 77. See also ‘Sejarah Tempo.’ Available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20150425122726/http://korporat.tempo.co/tentang/sejarah>. [accessed on August 10, 2021].

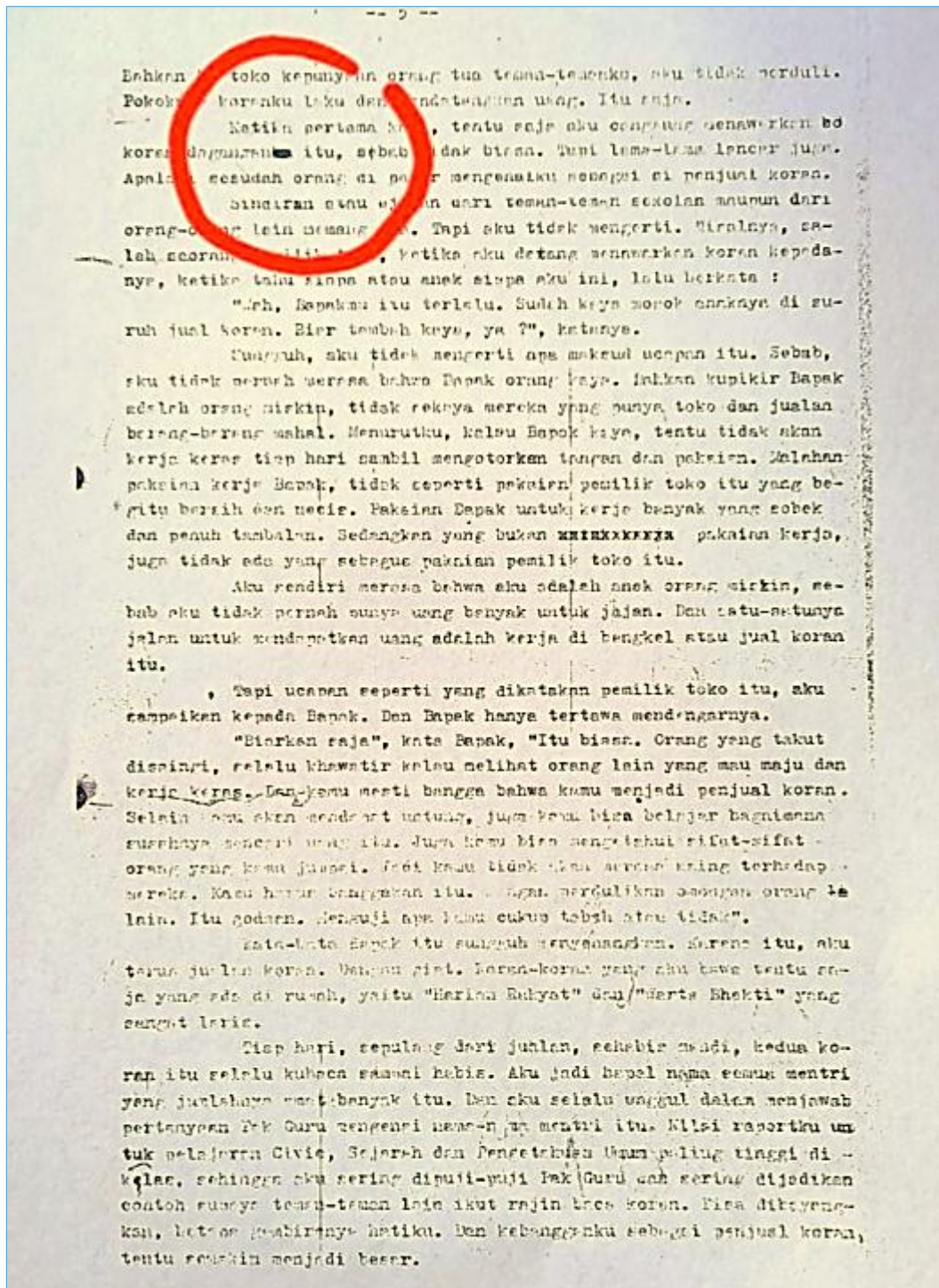


Fig. 1

...beribu yang pernah adalah ~~...~~ ...
...reda tradisinya. Serba pintar dan juga pidi, selain itu aku betul-
betul ingin menjadi orang seperti dia, selain itu juga yang dia
...ken Ibu. Oleh karena itu, keterbatasan ~~...~~ ...
...telah bisa mengingatkannya keperluan dan ~~...~~ ...
...keinginan menjadi orang-orang tua, ~~...~~ ...
...nya tiru dan orang-orang tua yang hebat itu

Terselamatkan Jendral Heretion juga selamat. Yang kuradiklikkan dariadanya adalah bahwa anaknya, Ade Irma Heretion, telah menjadi acaraan pekerjaan orang-orang IT itu. Anak kecil itu telah dituntut secara blind dan tak berprinsip-prinsip. Tapi aku yakin bahwa Ade Irma, akan masuk ke kelas Super karena dia tidak punya dosa. Betapa akan berbahagianya dia disana, bisa bertemu dengan sahabat-sahabat dan bisa berjalan-jalan bersama Tuhan yang baik hati. Aku merasa iri juga pada Ade Irma, sebab dia mau ingin masuk surga dan berjalan-jalan di taman-tamannya yang indah.

keberesapa hari kemudian, ketika semua orang mengerti betul tentang apa yang sudah terjadi, seluruh kota gemer dan tegang. Para pemuda banyak sibuk dan maras-maras, mereka senjato, entah golok, pisau belati maupun peralatan kayu.

Yang membuat saya memarahkan seseorang adalah corotan-korotan corotan dengan cat hitam di tembok-tembok, baik itu di luar kota baik pun di kampung-kampung. Di setiap dinding pasti ada tulisan-tulisan itu. Bunyinya bermacam-macam. Misalnya: "Ganyang PKI, Gantung Aidit, Bularkan Baperki, Sebelah Kolonel Untung". Dan yang lebih mengharukan, membayangkan marah tapi juga mengerikan adalah: "Hutang Nyaw Beyer Krawa! Nyawa 6 Jendral Harus Dibayar Dengan 6 Juta Nyawa PKI dan Antek-anteknya".

Pada dua yang terakhir terjadi memang ada kutha meskipun te-
 kecil dan banyak di penghujung dan bersebelahan. Perahu-perahu dan juga o-
 rang-orang tua, bersebelahan dalam sebuah kelompok besar yang penuh
 dendam. Mereka bertiga-tiga menaruhkan lantai-konter PII dan an-
 tix-catcher. Menemukan-bangunan dikawatirakan itu dihancurkan satu
 dan-tandanya sampai rusak dan tidak berwujud lagi. Orang-orang yang
 ada di kontor itu ditangguhkan dan dibawa ke lokasi setelah diuji le-
 bib dekulu.

Itulah gerakan pemusnahan atau pembakaran. Siang-dal^{am} a
reka bergerak ke selatan pelorok. Mengobrak-abrik rumah orang-orang
komais itu dan menangkapi orang-orangnya untuk dihajar dan dibawa
ke Kodiu. Setelah kemudian pembakaran-pembakaran pun dilakukan.

Pokoknya komunitas dituntut sampai ke akar-akarnya, tidak peduli apakah itu tokoh atau pun hanya masyarakat biasa. Gerakan ini meluas sampai ke desa-desa, sebab anggota PKI yang paling banyak adalah orang-orang desa: petani-petani, buruh-buruh tani, pekerja perkebunan karet serta pemuda-pemudanya. Mereka adalah anggota-anggota

103

✓
 sungguh-sungguh telah dijadikan sebagai anak bawang yang penuh ke-
 genjilan oleh mereka semua. Oleh lingkungan~~ku~~. Dan aku harus men-
 rima semua itu tanpa bisa menawar lagi, sebab itulah keputusan yang
 dijatuhkan oleh orang-orang di sekelilingku. Jadi, semakin aku jauh
 dan dijauhi lingkunganku, semakin jauh pulalah aku kepada diriku
 sendiri. Aku jadi seperti layangan putus yang terdampar nyangkut
 di pohon. Melayang terus di angkasa sampai mungkin akhirnya rebek
 sendiri. Direbek oleh kekuatan alam. ~~Menungguh keputusan yang sangat~~
~~amat~~
 Merasakan goyangan-goyangan jadi seperti itu, memang
 amat berat. Sehingga, kupikir adalah wajar jika banyak ibu-ibu yang
 runtuhnya dihancurkan, semuanya ditangkap entah dibawa ke mana dan
 tak tentu menderita lalu menjadi gila. Dan bunuh diri. Aku bisa me-
 maklumi itu. Tapi tentu saja aku tidak menyangka ada salah ~~seorang~~
 seorang di antara kami yang bernasib seburuk itu. Aku tidak ingin
 Ibu atau Bapak menjadi hilang ingatan. Aku ingin semua dari kami
 tetap sehat dan waras dan sanggup bertahan menghadapi segalanya.
 Tapi apakah aku sendiri bisa bertahan? Entahlah! Aku ragu.
 Satu hal yang selama ini memberikan kepercayaan dan
 sanggup memberi kekuatan pada diriku adalah kenyataan bahwa Bapak,
 tetap berada di tengah-tengah kami, walaupun rumah kami sudah tiga
 bulan yang lewat dihancurkan.
 Aku sendiri merasa heran pada kenyataan itu. Sebab hal
 Bapak itu sungguh diluar kebiasaan. Biasanya sesudah rumah orang
 yang betul-betul PKI dihancurkan Bapak atau ibunya atau kedua-dua-
 nya lalu diciduk, di bawa ke Kodam atau entah dibawa ke mana. Bia-
 sanya begitu. Dan itu waktunya sangat berdekatan dengan ketika ru-
 mah itu dihancurkan. Tapi Bapak? Sudah berbulan-bulan ternyata ti-
 dak ada yang datang dari rumah. Tidak ada tentara atau polisi
 yang menciduknya atau mengancamnya. Bapak masih bebas pergi ma-
 na saja.
 Aku sungguh tidak mengerti itu. Kupikir kalau Bapak be-
 tul-betul orang komunis, pasti sekarang-sekarang ini sudah tidak
 berada di rumah lagi. Tapi Bapak tolh tetap di rumah. Jadi, aku pu-
 nya kesimpulan bahwa Bapak tentu bukan orang PKI, dan aku yakin,

Fig. 3

In figure 1, revision occurs only on the omission of the possessive adjective 'ku' (my) in 'daganganku' which refers to the newspapers that he was selling. The adjective was omitted due to the redundancy with the demonstrative 'itu'. The deletion, therefore, did not change the story.

In figure 2, revisions were made on the misplaced words, i.e. *juga* and *yang*. In this paragraph, the first-person narrator, an eleven-year-old boy, is describing President Sukarno as the charismatic figure he wishes to become — a smart individual and excellent orator without rivals. He ‘*betul-betul ingin menjadi orang seperti dia, sebagaimana **yang juga** diharapkan ibu*’ (He really wants to become a man like Sukarno, just like what mother also wishes for me).

In figure 3, revisions occur due to slight confusion between ‘*di*’ as a preposition and ‘*di*’ as a prefix. In the Indonesian language, ‘*di*’ as preposition is written separately to indicate location while ‘*di*’ as prefix is combined with the verb that follows to indicate passive voice. Throughout the 135 page manuscript, Massardi confused ‘*di*’ as preposition and ‘*di*’ as prefix. While this did not significantly impact the story of the *Aku Bukan Komunis*, the use of this prefix shows that language use of the author limits if not completely deletes the agency of the actor — in such sentence structure, the object becomes the subject, while the original subject was made absent. Things were ‘*disuruh*’, ‘*diservis*’, ‘*dihilangkan*’, ‘*dipenjara*’, ‘*dibunuh*.’ The actors, and in particular the perpetrators, were erased and agency was removed or made invisible.

Content-wise, revisions that were based on the feedback from the editor were absent. Alfons Taryadi, the editor, never seemed to bother to delve into the content and other intrinsic elements of the manuscript, as it had been weighed and assessed by professional literary scholars and authors who were judges of the writing contest. Except for the layout, which concerns production efficiency and pricing, what was typed in the original manuscript is exactly the same as what appeared in the daily serial in *Kompas*, and its novel form published by Gramedia. (Self-)censorship on the part of the editor, therefore, was never put into practice in the case of this novel. The author, however, as indicated above, carried out the practice of self-censorship as he resorted to using passive voice in many of his sentences throughout the manuscript. This use of passive voice demotes the active subject to an optional oblique syntactic position, the immediate effect of which is that the agency of actors was limited or even erased — instead of actors killing people, people disappeared, perished, or died. I will further elaborate this in Chapter 5 when I examine aspects of language in more detail.

Aside from the self-censorship practiced by the author, pre-publication changes by the publisher took place in the renaming of the title. According to Yudhistira, Alfons Taryadi was so worried that readers or the government might put too much focus on the word ‘*Komunis*’ in ‘*Aku Bukan Komunis*’ that they literally ignored the original title of the story, and actually negated what would have been accused of the author or that it actually propagated anti-communist sentiment — ‘I Am NOT a Communist’. Based on the editor’s anxious anticipation, the title was changed to ‘*Mencoba Tidak Menyerah*’ which was immediately approved by both *Kompas* and Gramedia in both serial and novel form.³³⁶

³³⁶ Interview with Yudhistira Massardi on October 10, 2017, in Pekayon, Bekasi.

Original Covers of *Aku Bukan Komunis* – Pre-publication 1977



Fig. 4

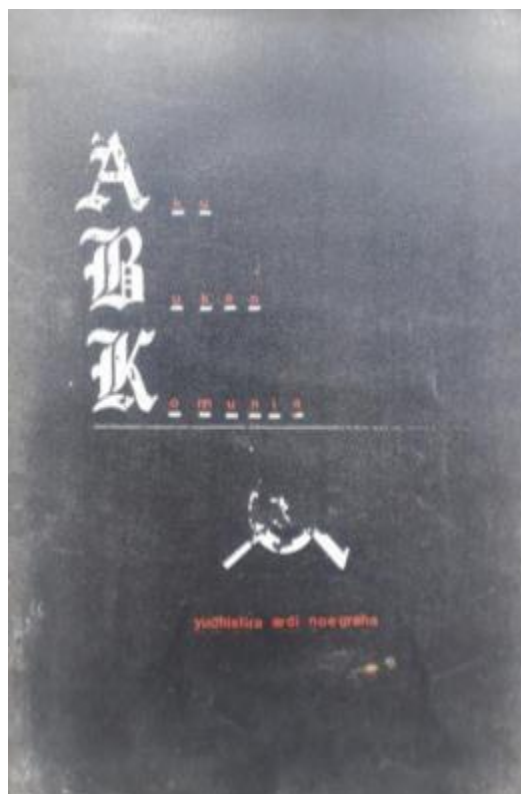


Fig. 5

Figure 4 is the title page of the original manuscript of *Aku Bukan Komunis*.

Figure 5 is the cover of the plastic folder that contained the original manuscript of *Aku Bukan Komunis*. On the bottom center part of the folder was a faded communist insignia in typeface on the cover. This was the folder that Yudhistira sent to both Gramedia for publication and the Jakarta Arts Council for the writing competition, and this was also the same plastic folder that led to me being rounded up by the police officer in Jatinangor for questioning at the local precinct.

Taryadi's anticipation to change the title was in itself the first act of self-censorship to avoid bigger repercussions in the form of state censorship. Yudhistira did not entirely agree to it because that was the title that made him win the competition in November 1977 which was endorsed by the government c.q. the Ministry of Culture and Education of the Republic of Indonesia. Despite the objection, Taryadi went ahead with the new title. His precaution was perhaps effective in getting the novel published, especially since even the smallest thing could draw the ire of the state.³³⁷

³³⁷ Interview with Yudhistira Massardi on October 10, 2017, in Pekayon, Bekasi.

Illustration for *Mencoba Tidak Menyerah* – *Kompas*



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

Figure 6 is an illustration to the serial *Mencoba Tidak Menyerah* that appeared in *Kompas* on Monday, October 16, 1978, a year after the original manuscript of the story won the DKJ award. This illustration, however, angered the government, c.q. Ministry of Information who noticed the communist insignia partially hidden behind the forefront male figure in the illustration. The government found out about it on the second day the serial appeared in *Kompas* and on that very day, the government made a phone call to the editor of *Kompas* threatening that the story be removed, or *Kompas* would be shutdown. While probably successful in anticipating the rage that the original title of the story could have provoked, *Kompas* failed to anticipate the fury that resulted from the simple mishap of including the communist symbol. Figure 7 is the illustration that began to accompany the story starting from the third day of its appearance, October 18, 1978. In order to accommodate the demands of the state while preserving a level of independence for the newspaper and respecting readers' wish to continue reading the story, *Kompas* changed the illustration by omitting the hammer and sickle and replacing it with the head of the eleven-year-old narrator-cum-main character in the story. The head shape was intended to distract the reader from noticing what was missing and to focus on the huge head that began to appear on the third day the story was run.

A similar incident took place five years later. On Monday, April 18, 1983, the popular Japanese novel, *Musashi*, was first serialized in *Kompas*.³³⁸ Due to the massive number of pages, it appeared in the newspaper from that day until the following year. Prior to the publication, the novel had been translated from English

³³⁸ "Musashi: Cerber" in *Kompas*, April 18, 1983.

to Indonesian by Koesalah Soebagyo Toer (1936-2016), the brother of Pramoedya Ananta Toer (1925-2006). He was hired by *Kompas* to translate the novel through his famous brother's connection with *Kompas*. On the third month of its publication, *Kompas* chief editor at the cultural desk, J.B. Kristanto, informed Koesalah that the government, c.q. the Department of Information under Harmoko, wanted the serialized story removed from print because of the translator's affiliation with the then disbanded communist cultural institute, LEKRA (whereas in fact he was not and had never been associated with LEKRA).³³⁹ Because at the time *Kompas* did not have available an alternative story to replace the serialized *Musashi* — what is more, it had also gained a huge readership, Kristanto negotiated with the Department of Information and came to an agreement that the story could continue as long as the name of the translator was omitted. When the story was published as pocket-size novel in seven volumes, Koesalah's name was still absent. The aftermath of this incident was that not only Gramedia but also other publishers, such as Gunung Agung, Panca Simpati, Sinar Harapan, and even Pustaka Jaya decided not to hire Koesalah Soebagyo Toer for future translation projects — a perfect example of preventive censorship by the publisher.³⁴⁰

Among the three authors, Tohari was the only one who had to work extra hard and felt disappointed with the publication of his novel in three series. A year after the third volume of his trilogy had been published, Tohari looked back in anger at the creative process of *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*. He even wrote a six-page essay, *Aku Hamil Mengandung Srintil* (I Was Pregnant with Srintil), which elaborated on the real event that *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* was based on, his personal aim for writing the novel, and his brief mentioning of the editing process which led him to anger and disappointment.³⁴¹

Being conscious and cautious about the perilous story that he was about to tell, Tohari developed, by way of preventive censorship, a unique way of narrating which he called '*mlipir-mlipir*' (Javanese words for walking silently on the periphery), which indicates carefulness, constant self-revisions, and simultaneously a direct self-censorship — a practice which he developed when he was an editor for the newspaper *Harian Merdeka* (1979-1981).³⁴² In an interview in August 2017, he told me that he wanted to protest the government for the injustice that they had committed against their people without having to take the risk of angering them. In

³³⁹ Interview with J.B. Kristanto on October 3, 2017 in Jakarta.

³⁴⁰ Interview with J.B. Kristanto on October 3, 2017 in Jakarta. Also see Sidharta 2014. Available at https://kbr.id/nusantara/10-2014/novel_musashi_dan_cerita_eks_tapol_65/51533.html [accessed on August 10, 2021].

³⁴¹ Tohari 1987. Private collection of Ahmad Tohari. Unpublished paper presented in 1987 in a seminar organized by Ikatan Keluarga Sastra Indonesia in Rawamangun, Faculty of Arts, University of Indonesia, Jakarta.

³⁴² *On the Record: Film Transcripts and Biographical Information. Volume 4*. Jakarta: Lontar Foundation, 2004.

addition, he was on his journey to seek a cure for the trauma that was caused by the mass killings of 1965 that he himself witnessed.³⁴³

He began his journey by writing his novel *Kubah* that was published fifteen years after the massacres. In the novel, he played it safe (perhaps a key reason why he was able to avoid censorship and political repression). *Kubah* tells the story of Karman, a naive young Javanese who, after being unable to handle romantic rejection by the daughter of a pious Haji Bakir, plunges himself into politics and joins the Communist Party. When alleged communists face massacre in 1965, Karman discovers that his closest friends have been killed, and he immediately runs for his life. Finally, though, he is captured and sent to *Pulau B*, where all political prisoners were incarcerated. (*Pulau B* clearly evokes *Pulau Buru*, the most notorious concentration camp where the New Order sent alleged communists). Tohari chronicles the experiences of Karman and his friends, describing in particular detail their experiences of being chased by the military-backed mob and during their imprisonment at *Pulau B*, describing horrors similar to those endured by many accused communists during those years. Presumably aware of the omnipresent regime, Tohari twisted the plot, making his character regret his communist past. Karman decides to return to his village and contribute to society by becoming a very religious man and sharing his expertise and wisdom gained during his imprisonment in *Pulau B*. He helps Haji Bakir make an intricately designed *kubah* for a mosque that the community is building. Karman is depicted as reformed, perhaps even redeemed. Despite the representation of the anti-communist regime's cruelty, this novel ultimately acts as a tool of pro-regime propaganda. After all, it shows that communism only leads to demise, and stresses that through violence the religious state reforms and redeems those who stray from the flock, and in its mercy accepts them back into the fold, saving their souls and bringing them back to righteousness. This strategy of *mlipir-mlipir*, while accommodating the generic narrative of bad communists, proved a success with the regime. Just a year after publication, 1980, the novel won the Yayasan Buku Utama Award from Indonesia's Ministry of Education, which can only be interpreted as an endorsement by the New Order regime.

Tohari used the momentum to write another novel, published in 1982. *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, his second novel, cannot easily be read as an endorsement of the regime. It speaks more bluntly about the 1965-66 killings by making use of elaborate characterization of the main female character, Srintil, a naive and illiterate *ronggeng* (Javanese traditional dancer often associated with eroticism and sexuality), and a male character, Rasus, Srintil's childhood friend and eventually lover-savior. Through Srintil and Rasus, Tohari narrates in detail the events leading up to the 1965 mass killings.

³⁴³ Interview with Ahmad Tohari on August 10, 2017 in Jatilawang, Banyumas. Also see Yudiono 2003, p. 5-7.

While Tohari's *mlipir-mlipir* proved a great success in his first novel, *Kubah*, leading Pustaka Jaya to publish it, Gramedia's considered Tohari's approach insufficiently accommodating for the final novel of the trilogy. Indeed, the first two volumes of Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk, i.e. *Catatan Buat Emak* (A Note for Mother) and *Lintang Kemukus Dini Hari* (Shooting Star) were well received and garnered a huge readership, but the last of the trilogy *Jantera Bianglala* (The Rainbow's Arc) was considered so sensitive that Gramedia refused to print it. The original manuscript of *Jantera Bianglala* detailed the ostracization of the alleged communists and the mass killings, and identified the perpetrators. It portrayed an emotionally damaged Srintil. After two years of imprisonment, she returned to Dukuh Paruk a different person; the society, however, still saw her as a *ronggeng* whom they can pay for pleasure. Srintil refuses to provide sexual services to Marsusi, one of the novel's antagonists, who later threatens to send Srintil back to prison for being an unreformed communist. Srintil is terrified by the threat. This image of a woman forced into sexual servitude and living in fear becomes an allegory for the way accused leftists were stripped of dignity during the Soeharto regime. According to Gramedia, this kind of narrative was not appropriate for the time because the regime was still at the crest of its power.³⁴⁴

As Tohari insisted on getting the novel published, negotiation took place between him and his editor Listiana Srisanti.³⁴⁵ This can easily be compared with the censorship under the German Democratic Republic where most books were 'arranged by negotiations between authors and publishers.'³⁴⁶ According to Darnton, East German editors often developed friendly relations with authors, who usually worked with the same publishing house, notably in the case of East German contemporary fiction, the *Mittledeutscher Verlag* (MDV) based in Halle and Leipzig.³⁴⁷ They worked together to improve phrasing and strengthen narratives. This kind of relation was also developed by Tohari and his editor, Listiana Srisanti. However, while the East German relationship remained mostly mutual until the very last stage of publication, which included the selection of paper format, the amount of paper required, the proposed pressrun, and the price, Tohari's relation with his editor was breached when the editor decided that no fewer than 40 pages in the first chapter of *Jantera Bianglala* had to be removed or partially re-written. According to J.B. Kristanto, Tohari was first asked to remove and revise the passages because, according to Gramedia's editor, those passages which Tohari had carefully written and became the central thrust of his novel were too sensitive under the current political condition and too vulnerable to post-publication sanctions.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁴ Interview with Ahmad Tohari on November 6, 2017 in Jatilawang, Banyumas. See also Andita 2018. Available at <https://lokadata.id/artikel/ahmad-tohari-kisah-ronggeng-dan-pembantaian-pki-di-pekuncen> [accessed on 10 August 2021].

³⁴⁵ Interview with J.B. Kristanto on October 3, 2017 in Jakarta.

³⁴⁶ See Darnton 2014, p. 157.

³⁴⁷ Darnton 2014, p. 183.

³⁴⁸ Interview with J.B. Kristanto on October 3, 2017 in Jakarta. Also see Yudiono 2003, p. 6.

In the beginning, Tohari welcomed and even accommodated the wishes of the editor, while still trying to keep in the essential part of the narrative in the manuscript. But after the seemingly unending revisions, Tohari gave in and followed what the editor had requested, i.e. deleting the part that both implicitly and explicitly mentioned the involvement of the state in the mass killings, including the actors involved.³⁴⁹ This practice of preventive self-censorship and unbalanced negotiation processes by the publisher hurt Tohari so badly that he expressed his anger and disappointment for the practice in the unpublished essay that he wrote in 1987. In it, he personified the novel as a baby that he had just given birth to. He had been carrying this spiritual baby for so long that he was now ‘*hamil tua*’ (in late pregnancy). Prior to the labor, he had made preparations from gathering strength and resources to asking help from ‘*langit, semut, pelepah pisang tiba-tiba patah dan runduk*’ (the sky, the ants, and the banana stalk that just fell off from its tree — all of which were references to literary producers and publisher).³⁵⁰ His relief, however, was temporary as he had to ‘amputate’ *Jantera Bianglala*.

‘*Cacatlah dia selama-lamanya. Ya Tuhan, siapa yang senang punya anak cacat. Apalagi cacat itu sebenarnya tidak perlu terjadi?*’

(He is now crippled. Dear Lord, who would want to have a crippled child? It was more painful still, since this did not have to happen to begin with).³⁵¹

In that essay, Tohari continued to lament:

‘*Aku lelah, sakit, dan kecewa. Dan apakah ada orang mau tahu bahwa tiap-tiap lahir sebuah kalimat, bahkan sebuah kata dalam trilogi Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk selalu menguras tenagaku yang cukup banyak?*’³⁵²

(I am fatigued, ill, and disillusioned. Why wouldn’t they care how much energy it took for me to write a sentence, or even a single word for *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*?)

In the sentence that follows, Tohari even insinuated a practice of self-censorship which he described as ‘*mlipir-mlipir di tengah kemustahilan*’ (walking cautiously amidst impossibilities). He claimed that

³⁴⁹ Interview with Anastasia Mustika Widjaja on September 11, 2017 in Jakarta and Interview with Ahmad Tohari on November 6, 2017 in Jatilawang, Banyumas. When I interviewed Anastasia Mustika, I inquired if I could get access to the original manuscript of *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* and its revisions. Mustika responded by saying that manuscripts were always returned to the author. Tohari claimed otherwise. He informed me that he did not keep the manuscript because it was taken by the publisher. Interestingly, the passages that were removed by Tohari and the editor appeared in 2003 print of the novel (now combined in one book). See Tohari 2003.

³⁵⁰ Tohari 1987, p. 5.

³⁵¹ Tohari 1987, p. 5.

³⁵² Tohari 1987, p. 6.

‘Aku kadang sampai berhari-hari mengernyitkan kening hanya untuk menemukan sebuah kata yang cukup sah mewakili aspirasiku.’

(It took me days just to find a word that would accommodate my aspiration).³⁵³

The 40 pages that were “*digunting*” (cut) contained what Tohari claimed to be the “*puncak-puncak aspirasiku*” (“the peaks of my aspirations”) and the “*primadona JANTERA BIANGLALA (sic)*” (the prima donna of Jantera Bianglala), without which his novel became lifeless.³⁵⁴ Tohari’s rumination on which words to choose and what sentences to write for *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, as well as his act of accommodating the hostile political situation under which he was writing his novel, became pointless, as the editor and publisher employed the same caution and preventive self-censorship that Tohari himself had performed during the creative process. Shortly after the novel was published, Tohari accused the editor/publisher of not showing “*penghargaan dan ketulusan mengungkapkan sesuatu yang sebenarnya berada pada dasar hati setiap manusia*” (appreciation and sincerity for someone who is struggling to reveal what lies at the bottom of his heart).³⁵⁵

The following screen-captures of *Jantera Bianglala* taken from three different editions will give a sense of the drastic nature of self-censorship from the publisher.

Ahmad Tohari’s *Jantera Bianglala*



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

Figure 8 is a screen-capture from Tohari’s *Jantera Bianglala* that ran as a serial in *Kompas* from September 23, 1985 to October 27, 1985. Figure 9 is taken from the novel that was published in 1986. Figure 10 is taken from the 2003 edition that

³⁵³ Tohari 1977, p. 6.

³⁵⁴ Tohari 1987, p. 6.

³⁵⁵ Tohari 1987, p. 6.

compiled the three series into one novel. Due to the changing nature of the political condition in 2003, especially after Reformasi, when freedom of expression returned, Gramedia had decided to reinsert the removed pages to this edition and the editions that followed.³⁵⁶

As evident in the screen-captures above, figure 8 and 9 contain the same story, sentences, and words, as they indeed belong to the same manuscript or novel. However, when figure 8 and 9 were compared to figure 10, figure 10 looks as if it belonged to a different novel. The first two paragraphs in the first two figures linger in portraying the destruction of Dukuh Paruk (Paruk hamlet) as something that is natural and already bound to happen, while shying away from mentioning actors. The first paragraph in figure 10, however, was very direct, as it immediately mentions '*tentara, polisi, dan paramiliter*' (the army, the police, and the paramilitary). The sentence that follows reads: '*Tembakan bedil masih terdengar satu dua dari kejauhan.... Ada deru truk berhenti disusul suara langkah sepatu yang berat, lalu berangkat lagi*' (Shots were fired, and heard from afar... Trucks roared and then stopped, followed by the thumping sounds of heavy boots, and then set off again).

The many paragraphs that follow further detail the involvement of the military, the Hansip or civic action, the establishment of detainment centers, military bases, the imprisonment of the accused communists, locking thumbs to restrain prisoners from escaping, their immediate fate after they were transported by trucks, all of which were a '*potret ironi sejarah manusia yang telah membinasakan kemanusiaan itu sendiri*' (irony of mankind who destroyed humanity).

Given the fact that actors were mentioned, it is understandable that these pages were removed from the newspaper serial and earlier edition. Interestingly, it is actually this truncated edition that had made Tohari the way he is today, together with all of his reputation that he enjoys as the 'people's writer' who was willing to take the risk of being accused as communist sympathizer for writing what was not supposed to be written.³⁵⁷ And like his first novel, *Kubah*, it also won him the Yayasan Buku Utama award in 1986 from Indonesia's Ministry of Education, which can only be interpreted as an endorsement by the New Order regime. On the flip side of it, in the same year Tohari won the award, on July 2 to be precise, he was arrested by the New Order secret police, the KOPKAMTIB, the state body from which most recommendations and even initiatives for book bans came and, therefore, regularly appeared in Attorney General banning decrees. At the military base, in five consecutive days, Tohari was interrogated over his motive for writing the novel. He was also forced to admit that he was part of the PKI.³⁵⁸

In the interview I had with Tohari, he admitted that no explanations and answers could satisfy them. It was only on the sixth day that he was released after he showed the interrogators his relation with Abdurrahman Wahid, then the chair of

³⁵⁶ Riyanto 2006, p. 20.

³⁵⁷ Krisnantari 2011.

³⁵⁸ Interview with Ahmad Tohari on August 10, 2017 in Jatilawang, Banyumas.

NU, Indonesia's largest Muslim organization. Shortly after Tohari handed in Abdurrahman Wahid's name and telephone number, the interrogator let him go.³⁵⁹ Tohari claimed that together with Wahid, in the 27th Muktamar (Congress) in 1984 in Situbondo, he formulated and finally concluded NU's acceptance for *Asas Tunggal* (the sole basis), New Order's imposition of the political ideology in the obligation to adopt Pancasila as the basis for all political parties and mass organizations.³⁶⁰ In the course of Indonesian history, NU has a long reputation of being more accommodating in its interaction with the state. Scholars, notably anthropologists and political scientists writing on Islam in Indonesia in the 1960s and 1970s, attributed NU's politically accommodative stance to the opportunism of the organization.³⁶¹ During the period of Guided Democracy, the organization benefitted a great deal from NU's support for Sukarno, especially in the form of huge subsidies that were channeled toward the development of the traditional Islamic schools under the auspices of NU, which in time, with the expansion of the State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN) throughout the country, had helped the emergence of a new generation of well-educated, younger NU elite in the 1980s and 1990s.³⁶² Its accommodating role did not seem to fade when the army intervened after the abortive coup in 1965. As a matter of fact, NU leaders welcomed and had hoped for greater access to power within the new regime. It even played a critical role in legitimating the rise of Suharto's New Order regime. As early as October 4, 1965 NU released its first statement regarding the events, calling for the PKI and its affiliates to be banned. In fact, NU and its affiliated bodies had also participated directly in the decimation of the PKI from the rural areas of Java.³⁶³ Support for the New Order regime was also evident in the appointment of Abdurrahman Wahid as a committee member commissioned by NU as a preparation to accept Pancasila as the sole basis of the organization while many other organizations hesitated and even opposed against.³⁶⁴ This makes it very likely that Tohari's political affiliation with both the top leader and the largest organization in Indonesia had not only enabled him to be rescued from further prosecution, but also kept his *Jantera Bianglala* to remain in circulation.

In connection with the editing process and the predicament that Tohari was put in by the state *vis-à-vis* his imprisonment by KOPKAMTIB which indicates states intervention, the state also intervened before publication was completed.

³⁵⁹ Interview with Ahmad Tohari on August 10, 2017 in Jatilawang, Banyumas. Tohari also informed me that the last interrogator comes from the same town as Tohari does. He insinuated this spatial affinity grew sympathy on the part of the interrogator, which in time, led to his release.

³⁶⁰ Interview with Ahmad Tohari on November 6, 2017 in Jatilawang, Banyumas. See also Riyanto 2006, pp. 43-57.

³⁶¹ See Geertz 1960, pp. 228-249; Castles 1966, pp. 30-45; Jones 1980, pp. 1-20.

³⁶² Kadir 1999, pp. 160-161.

³⁶³ See anonymous publication from Cornell Modern Indonesia Project titled "Report from East Java". This article details the aggression in areas of East Java was published in *Indonesia* no. 41, 1988.

³⁶⁴ The Union of Indonesian Islamic High School Students (PII) and their prominent patrons such as Deliar Noer, Syafruddin Prawiranegara, and Yusuf Abdullah Puar, were among others who expressed their discontent with this idea. See Thaba 1999, pp. 265-266.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, not all Indonesian publishers were equipped with an editorial board. Many small publishers or those that were extremely profit-oriented ran their publishing house without editorial boards. After collection, manuscripts would immediately be printed without taking into consideration the authenticity of the manuscript or the literary benefit for the readers. This situation motivated the government via the National Book Advisory Council (*Badan Pertimbangan Pengembangan Buku Nasional* – BPPBN) to issue a policy which stated that permits, financial aid, and other publishing facilities would only be granted by the government on the condition that the publishing house employed skilled editors and correctors. Responding to this policy, in November 1980, the Indonesian Publishers IKAPI organized a workshop and training for manuscript editors. Participants, all 34 of them, came from 24 publishers in Jakarta. The advisory council, consisting of editors from major publishing houses, argued that skilled editors would result in quality books that were in conformity with the state interests.³⁶⁵

Novel Print: Size and Layout

In addition to editing, choosing size and layout was inherently a practice of self-censorship by the publisher in order to avoid post-publication censorship by the state. The decision would determine to which literary stream one novel belonged. Generally, popular novels in the 1970s and 1980s were printed in pocket-book size, i.e. 11 x 8 cm, with which the font and its size were adjusted, either roman or sans serif size 12 or 11. In addition to these elements, the width of the text, margin, and spacing were adjusted in accordance with the size of the paper. This small size goes back to the tradition of printing *roman pitjisan* or *cerita silat* in the 1930s and 1950s as a form of pragmatism of saving papers, and other operational printing costs. And for readers, such novels were also very practical. This in time became inherent aspects of popular novels, in addition to their popularity and minimum literary quality.

A distinction in size was made in the publication of literary novels. Fonts and size might be the same; however, literary novels were printed in bigger size, i.e. 21 x 15. Almost all novels published by Balai Pustaka and Pustaka Jaya in the 1970s and 1980s were printed in this size, including: Ramadan KH's *Kemelut Hidup* (1977), Mochtar Lubis's *Berkelana dalam Rimba* (1980), Putu Wijaya's *Nyali* (1983), *Gerr* (1986) and *Dor* (1986), and Pramoedya Ananta Toer's *Bumi Manusia* (1980), *Anak Semua Bangsa* (1981), *Jejak Langkah* (1985), and *Rumah Kaca* (1988). Ajip Rosidi's short story anthologies *Perjalanan Pengantin*, volumes of poems, and translations were all printed in this size by prominent literary publishers, such as Gunung Agung and Pustaka Jaya. The only exception was his novel, *Anah Tanahair*, printed by Gramedia, in pocket-book size, making it fall under the category of

³⁶⁵ Badan Pertimbangan Pengembangan Buku Nasional 1980, p. 6.

popular novel despite Ajip Rosidi's unparalleled literary expertise and authority. It is interesting to note that when Rosidi had *Anak Tanahair* reprinted in 2008, this time by Pustaka Jaya, the novel layout was changed and re-sized into the size of literary novels.

Equally relevant was the book cover, which contained illustrations and, therefore, reflected the content of the novel. Novels of the 1970s and 1980s took this issue very seriously because illustration, layout, and size determined the category of the novel. Literary novels of these decades were almost always accompanied with abstract images or even without any illustration whatsoever, whereas popular novels tended to embrace a much more concrete drawing. The cover of Pramoedya Ananta Toer's *Bumi Manusia* only displayed the title and the author's name, whereas *Kabut Sutura Ungu* featured a contemporary Indonesian actor and actress who supported the filmmaking. According to Agus Dermawan, the cover did not guarantee the quality of the novel; however, the popular novel was consistent in presenting illustrations that suggested contents that were light, banal, and cliché.³⁶⁶

Technical matters in the publishing industry in their relation to state censorship mattered greatly. The existing premise was that the smaller the size of the novel, the less literary quality it possessed. Novels in pocket size were assumed to overlook literary quality and not offer in-depth or critical understanding of things (*tanpa pendalaman*), and were often considered to only provide entertainment to an exclusive group of readers, mostly female adults and teenagers (junior high school and senior high school students).³⁶⁷ Regarding the print and size, *Mencoba Tidak Menyerah*, *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, and *Anak Tanahair* were printed in pocket size, and critics have accordingly categorized them into this category. This was in part the publisher's decision as one way to navigate through the repressive state censorship.

Conclusion

The New Order government had an ambivalent attitude towards the publishing industry in Indonesia. On the one hand, it defended the interest of the media and publishing industry by providing subsidies for things ranging from reducing the price of prints and publication, to transportation, low-interest credit for purchasing printing machines, and training on management, reporting, writing, and editing techniques. But on the other hand, the government curbed the development of the industry through the regulation on publishing permits, so as not to become so large that it was difficult to control. The policy was run by the Ministry of Information, along with the Ministry of Trade, which regulated the paper and ink industry — two main

³⁶⁶ Dermawan 1981.

³⁶⁷ Sumardjo 1979, p.10. Also see, 'Buku Novel' 1977, p. 47-48. In addition, research conducted by the Center for Language Training and Development of the Universitas Indonesia found that romantic novels were most favored by teenagers, reaching a high percentage of 80.92 percent of the total 10,500 surveyed, whereas women popular novels that centered on household issues, and romance were favored by female adults as they offered solution to problems that the readers might have also faced. Nasution 1977, p. 63. See also Oemarjati 1979, p. 134.

ingredients for the publication — and the Ministry of Defense, which was responsible for domestic politics and security. They also controlled publications by selecting people who would sit in business and professional organizations that were recognized by the government. In this regard, the publisher and the state were two sides of the same coin. They might seem to contradict each other, contesting strength, and exercising power; however, the publisher was actually an inherent part of the state, and for that matter of the politics of censorship.

The historical development of publishing industry under the New Order shows that the publisher served as agent of development as well as partner of the government. They both encouraged the production of ideas by means of publication, while at the same time they kept such production of ideas from coming into being (complete). Novels were the products of a complex historical interaction that involved storytellers, their audiences, and a publishing industry interactively patronized, supported, or controlled by the state, and the larger society to which they belonged. They were inextricably linked with the history of censorship that shaped these novels, as censorship was internalized by both the publisher/editors and authors.

Finally, although internalized censorship owes its origin to state-imposed censorship, the internalized preventive censorship carried out by editors in Gramedia, as well as the authors, was distinct from state censorship, as it was generally negotiable, personal, and without visible sanctions. The editor and author or translator probed the limit of tolerance with state rules, and tried to discover what they could get away with. By removing pages, changing titles, and deleting illustrations, the editor handled its relations with authorities and avoided the infliction of adverse consequences on the author as well as the publisher.