

Silence in Indonesian Literary Discourse: The Case of the Indonesian Chinese

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This paper raises questions about the curious absence of ethnic tension involving the Chinese minority as a theme within the Indonesian literary canon during the seventy-five or more years of its history. The silence is intriguing given the salience of the topic in everyday conversations, national policies, as well as non-fictional writings and fictional works outside the officially sanctioned sphere.

The national literature of Indonesia has been curiously silent about an important aspect in the life of its immediate audience: the ethnic tension between the Chinese minority and the so-called "indigenous" people. Why this is so has intrigued me in recent years without leading me to any satisfying answers. I wish to explore this question and discuss why I find it intriguing and important.

This paper will proceed with a brief introduction to the ethnic tension in question. My main purpose is to suggest how important the matter is in the everyday life of Indonesians. In the next section, I will specify the locus and nature of the literary silence that surrounds this tension. By way of comparison, I will present examples of literary works outside the official canon of Indonesia's national literature that depict ethnic tension as a central theme. Finally, I wish to suggest the significance of this literary silence to understanding Indonesian literature in a broader perspective.

Culturalism and Racism in Contemporary Indonesia

Contemporary Indonesia offers a rare example of the official banning of a major world language. Since the rise of the New Order regime

under the leadership of (Retired General) Soeharto in 1966, Chinese language and culture have been officially proscribed throughout Indonesia. The only comparable case that I know of is the expression of Catalan under the Spanish Fascism of Francisco Franco.¹

For nearly thirty years now, printed matter in Chinese characters has fallen under the same category as pornography, arms, and narcotics in the short list of items visitors are prohibited from bringing into this, the world's fourth largest, country. In the late 1960s, there were reports of ethnic Chinese being slapped on the spot when found speaking, even privately, in Chinese in a public place. Such reports were insignificant at a time when citizens of Chinese descent (around 5 million or about 2.5 per cent of the nation's population) were systematically pressed to change their names as one of the ways of purging their Chineseness. All newspapers and publications in Chinese were banned, along with Chinese schools and mass organizations.

In turn, those bans followed the 1965/66 massacres of at least half a million people, apart from the exile and imprisonment of hundreds of thousands without trial. These political upheavals did not primarily target the ethnic Chinese, but a substantial portion of the victims were of that ethnic minority. The tragedy, "one of the bloodiest in modern history", as it is often designated, remains deeply embedded in the foundation of everyday life for contemporary Indonesians.²

The rise of the New Order regime was a result of a long series of political antagonisms between the army and the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), the largest communist party outside the Soviet Union and China. Soon after winning the upper hand, the army propagated its own version of the history of its political ascendancy. The military alleged that the PKI had masterminded an "abortive *coup d'état*" when six generals were killed on the eve of October 1965, and that the People's Republic of China had supported the coup. This marks the beginning of the extensive and gross form of racism practised against the Chinese, as part of the wider campaign against communist, leftist, or populist politics. Since then, Indonesia has seen no ethnic Chinese among its cabinet ministers or military élite.³

Despite this apparently gross racism, no one denies that Chinese business circles, along with the Whites, “honorary Whites” (that is, Japanese — see Wallerstein 1991 *b*, p. 80), members of the first family, and the military élite, dominate the national economy. Political economists have no quarrels with the proposition that the New Order government is, to a large extent, responsible for the major share which the Chinese play in the country’s economy (see, for example, Budiman 1991; Robison 1986).

The government prefers the Chinese minority to the “indigenous” entrepreneurs in major industrial projects, partly because the Chinese have at their disposal more capital, efficient networks and experience. These assets are, in turn, the fruits of a long history of the division of labour by race in the Dutch colonial economy. But the New Order government’s preference for the Chinese has a more important foundation. Unlike their indigenous counterparts, the Indonesian Chinese are people of a politically pariah status.

Having virtually no effective political representation to challenge the status quo and the regime responsible for it, the indigenous population often target the Chinese people when expressing their frustration. The Soeharto government endorses such popular racism. This is to deflect popular anger not so much, or not only, from the Western and Japanese bourgeoisie as Anderson mentions (1990, p. 116), but from the government itself. Intimidated by continuing racist hostility, this largest ethnic minority has little choice but to seek protection from the government. Thus the vicious circle is perpetrated.

To keep the system self-reproducing, the government provides the necessary security protection for the Chinese minority, in exchange for the revenue accruing to the state from this minority. Paradoxically, government officials must occasionally demonstrate to the public some racist-sounding measures against the Chinese communities in general and their economic dominance in particular. This is to sustain legitimacy and credibility among the indigenous majority. One can argue that the New Order’s racism is more formal and instrumental than an expression of genuine hatred of a particular race. However, it is no less real and consequential than other forms of racism. It comes close to the

status of “hyperreal”, in the sense Jean Baudrillard speaks of simulacra (1988, pp. 166–84).

The root of racism against the Chinese minority in contemporary Indonesia is politico-economic. This is precisely what the official discourse does not see, or refuses to admit. Instead, government officials have persuaded themselves and the population that the “Chinese problem” is essentially, if not exclusively, a cultural matter. In the dominant discourse, the Chinese communities are blamed for the popular sentiments against them that break out in periodic riots. Their alleged guilt includes being so “different” from the rest of the population, not only economically and culturally, but also biologically. They are so “un-Indonesian”.

The standard stereotypes of the Chinese Indonesians are comparable to those of the Jews in Europe or the “bourgeoisie” in the modern social sciences (see Wallerstein 1991 *a*). In positive terms, these include being industrious, rational, reliable, skilled, thrifty, and efficient. This is the reverse of the stereotypical descriptions of the “indigenous”: lazy, irrational, corrupt, unskilled, hedonistic. However, contemporary ethnic Chinese are more frequently identified in negative terms: unpatriotic, selfish, materialistic, stingy, cunning, opportunistic, philistine, and, worst of all, “communist”.

As stereotypical prejudices, there is nothing unusual about these descriptions. What is unusual is the fact that such prejudices find unrestrained expression in major official discourse. Since 1966, the ethnic Chinese have not been a speaking subject in public space. Sympathetic defences of them occasionally emerge, but almost always from individual outsiders who have a legitimate voice. This ethnic group is considered to be essentially a “problem” for the nation, and it is in need of “correction”.

Because the “Chinese problem” is seen primarily as a cultural problem, which spreads through kinship ties, the formal and apparently logical solution is also primarily cultural and marital. In the late 1960s, the militarist government launched a nation-wide “assimilation” programme (*Pembauran*). It met with what appeared to be spontaneous support from the general population in the overall climate of political acquiescence. The core of this official programme is the demand that

the ethnic Chinese give up their ethnicity. The standard recommendation is that they should “assimilate” with the locals in cultural and, ideally, in marital terms. This is the rationale for the changing of personal names and the names of shops and companies; the closing down of the Chinese press and schools; the eradication of Chinese languages, both spoken and printed form; the public celebration of the Chinese Lunar New Year; and, in Central Java, the series of restrictions on popular Chinese physical exercise, Mandarin songs in *karaoke* entertainment centres, and the sale of Chinese cakes traditionally consumed for the New Year celebration.⁴

The construction of “indigenous” and its “others” (in this case, the “Chinese Indonesians”) in this society dates back to eighteenth-century Dutch colonialism in the archipelago, which intensified the spread of modernity and capitalism in the Indies.⁵ The ethnic construction is not exclusively of the New Order’s making. In this regard I find Joel S. Kahn’s observation about the link between culturalism and racism very instructive: “a new kind of racism in which in fact culture and not physiological features provides the basis for discrimination and domination” (1989, p. 20).

Because the pariah Chinese ethnicity represents a crucial component in the formation and reproduction of New Order Indonesia, we can be assured that the state-sponsored *Pembaauran* programme will never come close to its stated aim, that is, dissolving the ethnic Chinese through “voluntary” cultural and biological assimilation. Nothing better illustrates the internal contradiction of the official programme than the government’s population control measures. While the government demands that the ethnic Chinese mix with the locals and give up their Chineseness, most governmental bureaucracies continue to segregate Chinese citizens and process their legal documents separately. These discriminatory procedures can be found in the administration of identity cards, passports, and marriage certificates.⁶

Inter-marriage has often been applauded. However, such inter-marriage will change neither the status of a Chinese groom, nor his children. No matter how deeply they “go native”, these males will still be

considered as “Chinese” in the government’s population registration. Following the patriarchal system, one takes on the ethnicity of one’s father. Sexism, as much as culturalism, is deeply implicated with racism.

The National Literary Silence

Given the significance of racial discrimination in the lives of the general population, and the ideological campaign promoting *Pembaauran*, it is understandable that the racial issue occupies a central position in the minds of the general population. It is striking that the Indonesian literary canon is almost totally silent about the matter, given its long tradition of literary “social engagement” and “didacticism”.⁷ Furthermore, this silence has virtually passed unquestioned in the literary community. There is a silence in literary criticism, theory, and history regarding the thematic silence in the national literary canon.⁸

A series of questions come to mind. Are there any legal or political constraints involved? These may not be as overt as official censorship. Conversely, one may ask why we should expect Indonesian literature to address such a theme. How significant is this thematic absence anyway? Is it a deliberate avoidance or denial on the part of individual writers, or is it more of an expression of collective and purely innocent lack of interest in the subject matter among authors? But can there be aesthetic interest (or lack of it) that is ideologically innocent? The remainder of this paper will explore these issues.⁹

I have no satisfying answers to the questions raised here. However, I have reason to hope that the ensuing discussion will make some contribution to the pursuance of new insights in the field. I will begin with the question of external proscription on writing dealing with ethnic themes in the national literature. In short, the answer is that there are no external or non-literary restrictions directly responsible for the phenomenon.

In terms of its official pronouncements, the New Order government has been seen to be rather repressive in matters of censorship. One fairly minor restriction in New Order Indonesia puts certain limits to any public discussion of SARA, the official abbreviation for *suku* (ethnicity),

agama (religion), *ras* (race), and *antar-golongan* (social groups). Nonetheless, this is far from total censorship of any discourse on those specified subject matters. Rather, it simply proscribes any open discussion of the issues from a critical perspective that challenges official policies. In fact, it is in the interest of the government to continue to reproduce the pariah Chinese ethnicity, which requires a wide and sustained discussion of the “Chinese problem” within the culturalist parameters of *Pembauran*.

Three other factors make the absence of the theme in the national literature more puzzling. First, in non-fiction writing, the issue has generated voluminous published debates (for a review, see Oetomo 1989). Indonesian commentators are not always in favour of government policies. The same issue occupies a prominent place in the rhetoric of government officials, journalistic reports, and private rumour. The dichotomous ethnic categories of *pribumi* (indigenous) and non-*pribumi* (non-indigenous; in effect referring exclusively to ethnic Chinese regardless of citizenship) have become commonplace. Thus, an idiomatic expression for saying “all sorts of people” is “men and women, young and old, *pribumi* and non-*pribumi* alike ...”.

Secondly, even if there were official restrictions on writing on the subject in literary works, they would not be likely to silence authors. The contrary could well be true. Throughout its history, writers of Indonesian literature have proudly adopted the Romantic self-image of asocial, anarchic, or rebellious individuals. In such a climate, overt restrictions of particular literary themes may stimulate, not discourage, these authors to write about those very themes. Taboos on discussing sexuality, corruption of the élite, state political violence, or aspects of religions, have not prevented Indonesian authors from writing on those themes, and occasionally provoking retaliation from the state or the general public.

The aftermath of the 1965–66 massacres is certainly a much more sensitive issue than that of the ethnic Chinese. Nonetheless, the number of post-1979 works of fiction dealing with this subject is impressive (Foulcher 1990). Seno Gumira Ajidarma has published a series of semi-historical short stories in *Kompas* (the most prestigious and widely circulated conservative daily in the country), depicting Indonesian soldiers’

political violence in East Timor. It is hard to imagine Indonesian non-fictional publications presenting the appalling terror even half as graphically as it is portrayed in these short stories.¹⁰

Thirdly, not all literary traditions in Indonesia are silent about the issues of the ethnic Chinese and *Pembauran*. The silence that we have been discussing belongs exclusively to the “official” canon of Indonesia’s national literature. To elaborate this point, I must explain the concept of the “official” literary canon.

Extending Ivan Illich’s observation about “vernacular values” (1982), I would argue that literary activities in modern societies today can be divided into a few structural categories, each occupying a position within a hierarchy of power. For example, I have divided contemporary Indonesian literatures into five categories (see Heryanto 1988*a*). They are (a) the official canon; (b) the banned; (c) the disparaged and subordinated (designated as cheap and “popular” readings); (d) the “regional” (that is, “non-national”, because they are written in vernacular languages); and (e) the non-literary (for example, non-fiction). Within this synchronic taxonomy, one category exists and has particular values only in structural relation with its “others” in a given time. Through time, individual works and their values can shift positions in the hierarchy. Some shift more drastically than others, but the hierarchy itself tends to remain relatively durable.

Indonesia’s national literary canon has its origins in the official sponsorship of original fiction in “native” languages that was initiated by the Dutch colonial government’s “Bureau of Popular Literature” from 1918. This marked the beginning of a state-sponsored and approved “modern Indonesian literature”. Successive regimes (parliamentary, Guided Democracy, New Order) in independent Indonesia have sanctioned the canonized works financially and politically, and chosen them to represent “modern Indonesian literature” in schools, national and international meetings of authors, and in historical writings. Only works under this category are to be found in the “literature” section of libraries and bookstores. In this seventy-five-year-old literature, the perennial tension related to the ethnic Chinese is invisible.¹¹

One exception to the above observation must be mentioned.

Harijadi S. Hartowardojo's 1971 novel, entitled *Orang Buangan* (An Outcast), presents the only case where the ethnic issue occupies a significant position in the narrative. The novel won a prestigious regional literary competition in 1967 (it was originally entitled *Munafik* (Hypocrite). Published by a major publisher, Pustaka Jaya, the novel quickly found itself on the official reading list for university literature courses. The title *Orang Buangan* refers not to a Chinese Indonesian, but to a male protagonist named Tantri who is in love with Hiang Nio, a Chinese schoolmate. Neither their love story, nor the ethnic tension involved, constitutes the central theme of the narrative. Understandably, discussions of *Orang Buangan* make no comment on its reference to the racial tension, and the general discussions of ethnic Chinese do not refer to this novel. Yet, no other fiction from the official canon presents this racial issue to the extent that this novel does.

Voices Outside the National Canon

Literary writings in various categories outside the official canon give much more attention to the Chinese–indigenous tensions. The following is not meant to be a comprehensive survey. It is simply intended to indicate that the thematic silence in the national canon is unique to that particular category of literary production.

The famous tetralogy of Pramoedya Ananta Toer (*Bumi Manusia*, *Anak Semua Bangsa*, *Jejak Langkah*, and *Rumah Kaca*) presents a relatively generous semi-historical account of the early construction of racial tension in this society and the significance of inter-marriage. More importantly, the tetralogy radically challenges the official history, including that of the Chinese community and of the birth of Indonesian nationhood. This must be part of the reason why the tetralogy fell under the category of banned literature soon after its publication in the 1980s.¹²

The theme of the Indonesian Chinese also appears in several examples of “popular” fiction where the national language (standard Indonesian) serves as the medium of narration. The short story “Babah Liem” by Patmono Sk (1985) presents a mixture of racial and economic ten-

sion between the poor “indigenous” and rich “non-indigenous”. The problem develops from the establishment of a big factory in a village, and the subsequently rapid commodification of village life. Babah Liem owns the factory and the village seems to have no inhabitants of Chinese descent. Instead of propagating the official propaganda for *Pembauran*, this fiction simply presents the plight of the “indigenous” population with no direct moralizing message. Its ending is a little pessimistic about Chinese economic dominance and its collaboration with indigenous bureaucrats. Like most short stories published in the “entertainment” pages of the Sunday editions of Indonesian dailies, “Babah Liem” is bound to be designated as “popular” reading, outside the literary canon as such.

Another “popular” short story, entitled “*Di Suatu Hari yang Indah*” (On a Beautiful Day) by Marselli (1986), presents a similar theme. Here we find an anonymous narrator, whose gender and ethnicity are unclear, recounting the life of a Chinese protagonist named Tan Sie Poen. In no way does this short story address the racial tension that exists in Indonesia. The narrator mentions but makes no comment about the protagonist's ethnicity, nor do any of the other characters in the story. The story takes place as if racial tension is either non-existent or unimportant in Indonesian society.

Popular fiction with the *Pembauran* theme also finds expression in film and television: for example, the film *Putri Giok*, featured on 12 May 1985 on TVRI, then the sole and government-owned television network. This film is blatant propaganda for the *Pembauran* programme, manipulating all the familiar stereotypes and prejudices. Giok (a Chinese woman) is in love with Herman (an indigenous man) and Giok's father, a rich businessman, tries cruelly to break up their relationship, before he is eventually “enlightened”. As might be expected, the story has a happy ending. A decade later, we see an extremely interesting case in the portrayal of A Hong, a fairly sympathetic minor character, as a part of ordinary life in Indonesia, in the highly popular televised series “*Si Doel Anak Sekolahan*”.

On 1 May 1988, TVRI broadcast its own film, “*Wajah-wajah di Balik Pantulan*” (Faces behind a Reflection). This film allows a Chinese

Indonesian male, Kho Boen, alias Pujo Semedi, to be a hero and a police officer. Like Marselli's "*Di Suatu Hari yang Indah*", the story centres around personal friendship and professional co-operation between the male Chinese protagonist and his indigenous co-workers.

The theme of the problematic ethnic Chinese in Indonesia has been a favourite in fictional works written in the vernacular languages. I can mention only briefly a few examples from two major traditions of such literature: those written in modern Javanese and the vernacular Malay (officially designated as "bazaar" and "low" Malay). But before considering individual examples from these two literary traditions, I want to emphasize that each of these traditions is older than, and by far superior, in terms of quantity of works, authors, and readership, to the officially designated "national" literary canon. The systematic denial of their existence, not to speak of their merits, has an element of overkill.¹³

Chinese Indonesians featured as protagonists in modern Javanese fiction as early as 1923 in R. Suyitna Martaatmaja's *Tan Lun Tik lan Tan Lun Cong* (Tan Lun Tik and Tan Lun Cong). This title is taken from the names of "two sons of a *singkeh* Chinese by his Javanese wife who remain behind when their father returns to China" (Ras 1979, p. 11). The problematic relationship of ethnic Chinese to the indigenous Indonesians, however, did not appear in modern Javanese fiction until the publication of *Tunggak-Tunggak Jati*, a novel by Esmiet in 1977. Both Ras (*ibid.*, pp. 26–27) and Hutomo (1978) noted the fact that *Tunggak-Tunggak Jati* introduced a new theme into modern Javanese fiction. Ideologically, this novel is still under the shadow of the official propaganda of *Pembauran*.

In the mid-1980s I found three works of fiction on the same theme in the Javanese magazine *Jaya Baya*. Two of them are short stories: "*Lien Nio Atimu Putih*" (Lien Nio, You Have a White Heart) by Retno Yudhawati (1984) and "*Pembauran*" (Assimilation) by Pierre Moerlan (1985). The other is a serialized novelette "*Tembok*" (Wall) by Dyah Kushar (1984–85). I have discussed the ideological significance of these three works of fiction elsewhere (Heryanto 1988*b*), particularly the subversive challenge in Moerlan's "*Pembauran*" to the official propaganda for the Chinese assimilation. Here I only wish to add that Moerlan's

"*Pembauran*" is extraordinary, particularly in its power to "defamiliarize" (or *ostranenie*, as the Russian Formalists of the 1920s called it) contemporary linguistic and literary conventions, and in its "deconstructive" twists against the official wisdom on authority, ethnicity, and sexuality. This is one of the most powerful pieces of contemporary fiction in Indonesia that I have found. It clearly deserves a separate discussion of its own merits.

Finally, mention must be made on the persistence of the theme of the ambiguous position of the Sino-Indonesian in fiction written in the Malay lingua-franca ("low" or "bazaar") by Chinese Indonesian authors. Romantic and marital relationships between Chinese and indigenous Indonesians already appeared in one of the first original Sino-Indonesian novels *Oey Se* (1903) by Thio Tjien Boen (1885–1940). Students of this literature have reported other works that deal with similar themes (Nio 1962, pp. 82–96; Hutomo 1978; Sumardjo 1983, p. 331; Salmon 1987).

It is only to be expected that these authors write on such a theme, since it directly affects their existence and collective identity as a minority. The Sino-Indonesian literary tradition offers the largest number of works of fiction with this theme. Incidentally, regardless of themes, no other literary traditions in this country have matched Sino-Indonesian literature in number of works, authors, and audiences. Under severe political pressure from successive regimes since the Japanese occupation in 1942, Sino-Indonesian literature gradually fizzled out (Nio 1962, pp. 156–59; Kwee 1982, p. 212; Sumardjo 1983, pp. 334–35). Soon after the arrival of the Japanese, "hundreds of *peranakan* journalists and authors were arrested" (Kwee 1982, p. 212).

Discursive Practice?

The foregoing shows that the issue of Chinese Indonesians has consistently been of central interest to Indonesian people this century, including authors and audiences of fiction and non-fiction alike. The few examples of fiction that I have mentioned strongly invite an area of critical analysis, especially as they concern the inter-relationship between lit-

erary politics, racism, and sexism.¹⁴ But such discussion belongs to another essay. My preliminary analysis of those works gives me no further clues to our primary concern here, namely, the thematic silence pertaining to Indonesian national literature.

That silence is intriguing in the light of three facts. First, there have been no external (that is, non-literary) restrictions on such a theme in the official canon. Second, this absence has been largely overlooked, left unquestioned, or taken for granted. This is not a case of active rejection or denial of particular events or statements. Third, the national canon constitutes the most dominant literary works, enjoying the best scholarly studies and literary criticism, and thus most susceptible to close scrutiny.

It is tempting to speculate that the theme in question is simply invisible, unrecognizable, or undesirable for authors of the national literary canon. But why? Since the absence is apparently unseen, and it has a long, uninterrupted history, the reasons for this indifference or avoidance cannot rest with individual authors. I find it difficult to resist the appeal of post-structuralist arguments in dealing with this problem. Have some sort of impersonal structures of semiotic dispositions (Pierre Bourdieu's "habitus", or Michel Foucault's "discursive practice") been responsible for it?¹⁵

As I stated from the outset, I do not have any definite answer. But I am inclined to explore the matter in the light of discourse arguments. I believe they offer some tenable, even if provisional and partial, answers. Crudely put, the hypothesis I wish to consider is that Indonesia's national literary canon constitutes, and is simultaneously constituted by, a set of discursive practices that do not allow authors (as well as critics, audiences, and students) to see the desirability or possibility of writing on particular themes within its given or familiar framework.

A separate empirical observation below will help substantiate this theoretical proposition. The theme of Chinese Indonesians and their troubled positions is also absent in the official canon of Indonesia's drama (see also Heryanto 1988*b*, pp. 200–1). An important incident took place in 1980, when the Jakarta BAKOM PKB (*Badan Komunikasi Penghayatan Kesatuan Bangsa*, "Consultative Body for the Internaliza-

tion of National Unity") held a national playwriting competition with a given theme: the *Pembaauran* of Chinese Indonesian communities. This body is not an arts-affiliated institute, and it has no prestige in artistic circles. The competition, however, attracted more entries than any other recorded competitions.¹⁶ More importantly, among the entries were Indonesia's most acclaimed playwrights such as Putu Wijaya and Saini K.M.

The incident indicates that under certain circumstances individuals belonging to the community of the national literary and dramatic tradition show a strong interest and confidence in writing fiction on the problems related to the Chinese minority in contemporary Indonesia. This interest does not find expression throughout the history of the official national literary/dramatic tradition. There is no clearly demarcated community of the national literary canon with certain exclusive thematic silence or preference. It is, therefore, fair to argue that the "mystery" lies in this official tradition, not its individual authors, nor the popular theme in question, let alone the repressive state or the market for such literary production.

It is important at this stage to stress that I am not arguing that the theme of ethnic Chinese should be or should have been found in the works of Indonesia's literary canon. There are no "natural" reasons why it should. But neither are there "natural" reasons for its absence or avoidance for an extended period. In fact, every literary tradition necessarily has a series of silences, just like every utterance does (Macherey 1978, pp. 85–89). But the nature and significance of each given silence cannot be universally determined.

It is important to ask why certain themes are dominant in certain genres or literary domains at certain times, but absent in others belonging to the same society and time. It is also clear that certain issues have escaped critical questioning for the whole seventy-five years of Indonesia's national literary history.

These questions serve also to raise broader issues related to the study of literature in Indonesia. Are there other themes which are dominant in the various literary traditions in this society, but absent in the national canon? Are they simply unsaid, or rather not expressible within the dis-

course of this particular literary canon? How important is the ethnic Chinese theme in other vernacular languages in the polyglot Indonesian archipelago (especially in areas where ethnic Chinese constitute a significant population group or economic dominance)?¹⁷ How does the case in Indonesia compare with the situation in its neighbouring nation-states?¹⁸

All of these questions are subjects for sustained and serious study. They not only open up problems in the study of literature in Indonesia. The question of silences within particular literary traditions, and their relation to structures of hegemony among traditions, touches on issues of importance for the study of literature and literary politics in general.

NOTES

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1. "From 1939 to 1945, 'books in Catalan were removed from bookstores and libraries and many of them were burned' ... Any public use of Catalan was proscribed; it was not permitted in any form in public or private schools." (Laitin 1989, p. 302)

The more common practices world-wide are non- or semi-official discrimination in varying degrees against the use of particular languages, and official bans on the use of particular languages in certain domains, occasions, or specific purposes. For example, on 7 July 1993, the government banned the use of English in all forms of advertisements and company boards in the cosmopolitan city of Jakarta (see *Jakarta-Jakarta*, 364, 26 June to 2 July 1993, p. 79).

2. There is now voluminous literature on the subject, and yet several key questions

are still unanswered. For a quick view of the matter, see a recent edited volume by Robert Cribb (1990).

3. Ministers of Chinese descent "were a regular feature of the revolutionary, parliamentary, and Guided Democracy periods" (Anderson 1990, p. 115). One must add, however, that Chineseness and officially designated "Chinese" top business figures gain an increasingly high profile in public culture since 1990 for curious reasons beyond the scope of this present analysis (for more details, see Heryanto, forthcoming). This is most visible in the weekly *Sinar*, first issued on 13 September 1993.
4. For more details of the various current restrictions against the Chinese Indonesians, see Suryadinata (1985, 1990), TAPOL Report (1993), Subianto (1993), Indrakusuma (1993), and McBeth and Hiebert (1996).
5. See Kemasang (1985) for an excellent study of the early construction of ethnicities and state-sponsored racism against the ethnic Chinese in the Dutch East Indies.
6. Contemporary regulations demand that every Indonesian citizen must always carry a valid identity card. Only citizens with Chinese descent get a special number on their identity cards, beginning with "0". In August 1990 the discrimination was supposed to be abolished in some of the big cities (*Kompas*, 19 July 1990, p. 7; *Suara Merdeka*, 31 July 1990, p. 2 and 18 August 1990, p. 6). In some cities, even private banks designate discriminating account numbers to distinguish clients with Chinese descent from the rest (see *Pikiran Rakyat*, 24 June 1985, and *Sinar Harapan*, 24 July 1985). Admission to universities is based on a quota system. In 1995 the government introduced a new computerized system of identity cards, wiping out special markers on the cards for ethnic Chinese. At the same time, however, the government claimed that it would keep a separate filing system on this ethnic group in the data base (*Kompas*, 23 August 1995, p. 8).
7. One minor exception will be discussed below.
8. I have found one other occasion when such a question was raised, and even then it was only in passing. See Suripan Sadi Hutomo's (1978) review of a Javanese novel *Tunggak-Tunggak Jati* by Esmiet (1977).
9. I have previously raised some of these issues elsewhere (Heryanto 1988*b*).
10. In 1992 Ajidarma and his two colleagues lost their jobs as editors for the news magazine *Jakarta-Jakarta*. They were held responsible for the publication of a series of interviews with eye witnesses of the Dili massacre in November 1991. The publication angered the Jakarta military élite. In an attempt to demonstrate loyalty to the powers that be, the magazine's top administration dismissed the three editors. The incident did not create any public controversy or protest.
11. Inter-marriage between native Indonesians (usually males) and Europeans and Eurasians (females) is a common theme in this official canon. In the writings of *peranakan* Chinese and Dutch authors, inter-marriage between Dutch males and

- native females is a dominant theme (see Toer 1982). In her study of "Dutch-Chinese Relations in Pre-War Peranakan Chinese Novels", Myra Sidharta notes that *peranakan* Chinese novelists (who are mainly male) wrote more favourably about marriages with indigenous rather than Dutch women (1990, p. 14).
12. See Foulcher (1981) for one of the earliest and best reviews of the two volumes of the tetralogy. Pramoedya Ananta Toer's non-fictional book *Hoakiao di Indonesia* (Overseas Chinese in Indonesia) was also banned in 1961 by the PEPERTI (*Penguasa Perang Tertinggi*, "Supreme War Authority").
 13. For a critical analysis of the denial and/or repression of modern Javanese literature by scholars, both Indonesian nationals and their non-Indonesian counterparts alike, see George Quinn (1983). See Claudine Salmon (1981) for the classic text of the rediscovery of Sino-Indonesian literature in Malay.
 14. Indonesian authors, publishers, and critics of literature in the national language, as well as in the vernacular are predominantly male. Most of the works featuring an inter-ethnic love story have a male I-narrator whose ethnicity is identical to that of the author. In New Order Indonesia, with the coercive implementation of the *Pembauran* programme, Chinese Indonesians who write fiction are predominantly women, writing in a language, style, and themes indistinguishable from those of their indigenous counterparts.
 15. Bourdieu defines *habitus* as "systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively "regulated" and "regular" without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor" (1977, p. 72).
Foucault defines "discursive practice" as "a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic area, the conditions of operation of the enunciative function" (1972, p. 117).
 16. The number of entries was ninety, or twice the average number of entries for the annual playwriting competition held by the Jakarta Art Council in the immediately preceding and succeeding years.
 17. For an example of a piece of writing in Sundanese about such inter-ethnic romance, see Sumardjo (1986). An example of a Banjar folktale about Chinese kings can be found in Artha (1976).
 18. Hutomo (1978) discusses several Malaysian literary works of the 1950s and 1960s that present the relations between ethnic Chinese and the Malays as main themes.

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