Reimagining the Postcolonial Cold War in Southeast Asia: Juxtaposing the Writing of Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Francisco Sionil José, Sadako Kurihara, and Ee Tiang Hong

Author:
Singh, Sandeep

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Reimagining the Postcolonial Cold War in Southeast Asia: Juxtaposing the Writing of Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Francisco Sionil José, Sadako Kurihara, and Ee Tiang Hong

Sandeep Singh

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Thesis submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis Title and Abstract | Declarations | Inclusion of Publications Statement | Corrected Thesis and Responses

Thesis Title

Reimagining the Postcolonial Cold War in Southeast Asia: Juxtaposing the writing of Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Francisco Sionil Jose, Sadako Kurihara, and Ee Tiang Hong

Thesis Abstract

The Postcolonial Cold War, a composite term proposed by Heonik Kwon, captures the situation in Southeast Asia of the period subsequent to the Second World War. It encompasses the experience of ideological struggle and the search for an identity in various contexts in the region. Two literary forms - the poem and the novel - are explored in this thesis as evidence that informs a reimagining. This critical reimagination proposes four dominant structuring features of the era. These features are expressed through the four literary works examined in this thesis, but also through the experiences that shaped these works and their authors. These experiences are 'Exile', 'Continuity', 'Death World' and 'Nostalgia'. These structuring features are integral to the literature of the Postcolonial Cold War in Southeast Asia and can be extrapolated to thematize the experience of conflict in the region.

Buttressing this argument, the thesis explores how the scholarly fields of the Cold War and postcolonial studies can be placed in conversation with each other, proving that this conjunction is especially suited to Southeast Asia. This thesis works with literary texts produced both between and outside of the dates understood by scholars to denote the Cold War. This 'decomposes' traditional political boundaries, and links Kwon's formulation to the broader postcolonial project. The thesis also explores and links Cold War literary readings to a search for postcolonial identity.

The texts and experiences of Pramoedya Ananta Toer, F. Sionil José, Sadako Kurihara and Ee Tiang Hong, along with those of Eka Kurniawan, Jeremy Tiang, and Ninochka Rosca, reveal that the Cold War in Southeast Asia cannot be examined without a conversation about the colonial experience and decolonization. In this way, the thesis demonstrates that the past is always present in selected texts.

Through novels and poems from Indonesia, the Philippines, Japan and Malaysia, along with an evaluation of retrospective contemporary literature, the thesis seeks to question the stability of the category of region, including Japan in the imaginary frame of Southeast Asia. Poetry proves conducive as a mode to communicate slippages in Cold War temporality and to voice trauma, and the novel allows us to read at once alongside and against the grain of the independent Southeast Asian nation state.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ABCC	Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission
ASA	Association of Southeast Asia
AWOL	Absent without leave
CCF	Congress for Cultural Freedom
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CPM	Communist Party of Malaya (also CPM)
JCP	Japanese Communist Party
LEKRA	Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat (Institute of People's Culture)
MAPHILINDO	Malaya, the Philippines, Indonesia
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MCP	Malayan Communist Party (also MCP)
MPAJA	Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese Army
NEI	Netherlands East Indies
NLB	National Library Board, Singapore
PKI	Partai Komunis Indonesia (Communist Party of Indonesia)
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
USIA	United States Information Agency
USIS	United States Information Service

Contents

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Introduction

This thesis deals with four writers, from Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, and justifies the inclusion of a writer from Japan as part of the framing of Southeast Asia as a region.It will demonstrate how works by Pramoedya Ananta Toer, F. Sionil José, Ee Tiang Hong, and Sadako Kurihara are related to the broader debates around postcolonial and Cold War writing in Asia – and more specifically Southeast Asian writing – asking how they link to our framing of the period. The thesis places these authors in conversation with one another, to illuminate the possibilities of a postcolonial, Cold War reading of their texts – poems and novels – that directly relate to concerns of the period in their various locations, as well as selected contemporary novels that in their aims are explicit in dialoguing with the past. As Jafar Suryomenggolo points out in the context of "leftist" writing in the region, "the experiences of the Cold War not only shaped the texts but also left their mark on social and political events in the countries where authors resided, wrote, and distributed their texts" (Suryomenggolo 2018, 6). This is instructive especially when thinking about the Cold War and how it both shaped and was shaped by the consciousness of the postcolonial Cold War.

Both the Cold War and the region are defined broadly, but with clear dates to bracket this period. The dates that these cover are 1945-1977, which include conflict in the region from the atomic bomb and end of the Second World War through to the end of the Second Indochina War, or 'Vietnam War'. These years address the main postcolonial Cold War in Southeast Asia as they encompass the important developments, especially in so far as these differ from the Cold War in Europe.

Southeast Asia as a unit of cartographic imagination is a product of the modern age, even though studies of the region have emphasised shared cultural commonalities (Wolters 46; Legge 18).The inclusion of Japan into a thesis about Southeast Asian imaginaries is relevant and useful as Japanese interactions with Southeast Asia, alongside the role of the Japanese Occupation as foregrounded in Southeast Asian experiences, help us work against understood and received understandings of the stability of 'region'.

In so doing, the thesis places into conversation the scholarly themes of postcolonial and Cold War studies, and also questions the concept of the region as a product of the period. This questioning of the idea of region is a key theme across the chapters, which allows the thesis to examine the status of contemporary texts that dialogue with the period in the present. These contemporary texts demonstrate that there is a continuous dialogue with the period in writing from the region. This thesis is therefore, at one level, a methodological inquiry into how fiction and poetry speak to bigger debates and how they intervene into these structures and discussions. On another level, the thesis demonstrates how we can build structuring features through both the authors and their texts, forming some conceptual tools to investigate the period in the region (Ricklefs, 2012, 491; Cheng Guan 2019, 5).

This section has been rephrased as follows:

Raymond Williams' idea of "structures of feeling" provides a productive way to think about the relationship between text and social fabric. Day sees an instance of this relationship in the way that "the Indonesian writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer …wanted to understand how art as a process experiences social life as a process, how social experiences come alive again and live on in art, and how history can be apprehended

through literature" (Day 2020, 3).This "overlapping", as Day puts it (Day 2020, 4), of structures of feeling can be understood within the frame of this thesis, especially if we think of how the literary works survey and inhabit different eras. Through this finding or locating of history through literary works, the text is merged into the context or set of contexts. However, this study does not pursue an archival base to justify its concerns. Instead, as a series of structures or registers for thinking methodologically about what can be imagined as a "postcolonial Cold War", literature is more apposite, deriving from Heonik Kwon's formulation of the postcolonial Cold War (Kwon 2010, 138). Thinking about the themes derived from mapping literature onto social and political conditions, one is reminded that they are not easily separated from various developments in decolonisation, appropriating formerly colonised knowledges, and working within and against the imperial language, or officially designated vernacular languages.

Southeast Asia is in fact a territorial construction and a product of the Second World War. While scholars in the past, such as George Coedes or D. R. SarDesai, included India as part of the ambit, this thesis has proceeded on the understanding that as much as the Indianised states of premodern Southeast Asia were linked inextricably to Indian influences, Japanese influence as a relevant factor during the twentieth century merits serious consideration as an internal factor in the region, rather than being external to it. However, while there is a notable absence of Japanese imperialism in the region, institutions, ideas, and texts circulated from Japan into the region and vice versa, so the Japanese dimension will be explored in terms of a shared regional history.

Moving away from thinking of "the Cold War" as simply a category of analysis is a key task of this thesis. Following Heonik Kwon, the thesis treats what we

imagine as the Cold War as instead "an emerging horizon and proactive aspect of contemporary history, rather than as a given chronological reality, and empirically as a slowly decomposing process that involves a multitude of human actions arising from concrete, structured conditions within and across defined locales" (Kwon 2010, 8).

While Kwon looks to destabilise the absolute end of the Cold War, I look to shifting away from a simple categorisation to invite further reflections on the shape of the conflict and its manifestations. From this, I reflect on what is, in some sense, the process of literary composition, echoing the remarks of the poet's subject in Derek Walcott's "The Spoiler's Return": "…I decompose, but I composing still" (Walcott 1986, 432). This aptly encompasses the move away from stasis towards a vision of an emerging and yet troubled creation, often inflected by death. Walcott comes to be of interesting significance, because he writes from a postcolonial, archipelagic perspective and his works do appear at times in this thesis in order to join the postcolonial to the Cold War. A reading of literary texts opens the avenues to new imaginative and discursive possibilities of thinking of the region in the period.

In examining the works of Kurihara Sadako, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, F. Sionil José, and Ee Tiang Hong, I offer the argument that their works form a compelling and important regional and transnational voice and offer us ways of re-reading the postcolonial Cold War in Southeast Asia. To suggest a re-reading is to perhaps imply that there is an established reading of regional writing in the first place, and while some good surveys exist, this is most certainly not the case. There are of course important studies on the writing from various countries, such as Vietnam, and some comparative studies emerging in Southeast Asian contexts, but they do not extend to the entire region. Further, most discussions of the Cold War in the Southeast

Asian region are still very much rooted in the geopolitical and at the level of state actors, with some notable exceptions emerging from scholars who want to challenge these distinctions, especially as "examples of Southeast Asian cultural expression examined here involved various solutions to the cultural dilemmas of the newly independent nation-states of the region" (Day and Liem 2010, 4).

The Cold War in Southeast Asia, as Merle Ricklefs notes, mattered, "but we should not overestimate how much it mattered" (Ricklefs, 2012 491). This indicates that developments in other forms during this period in the region could have varying causes, and manifestations. However, Ricklefs here does define the Cold War in a more traditional way, such that ideology adheres to political actors in his account, especially the United States of America as a superpower, along with polities in the region. The importance of external political intervention continues to be recognised in discourses about the Cold War, however, as historians such as Ang Cheng Guan have shown, "the so called cultural turn—and here I include the 'social' dimension as well—in Cold War historiography certainly expands our knowledge of the Cold War period and is to be welcomed" (Cheng Guan 2019, 12). The author perceptively notes, in his survey of the Cold War in Southeast Asia, that some of these new approaches are the "logical outgrowth…of a matured Eurocentric Cold War historiography…" (Cheng Guan 2019, 16). Thus, the shift away from this to emphasise cultural developments should also not be bound to Eurocentric notions, even as we embed the analysis sometimes in European derived methodologies, such as archaeology, to illuminate Cold War distinctions and approaches (Peleggi 2016, 107).

This expresses well the dilemma of the scholar who wishes to examine and prioritise regional developments around the idea of superpower rivalry, which was often couched in Eurocentric terms, which can be qualified with the obvious question:

how “Cold” was the Cold War in Asia as opposed to that in the West? Thus, in order to bring forward a more nuanced perspective from a more local or trans-local point of view, perspectives should be modified. This study approaches literary works and finds significance as “…the study of international literary treatment of the Cold War has developed only slowly over the past few decades and remains a field in emergence” (Hammond 2020, 4). The growing body of scholarship on Cold War experiences in Asia is then supplemented with the question of the place of the literary in the world, and also requires a nuanced appraisal of literary and cultural developments, which should take into account “the complexity of internal relationships within any ‘left’ or ‘right’” (Lindsay 2012, 5) And this complexity should be thought of as existing both within and without the works of fiction produced by authors speaking to global South experiences. As Pheng Cheah suggests, “they craft new stories of world-belonging for peoples in the postcolonial South by drawing on other temporalities that have persisted from precolonial, non-European traditions and foreground the tensions with global capitalist regimes of temporal governance and point to the opening of worlds”. Cheah goes on to note in the same remarks in his conversation with the world literature scholar David Damrosch that “there should in fact be as many world concepts as there are languages and cultures” (Cheah 2019, 309–10). This is relevant to our study as it creates a space for the literary works in question to produce new conceptual vocabularies that mirror other approaches in Cold War readings (Klein 2003, 5).

These ideas of world-belonging are not limited to one place. Certainly, as Day expresses, “no premodern South or Southeast Asian literary culture was the slightest concerned with the uniqueness of national character”. He suggests that a world historical context that appreciates how older Javanese texts and systems of writing

can reappear as influences on later texts, can mean that colonialism and subsequently nationalism cease to be hegemonic (Day and Liem 2010, 179–80). This displacement of structural predicates – such as superpower rivalry or ideological difference – while still valid too, goes for the Cold War, and yet their significance can be asserted to some degree. Thus, while we think of systems of writing under the nation, we must also pay attention to other influences and commonalities apparent in regional terms. As we can observe, language and writing also come to share cultural significance, even as the descriptors shift, and "flexibility is all pervasive", at least in Malay world terms (Maier 1997, 676).

This thesis argues three different, but related, points that will expand and contract within each chapter. The first is that postcolonial and Cold War studies are appositely understood as converging bodies of knowledge, rather than separate paradigms, and are united by the impulse to decolonise. The second is that writing in Southeast Asia allows us fragmentary glimpses of a response to dominant interpretive structures in critical theory and world literary models, in works of the second half of the twentieth century, which situates these writings outside dominant readings. The third is that, through an examination of a death world, nostalgia, and exile, the postcolonial Cold War is deepened as a concept and category of analysis. Writing is never always tied to these four themes, but they form a way of constituting the world, and by relation, being within it. Finally, the ideas around past and present are negotiated, but not fully reformulated, as the writings spill into the present, with similar concerns.

Each chapter in this thesis delineates major thematics presented in the works selected. These are then extrapolated to create registers of the postcolonial Cold War in Southeast Asian writing, the first being "Exile", the second, "Continuities", the third,

“Nostalgia” and the final being “Death World”. These are sourced from the authors’ works, in so far as the situations and texts they encompass relate to a broader scheme for thinking about the Cold War in the region, and further, these carry through to the present in retrospective writings. Overarching these questions are theories of postcolonialism and the Cold War. For postcolonial scholars, representations of centrality are placed into question, especially when “the centre is always constituted in terms of its own marginality” (Spivak 2014, 40). This unravels concepts of bipolarity to allow us to think about Cold War “peripheries”. These registers are the main conceptual ideas that link the reimagination of region in the postcolonial, Cold War context, and are addressed through the thesis chapters. Registers are important for thinking through these developments as they address the concept of region more creatively in producing categories for analysis.

The thesis engages with the intersection between politics and literary production, enunciated through textual examples in the work of the selected authors. It navigates between different scholarly frames but suggests that the postcolonial Cold War as a methodology for scholars finds fertile ground in Asia. More specifically, through select examples the notions of time, region and decolonisation as well as ideological struggle feature as part of bigger narratives and theories that developed during the second half of the twentieth century. An epistemology based on dominant Western models of representation is simply inadequate, but not entirely insignificant (Chakrabarty 2000, 6), to ways of reading that are germane to texts outside a “western” representative system. This notion of the outside is, however, not necessarily entirely divorced from the representation from or even within the “West”, as noted above, but the outside cannot be posited as a foil or complete “Other”.

The scholarship on F. Sionil José, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Ee Tiang Hong and Kurihara Sadako is extensive, but no project necessarily brings together these authors into a dialogue through their works with the themes of postcolonialism and the Cold War. Comparison often implies an othering of the subject: one that through words can create a new margin. Hierarchies are produced in these representations that create a new margin emphasising certain factors over others. But in relation to one another, the awareness of intervening power within the region geopolitically and also the disruptive nature of the rebellious ideal creates new possibilities for the articulation of postcolonial Cold War narratives. These four writers represent a form of examination of the postcolonial Cold War through playing at the margins of the narration of the time and the conflict.

In his chapter "Sites of the Postcolonial Cold War", in which Heonik Kwon calls attention to disparities between these two frames, he demonstrates how these disparities call for an interdisciplinary account. Kwon usefully points us to the disparities not only in global relations but the incongruities of meaning embodied or rather represented within the name of a precarious condition – *xoi dao* [in Vietnamese] and the fact that this name also refers to a delicacy of rice flour and black beans (Kwon 219). The double meaning signals the complex life worlds of terms that we employ, especially when we are using them in relation to real and lived experiences, as in this instance when metaphor associates the ordinariness of a delicacy with precarity and war.

The ability for us to think outside the realms of politics and yet still be political is quite fertile for scholarship, to think through vernacular expressions that extend into the everyday, and this study interrogates the categories of meaning that are produced through the literary. In Kwon's formulation, we can look at the delicacy

mirroring a precarity and becoming a stand in for it, which collapses the grandness of terms like Cold War into the quotidian and everyday objects and things, such as food. Each chapter explores the implications of the novels and poems in reflecting and shaping the social landscape. Thus, the social and the political are interrelated, and we witness the use of narrative strategies to reimagine and reinterpret how the experience of the period is understood. The historical narrative is contoured by this framing of the literary, and certain readings of historiography continue to be inflected with a mode of emplotment (White 1973, 5). This may seem uninviting for certain scholars, as "overemphasizing the non-political aspects [of the Cold War in Southeast Asia], important as they be, at the expense of the diplomatic, seems to put the cart before the horse" (Cheng Guan 2019, 4), but I would argue otherwise, stating that the literary helps to reformulate experience in the region while at the same time changing our thinking about what the Cold War was, and also calling our attention to disparities in regional construction as "given" facts.

The authors featured in this thesis do not always conform in their works to the trends of modernism or realism. They offer alternative readings to how we examine literary production in the period, and to understandings of the shape of the Cold War in the region, and of aesthetic choices. This divide can be all too simplistic, and it definitely reflects a way of reading in Southeast Asia, or Asia more broadly, that adheres to other possibilities of reading. These readings therefore construct a form of narrating the postcolonial and Cold War situation from a distinctive regional setting. Hajimu Masuda suggests that his writing of the localisations of the Korean War is always mediated through the "lenses of their own local contexts…eventually paving the way toward maintaining a particular Cold War world", and that we can write a history of the "*fantasy* of the Cold War, focusing on its imagined and constructed

nature as well as the social need for such an imagined reality" (Masuda 2015, 2). Importantly, in his study of the various manifestations of domestic struggles around Cold War events in countries around the world, Masuda indicates that:

> the actual Cold War existed less between East and West than within each society, and each, in turn, required the continuation of the Cold War to maintain harmonious life and order at home. From this angle, each instance of repression was not so much an end result of the Cold War but part of the engine, a component, of the Cold War, each contributing to the creation and maintenance of a gigantic imagined reality in the postwar world (Masuda 2015, 279).

The telling relation between the Cold War and the domestic front is key to our thinking about the conflict as a part of an imaginary, a fantasy as it were, that was produced by nations. Within this framework, or to borrow from it to think about the Cold War in Asia, we can see that the conflict not only operated in terms of an understood political reality, but also a social one, and the novels and poems produced relate in terms of how we read the fantasy as to how the Cold War was produced, but also reimagined and fragmented and displaced. From the various Cold War contexts studied, it is clear that the texts are not merely the products of a stable, bipolar, hierarchical Cold War imagination. The texts do not necessarily fit into these stereotypical imaginaries; instead they are part of conflicting ways of imagining what the conflict was and how it was experienced. The dynamic between stability and conflict produces a framework for rethinking the place of decolonisation and region in broader imaginaries. This imagined reality is much like the imagined community of Benedict Anderson, but while his bounded the nation into an "imagined political community" (Anderson 1991a,6), the Cold War region that emerges from the thesis is a sovereignty challenged through the exile of the writer, the critique of the imaginary,

and the distinct voice of the author. Overall, the works combine to reinforce the imagined entity that is "Southeast Asia" during the postcolonial Cold War.

Each chapter brings forward the themes present, and the authors are chosen specifically because their works narrate region in distinct ways that work against conventional understandings, and they often return to questions of the national and the colonial or the imperial. The work of Pramoedya Ananta Toer is seen as a key element in resistance to domestic political developments in Indonesia, especially in terms of the transition between Sukarno and Suharto's New Order regime, as well as the mass killings of 1965–66. His writing has been a major aspect of thinking about the Cold War and the role of art in the region, not least because of his commitment to political movements and later detention (Bahari 2001, 2–3). The novels of Filipino writer F. Sionil José parallel the national form while still being a site for Southeast Asian writing, particularly in *The Rosales Saga* and also in his own tenure as the editor of the regional journal *Solidarity*, which had a clear role in intervening in the discourses around regional identity and ideology in the period. Sadako Kurihara writes against war from Japan in traditional forms of poetry and free verse with an urgency that is echoed by current conflicts of the Cold War in Southeast Asia. As a *Hibakusha* writer, or a survivor of the atomic bombs, Sadako does not merely craft a career out of writing but writes poetry that is urgent and aims to change the world. Ee Tiang Hong, as a self-imposed exile within a larger group of artists that left Malaysia after 1969, expresses through his poetry a nostalgia for the past and a constant sense of unease in relation to the change in Malaysia of the policy to deal with race relations. It is in this spirit that the authors reflect in this thesis a framework for thinking through the Southeast Asian Cold War, even if they do not always conform to ideological confines or expectations of presenting a vision of conflict. Thus, the

superpower rivalry does not always play out in their works, but instead appears in influencing their decisions, not least aesthetic, and their work is brought to light to emphasise difference.

These chapters are then brought together with a retrospective chapter, which modestly attempts to capture the current state of some Southeast Asian writing in English that continues to grapple with (or is perhaps haunted by?) the Cold War period. The silence of the period, especially through censorial regimes in the region, is now coming to be negotiated and broken up in a landscape of political change. Art and the literary, therefore, are often but not always political, and authors often grapple with very real constraints and continue to both seek legitimacy from, and be censured by, networks of power and privilege. In the case of novels such as *State of Emergency* by Singaporean writer Jeremy Tiang, which is discussed in the last chapter, we see a deliberate conversation with voices silenced during the Cold War period: in Tiang's case, in so far as they were seen as either subversive elements or "Communist Terrorists" during the Malayan Emergency and in independent Singapore. It is important to address the relation between the ideological struggles and the art produced during the period studied, but it does seem that we can also locate literature of the Cold War outside the explicitly ideological – Pramoedya's novels are committed in their social realism but, as Day notes, his writing "bears witness to a world of literature that has other centers [than explicitly reacting to western imperialism], other histories, other futures that we should recognize, if not to attempt to make part of our own" (Day 2007, 193). These thematics then encapsulate the writers' work in varying but also interrelated frames.

Within the chapters, the works of the authors are brought into the thesis to elucidate the role and function of the postcolonial Cold War in various contexts: these

are constructed around thematic concerns or "structuring features" of what I think about as a literary postcolonial Cold War in Southeast Asia. Such a consideration of a historical era, if we think about ordering the thesis in such a way, is linked intimately to conceptions of time. As Prasenjit Duara, a scholar of Asian history, notes:

> All societies have diverse ways of conceptualizing the passage of time whether through natural cycles of the seasons, ritual or sacred times, and business cycles or through institutional rhythms. At the same time, certain conceptions of the past become dominant or hegemonic among different temporalities, such as the linear conception of time and history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Indeed, our very notion of history as an irreversible movement is inseparably tied to the conception of time as a linear succession of some bounded entity. Although linear time represents the common sense of our notion of historical time, I want to identify its uniqueness and understand how it became dominant in the modern world, its functional relation to competitive states, and how we might build histories upon alternative temporalities. I propose that we replace the primacy of the linear history of nations with a circulatory, interactive and transformative history. Local, regional and national histories are by no means to be excluded, but the analytical priority in this optic would be given to how these histories interact and loop with circulatory transformations (Duara 2015, 55).

When national history is often understood in linear terms, time is subsumed to the nation state and constructed in relation to the thinking of singular temporalities. The quotation above suggests a more transformative model of history that interacts with time, and that relates to more circular formations of the past and present. This is suggestive of a way of thinking about what has existed during and following the Cold War that removes the temporalities that are concomitant and parallel. This therefore invites us to think of how fiction is able to produce alternative temporalities. Cheah offers this formulation for thinking through how: "For [Benedict] Anderson, the novel

is an analogue of the nation that maps its social space for readers: 'the novelty of the novel as a literary form lay in its capacity to represent synchronically this bounded, intrahistorical society-with-a-future…'" (Cheah 2019, 238). From this, then we also have to think about how the nation is almost a parallel of the novel form, bringing a society into being, though this is not necessarily the case in poetry, with regard to the time produced through the asynchrony presented through poems and their structure, and this will be explored in the thesis. To think about time, poetry is often able to break down linear certainty, and yet still communicate urgent social concerns and intervene in a social space. In this way, the disruption to linear certainty that is provided by the "time" in poetry mirrors how Duara couches divergences within the space of hegemony of the Cold War: "we need to attend to the emergent differences, counter-movements, and resistances that crack, weaken, or sometimes strengthen the hegemonic order" (Duara 2011, 458).

Thinking about writing of resistances, especially in terms of counter-movements, signals a move into thinking about vernacular representations and also the influence of local factors within Southeast Asia on broader trends, but this influence is difficult to measure. In his book, which was published in 2000, much before a general turn towards more "global" studies of the Cold War, Mark Philip Bradley imagined how postcolonial Vietnam was shaped, and his notion of circulation introduced an important legacy of ideas in Southeast Asia that challenge dominant frames of Cold War histories as oriented from the centre or the West to the peripheries, which is the mode challenged by "New Cold War" histories.[1] What is most significant is how Bradley treats the Cold War as intersecting with postcolonial

[1] The study itself was published in the series of the same title, New Cold War Studies in 2000, and edited by John Lewis Gaddis, by then a major scholar in the field of Cold War Studies, and thinking about the historiography of the Cold War also has contributed significantly to debates between various schools of historical representation.

visions. As he posits, “the postcolonial visions of Vietnamese revolutionaries, and the place of the United States in them, also cast a long shadow in contemporary Vietnam” (Bradley 2000, 190). This then, in his relation between the “imaginaries” of each side, in a process of becoming, shaped what exists between “the postcolonial world and the American order-building projects of the twentieth century” (Bradley 2000, 192). The impetus provided has now come through more serious studies of how the shape of the Cold War was dictated from local settings.[2]

The literary similarly operates through this prism, breaking into many facets of how writing is both influenced by international trends – the localisation perhaps of modernism and realism – and also shapes these trends and speaks to ways of narrating time outside the global centre. It is apparent that the temporal is not merely static, as revealed through Mikhail Bakhtin’s chronotopes, refer to the “time and space invoked by a given narrative; in other words the ‘setting’, considered as a spatio-temporal whole” (Oxford Reference). Chronotopes are relevant to a study of fiction and poetry in so far as they contain within themselves certain spatio-temporal coordinates that do not always correspond to historical realities of the time when they were produced. These settings therefore allow time to operate distinctly within works of literature. This is relevant to a study that engages with works that do not always easily map on to the direct temporalities and circumstances of the Cold War in the region.

. These then allow us to “read” the event of literature, as a method of knowledge, and finally engage with our reading of new ways of knowing about the

[2] This trend is related as well through the scholarship on decolonisation, which often intersects with the Cold War. See for instance Cindy Ewing, “The Colombo Powers: Crafting Diplomacy in the Third World and Launching Afro-Asia in Bandung” *Cold War History* 19.1, 2019, p.1-19; Taomo Zhou, *Migration in the Time of Revolution: China, Indonesia, and the Cold War*, Cornell University Press, 2019. These two examples are not exhaustive but demonstrate newer approaches towards the conflict outside “dominant” centres.

postcolonial Cold War in Southeast Asia. As Day notes of Pramoedya's *Buru Quartet,* "the novels intervene in the Cold War", which as Pheng Cheah notes acts "'as an event to change the tide of history'" (Day 2020, 641). Thus, the role of narrative in shaping temporalities is significant, even if not always readily apparent.

Nation, region, and globe are uneasily brought together by scholarship on the subject of the postcolonial Cold War, especially as these concerns tie into development and Southeast Asia as part of the "Third World" more broadly. While the Third World as an idea "'moved millions and created heroes', and provided the elements for a new imagination for its cultural workers—people such as Pablo Neruda…" the principle of unity that undergirded it across broad lines "became a liability… rather than provide the means to create an entirely new society, these regimes protected the elites among the old social classes" (Prashad 2007, 9). Such questions are especially important to the literary, where full expositions of the contradictions of independent rule are exposed, such as in José's writing. In each chapter, we see direct links between the texts produced and the public space, communicating alongside and against power structures.

This is especially because questions of ideology, decolonisation, and independence are often blurred by temporal markers that are arbitrary. The concept of a "region" and knowledge of a region as a growing enterprise in the period help us to question how knowledge is constructed and for what purpose. With most of Southeast Asia enduring both colonialism and decolonisation, with the notable exception of Thailand,[3] inquiry into the legacy of both the Cold War and postcolonialism together in the region is warranted. Asian Studies approaches, especially in terms of grounding

[3] The context there is far more complicated than it appears. For a broad account of Thailand's numerous transitions politically, alongside the impact of colonisation as well as external powers in Thailand, see Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand*, 3d ed. (2014), especially chapters 3 and 5.

commonalities, are warranted in examining the relation between literary production, political power, social change and a sense of displacement and exile in the second half of the twentieth century. It is important to also note "that even the identity of the thing called Southeast Asia had not been known before World War II" (Winichakul 1994, 14). Considering the relation between the construction of region and war, especially when we think of the Japanese Occupation in the region, as well as subsequent decolonisation, offers us an opportunity to enjoin the experience of the end of World War II in Japan with the Cold War in the Southeast Asian region. Especially when we think of the construction of visions of regional order, Japan and its post-war role can be seen to be entangled closely with the region. In the poetry of Kurihara Sadako, the death world presented and the trauma faced overlap with Asian experiences. As with discourses on Cold War events and the related historiography surrounding this, a redirection in interpretative focus from the global, or systemic, to the regional sub-systemic "Cold Wars" is merited and highlights the importance and the currency within the scholarship, of a move towards looking at regional developments (Luthi 2020, 1). Further, working through these developments yet also complicating them, as the texts often do, is central to working within the frame of reference but also questioning it.

To be sure, we have to note a lack of mainland Southeast Asian polities from this study. However, a more ambitious move is to attempt to draw in writing from Japan, a power with considerable intellectual and political influence in the region, to Southeast Asia, one that will no doubt be problematic to scholars either working solely in East Asian studies or Japanese studies. Though this is the case, I believe this is not without merit. Looking at the work of scholars such as Takamichi Serizawa, we are able to recognise the links between Japan and Southeast Asia through textual

connections and translations. This is especially the case during the Vietnam War but is not limited to that period, reflecting a broader interest from Japanese intellectuals in the study of the region and translating various texts produced in the region (Serizawa 2020, 222–23). It is important to know, however, as Serizawa reminds us, that all translations are subject to various decisions, and contained "omissions in order to make the Filipino historians' works fit into Japanese society and culture" (Serizawa 2020, 226).

While some countries took a path of non-alignment during the postcolonial period in charting their own course, this was certainly not a foregone conclusion. With numerous external actors alongside the key role of the local political actors in the region, these merit further examination in terms of dynamics than in the extant literature. As stated, this thesis takes as its focus writers from Japan, Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia. What is seemingly a disparate set of nations, from both East and Southeast Asia, can be collapsed through thinking about the ways in which we see historical and literary commonalities. The first of these is the shared experience and the imposition of colonial ideas, institutions and actual military force of the Japanese in Southeast Asia. Questions of identity also find commonality in other places, in turn also linked to what is not present as opposed to what is present. This can be termed, as Thongchai Winichakul observes, "negative identification", and he provides this example from Thailand:

> A reporter said that he once teased a Thai about being a communist, but the Thai did not find the remark funny and quickly replied: 'I am not a communist. I am a Thai.' This is how the Thai state views communism as well. In a nutshell, the rationality of the anticommunist act (1952), whose model was the un-American activities legislation, was that communism is un-Thai in its ideas and its way of life (Winichakul 1994, 5–6).

These relations and their implications are important as they not only apply to local situations, but relate to similarities across the region, as ideology was mapped against traditional practices, and simultaneously rejected and assimilated.

The second commonality was the experience of the Japanese Occupation during the Second World War as an unmistakable post-war legacy in various countries in the region after the war. Third, the agency of pan-Asian ideas and their relation to intellectual movements in Southeast Asia in the first half of the twentieth century spills into the second, and concomitantly, the legacy of these movements is seen as either disavowed by national narratives in the post-war period, or incorporated in different and altered ways. This therefore links the scholarship of Southeast Asia to East Asia, perhaps rather modestly, and Japanese influence in the conflict allows us to reconceptualise the problematic of region as an epistemological concept. Atomic bombing offers a temporally foundational post-war moment from which to depart.

Finally, this thesis does not neglect, or find no merit in discussing the surrounding areas of Korea, Taiwan, or the People's Republic of China, which may prove to be similar comparison points for inclusion. However, it is arguable that other studies may productively do so, especially as studies will continue to explore these as part of East Asian studies, although a valid point could be made about including their interaction in Southeast Asia as legitimately as the use of, or choice of, Japan. These do not negate the need for East Asia or Southeast Asia as heuristic concepts and fields of regional study. They only call for a more open understanding of what is a region, and in fact the debates around Southeast Asian state and regional formation will be discussed. The concept of maritime and mainland Southeast Asia and their distinction is an important and useful one, but I would argue that these comparisons feature in other debates in regional studies, and not the one presently, as the framework

provided is, for all intents and purposes, useful to our reading of region. That it is useful is not a claim that it is comprehensive, or exhaustive. Considering the variety, breadth and scope of the languages in Southeast Asia, a single study will not suffice to explain the entire region, and thus perhaps the only scholars who have attempted a regional survey in terms of writing include various specialists in particular countries and regions. This is not to say, however, that a survey of Southeast Asia as a unit is therefore futile, as there continues to be a need for regional foci, even as globalisation threatens to collapse these distinctions.

The questions of regionalism and nationalism will feel familiar to arguments around Benedict Anderson's 1998 work *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World*. This is deliberate as the thesis engages directly with ideas around these themes. This thesis mirrors Anderson's study in that, as Anderson put it, it has a rather "strange shape", "intended to show the relationship between country studies, area studies in the strict sense of the word, and 'theory', as well as their collective embodiment in homogenous, empty time" (Anderson 1998, 20). And while I may not approximate Anderson's reach through his extensive fieldwork and breadth of insight, the thesis still aims to shed light on these themes, while emphasising "play" at the heart of the reading of the texts.

It is also critical to note how postcolonial scholars such as Partha Chatterjee critique the work of Anderson, especially in the way they view the postcolonial world, finding itself in the "heterogenous time of modernity" (Chatterjee 1999, 131).[4] Thus, thinking about time is important, especially how it is expressed in the situation of

[4] A deeper debate here would be on the notion of capital and the utopian time of capital in postcolonial settings, which is of considerable debate amongst subaltern studies scholars, but is outside the main aims of this study. However, Vivek Chibber's *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (Verso, 2013), as well as other publications in recent times, has come to question the "heterogeneity" or heterotopia suggested by Chatterjee and other scholars in terms of their arguments for historical difference in postcolonial situations.

postcolonial states decolonising after in some cases centuries of Western imperial and colonial domination. The time of the postcolony is understood in various ways, but as Chatterjee puts it, “history, it would seem, has decreed that we in the postcolonial world shall be only perpetual consumers of modernity” (Chatterjee 1993, 5), which indicates the salience of enjoining a vibrant postcolonial critique to the concepts of nationalism and area studies. This is because modernity, however it is constituted, can be reformulated through time existing outside Western conceptions, which is to parallel cultural production too.

Literature from disparate parts of Asia, especially with a dominant Southeast Asian writing perspective, offers a way of reading from the margins of the scholarly understandings of postcolonialism and the Cold War. Most extant studies of Cold War literature continue to be produced with a view to Europe or North America, or even in some cases the Socialist Bloc, so these studies must be enjoined to a broader survey of writing from various regions. This is because, necessarily, the scholarship on the Cold War period is growing in terms of regional conflicts and local contexts, and this shift into the experience outside plain grand strategy or global politics is significant, as it humanises the Cold War as a lived reality, but also as a real set of conflicts and events that were not quite “cold”.

The works studied are either written in English, in the case of the Malaysian poet Ee Tiang Hong and the Filipino writer F. Sionil José, or in acceptable translations by scholars of work by Indonesian author Pramoedya Ananta Toer and the Japanese poet Sadako Kurihara. This has to be clarified with a caveat that ‘acceptable translations’ depends on the evaluations of specialists. However, these translations are working to introduce authors to a global market of letters, which is expanded on in the next chapter of this thesis. While the thesis works with translations for selected texts, from

Indonesian and Japanese, the main focus of the study remains the thematics and the link to contexts from the period, not the commitment of the translations to complete authenticity. This may mean that some material is lost, and this is especially relevant to the major translations of Pramoedya Ananta Toer, where for example his original memoir is two volumes, and the English translation of the memoir appears as a single volume. I use the translation by Max Lane, which has been contested, especially by scholars such as Benedict Anderson, however, I also use other translations of Pramoedya's short stories, or tales, which correspond to a diversity of translations as part of my source base. The question of Toer's translation, or in fact his translators, is not quite the main issue at play, as my thesis is not a survey of the life or writings of Toer; however, I do accept the need for scholarly comprehensiveness, and in so doing, I attempt to bring in as much relevant literature as possible from translated materials to supplant whatever lack there may be otherwise. Neither is this an exhaustive survey of writing in Asia, be it in East or Southeast Asia during the period. The methodological impulse of the work of writing into the centre "marginal" renderings, both in academic scholarship and in literary terms, allows us to focus on fragments that eventually de-centre our readings of the cultural Cold War, something that builds on other scholarship (Day 2010, 143).

Rethinking how we can write about writing, in a literary sense, during a period of serious global political change and tumult that redefined the contours of nation, colony, and sphere of influence in the second half of the twentieth century, is a key aim of this study. This rethinking is done in terms of looking at the "function" of these works of literature as shaping and reacting to the context of the time. This uneven relationship between the texts and their times is not being studied from the perspective of reception studies. Instead, the thesis looks at how texts connect and are

in dialogue with each other via the various thematic concerns, alongside an explicit focus on the Cold War and postcolonial circumstances of the authors to a certain degree. However, this is not meant to be a biographical study; it only attempts to explicate why certain authorial decisions were taken if relevant, and to situate these, broadly speaking, within the context of the time.

The novels and poetry I have chosen offer voices that challenge divides that seemingly conflate sphere of influence and postcolony, contest the focus on the Cold War as a unique era as opposed to a broader view of the twentieth century, and expose the artificiality of the national narrative as a product of the times, as ways to rethink continuities and fault lines across these continuities. These can be seen as useful structuring categories, even if less explicit as influences, but moving along the grain offers quite a number of useful rewards as does going against it. My study is thus interested in providing a wide lens view without necessarily engaging "national" oeuvres or representativeness based on the centrality of these writers to established national or regional canons. The question of representativeness is a difficult one, since one has to think about various questions that are influenced by questions of aesthetic value and scholarship on what qualifies as worthy. Instead, the thesis demonstrates that the work of these writers can be read uniquely in this milieu, through broad transnational connections that are at the same time sub-regional and national. This thesis does not seek to deny the place of the works or the writers in those broader discussions, it merely displaces them to express a certain playful agency in establishing a literary transnational or even transregional space that sits at the margins of history, at the ends of empire and against the growing assertion of new nationhood. A 'play' around epistemic certainty is possible, especially when we look to work with

various concepts in order to uncover their assumptions and hidden meanings. This play can result in the production of new ideas.

The idea of play is central to the formulation of a question that deals with, but does not disrespect, a notion of a death world, as elaborated by Heonik Kwon. Playing at the margins of epistemic certainty is certainly a task worth interrogating, but it does not necessarily replace this certainty with relativism that is reducible to a hinging or an unsettling without substance, instead organizing around a challenging of the grounding of knowledge, and to destabilise while reinforcing the primacy of the text, and the Cold War situations in the specific instance. This is important because it does not undermine the "seriousness" of, for instance, the texts of the *Rosales Saga*, but it does indeed question the notion of the permanence or stability of "canon" formation in literary representation. Furthermore, it does not aim to dismantle so much as it does to displace. Thus, in this thesis, I offer sustained engagement with the literary as in itself situated yet malleable in the vicissitudes of textual formalisation and the generation of narratives.

This thesis works with novels and poems as its main sources. In so doing, it does not aim for comprehensiveness, but privileges these forms because they are primary to Southeast Asian literature. Similarly, because the writing of the period, and that of the writers selected, often borrowed stylistic conventions not always associated with "traditional" writing styles, these can come to represent alternative ways to give voice to experience and also a "new" way of communicating stories. While the authors borrow from local idioms, their works do not mirror the concerns of canonical writings, per se. Methodologically, I suggest that reading the works of fiction and poetry together offers a way of reframing four critical features, that are 'Exile', 'Continuities', 'Nostalgia', and 'Death World'. These have can be understood in

relation to time, postcoloniality, and the Cold War, as well as the scales of the national, regional and global. By placing emphasis on a transnational yet regional approach, the analysis places itself in relation to current debates about world literature and questions of minor literatures, but still communicates with an area studies focus, which is constantly under threat by globalisation. These questions of translatability as well as region existing in parallel and not quite synchronically with a world tie us into questions of time and the logic of the spread of homogenous empty time, as well as thinking about heterotemporality as a key discourse within postcolonial studies. The Cold War and postcolonial function, much like the "West", as ideal types of categories for analysis, and examining them in the literary, allows us to question the validity of such constructs within the life worlds at the margins.

The chapters that follow lay out my argument, which traces the work of each author, each having their own separate chapter. This argument is then placed into conversation with contemporary texts in a retrospective chapter, which features primarily novels that converse with issues of the postcolonial Cold War. The authors examined have written before, during, and after the second half of the twentieth century, and therefore their oeuvres are not limited to the period. But I focus on selected works that speak to the themes more clearly, and not their entire output, as this is more productive in answering the bigger questions and frames of the thesis than to open the scope to their entire corpus. This may certainly raise questions about representativeness and wholeness, but a study of fragments often offers a way to read a lack in the notion of "completeness", and similarly, the examination of, in certain instances, quartets, quintets, and whole poetry collections, gives some sense of fullness to the works selected.

While diffusionary models of history and textual production are questioned by scholars in history and literary studies, they still seem pervasive in our world. And despite this, it seems both ahistorical and inappropriate to deny the existence of key movements in writing and thinking, and to presume a world of writing outside the centre that never had cognisance of the existence of such movements. Simply put, structures of production can be seen as dominant and influential, but they do not explain everything, neither are they a single determining force on other contexts.

While the discussion of modernism and realism are both discussed as twinned phenomena in Cold War writing, especially along representational strategies pursued in both major ideological camps, across social realism as pursued by authors sympathetic to communist ideologies, as well as modernism promoted explicitly by the forces of American and Western funding and advocacy, it seems clear that two interlinked points can be made. First, these two categories have become apparent within the Southeast Asian region as well, with some clarity of deployment of realism as part of literary movements in Indonesia and elsewhere that are sympathetic with at least socialist objectives; and second, that these categories are meaningfully challenged and reformulated as well as deconstructed. The latter is importantly a focus of this thesis, especially as the writing from the region, much like the politics of the 'independent' actors of the region itself, tends to work against these bigger categories and moves towards a different means to imagine the Cold War, which is necessarily based in the postcolonial.

Modernism and realism are discussed as twinned phenomena in Cold War writing, especially as representational strategies pursued in both major ideological camps. “The West promoted modernism as the style which best reflected the freedom of the individual under the liberating possibilities of capitalism and democracy. Communist nations used socialist realism to represent the unifying abilities of the state to uplift the community and create social harmony” (Turner 2020, 35). This statement well expresses the way in which different ideological camps were represented in literature. It seems clear that two interlinked points can be made. Firstly, modernism and realism were present within the Southeast Asian region as well, in the deployment of realism as part of literary movements in Indonesia and elsewhere that were sympathetic with at least socialist objectives. Secondly, these categories were meaningfully challenged and reformulated as well as deconstructed at the time. The latter is importantly a focus of this thesis, especially as the writing from the region, much like the politics of the ‘independent’ actors of the region itself, tends to work against these bigger categories and moves towards a different means to imagine the Cold War, which is necessarily based in the postcolonial.

What is important is to rethink how we can write about writing, in a literary sense, in a period of serious global political change and tumult that redefined the contours of nation, colony, and sphere of influence in the second half of the twentieth century. Where I choose for grounds of comparison different writers who embody various literary “traditions”, they all express, either through their lives, writing, or both, a relation with political power in the period. This “strange” relationship between writer and text is a subject of lively and continuous discussion, but in some sense also allows us to ask what exactly it means to write between the lines of major paradigms in twentieth century periodisation: postcoloniality, the Cold War, decolonisation, and

national independence. While these may appear clear and intertwined at present, the experience of each at the time was not necessarily simple and involved as much complication as all contingent historical developments.

There is the issue of comparison without necessary comparability of form – at least in the case of different manifestations of literary form. These bring up questions of genre and form that can lead to questions of why a scholar would investigate both poetry and prose, as they represent different ways of speaking. Also, a simple examination of the literatures of Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines would speak to numerous "national" tendencies, and of course, it could seem "strange" that these have not often corresponded to each other, thus allowing us to ask why. Comparison for similarity is a particular aim, and it may be demonstrated in other ways than seemingly obvious relations.

The thesis begins with a methodology chapter that introduces questions central to critical scholarship around the authors and postcolonial and Cold War studies. The chapter explores how enjoining the postcolonial with the Cold War and submitting this as a category of analysis is able to productively create a framework for thinking about the latter half of the twentieth century in Southeast Asia. The chapters that follow are structured to situate the themes in a logical progression. Each with a focus on one author, they encompass the themes laid out above, of "Exile", "Continuities", "Death World" and "Nostalgia". We can loosely describe them as the past in the present: opening with Toer's *Buru Quartet*; the role of the dispossessed and betrayal in José's *The Rosales Saga*; the death world and potentialities for apocalypse in Kurihara Sadako's poems, and finally nostalgia and the politics of poetry in Ee Tiang Hong's poetry. Each of these four chapters is a variation on the broader theme of the postcolonial Cold War, speaking back to dominant discourses and singing in the

margins of the past. The thesis will then move to a retrospective chapter that offers a postscript on contemporary works that look back upon the period, as well as some concluding remarks after.

The first chapter on Pramoedya Ananta Toer charts the work of the Indonesian author against his exile through his works in The *Buru Quartet* and places these in dialogue with his memoir, *The Mute's Soliloquy*. The chapter argues that Toer's writing allows us to reread colonialism and nationalism through exile in a reframing of the postcolonial, Cold War domestic Indonesian state. Using a substantial historically grounded series of novels and charting out the relationship of his characters to the emergence of Indonesian nationalism amidst a late colonial Indies, the chapter shows that Toer's novels and memoir signal a reinscription of political change through the text, socially reinventing print and reflecting on the medium and its role in empowering a national consciousness. The Cold War emerges as a salient frame through which his novels were banned and circumscribed, and yet, also mirrors the silencing of alternative voices during the New Order era. This relationship between silence and speaking thus creates the relevance of the quartet in the imaginary of Indonesia and Southeast Asian writing, so often linked to political exile and censorship.

The second chapter traces the *Rosales Saga* by Filipino author Francisco Sionil José. Similar to Toer's writing, José's novels and his career as a journalist, and also as editor of the publication *Solidarity*, allow him to bridge concerns of both the colonial and postcolonial periods, as well as to chart out a national consciousness and regional discourse. Against the backdrop of Spanish and American colonial and imperial legacies, José's characters chart out identities that emerge from Rosales, Pangasinan, to then occupy a place within the nation, and the world at large. The five

novels, *Po-On, Tree, Mass, My Brother My Executioner* and *The Pretenders*, look to chart out identity that is at once postcolonial but also deeply invested in ideological concerns. This chapter is labelled "Continuities" because it aims to chart out how the postcolonial Cold War brought with it change but also deep continuities and influences that characters and the speaker have to navigate in order to produce a distinctive national narrative; yet it is tied deeply to influences both literary, in charting out the national novel after José Rizal, and in terms of social influence.

The third chapter, "Death World", examines Sadako Kurihara's volume of poetry *Black Eggs* or *Kuroi Tamago*, which reads the event of the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki against the geopolitical conditions of proxy wars in Asia, as well as thinking about the reading of the tradition of atomic bomb survivor literature as an urgent call to bear witness and to rally against war in Asia during the postcolonial Cold War. As a poet who is at once interested in both traditional and free verse poetic forms in Japanese, these are translated into English and convey the urgency of a critique of continuous warfare in the region. Sadako's poetry also communicates the necessity for us to think more closely in terms of the Southeast Asian experience and Japan as an actor within it, alongside notions of perpetual war. As a critic not just of war but of the structures that enable war, as well as the effects of war on mutilated bodies and countless generations of suffering, this chapter argues that the poetry constructs a "Death World", much as was discussed previously by Heonik Kwon.

Finally, in terms of our writers from the period, we see Ee Tiang Hong's poetry communicating nostalgia and loss of place as a result of his observations on domestic Cold War concerns, notably in response to the 13 May 1969 race riots in Malaysia, which led to his self-exile to Perth, Australia, where he continued to write

of his homeland. The chapter looks to dislodge poetry from being pensive but instead communicating continuous breaks and circulations in time, which also engage social formations. Through thinking through questions of language, in writing in English and emerging through colonial education, Ee's poetry works along and against the metropole by refiguring English to convey a Malaysian voice. Thus, as a chapter concerned with the postcolonial notions of identity and language, as well as place making and dislocation from the homeland, Ee's poetry also works against the domestic Cold War concern of the emergency and later the race riots which then led to the dominance and entrenchment of Bumiputera rule in Malaysia.

The retrospective chapter examines three novels written on the subject of, but not exclusively about, what we can generally think of as the postcolonial Cold War in Southeast Asia. This chapter surveys Jeremy Tiang's *State of Emergency* from Singapore, Ninotchka Rosca's *State of War* from the Philippines (and also in exile in America), and Eka Kurniawan's *Beauty is a Wound* from Indonesia. These novels retrospectively dialogue with the past, invoking the ghosts (at times as characters) of the period and are haunted by the Cold War as a spectre that influences the literary imagination in the region in a contemporary fashion. This is imagined through three broad themes: in *State of Emergency*, the lives erased by the independent nation during the emergency and various periods of internal conflict signal a struggle for rewriting the period in contemporary Singapore (and by extension perhaps Malaysia). In *State of War*, we see characters participate in a festival that in turn mirrors the broad history of the Philippines, not so subtly playing at the order created by Martial Law under Ferdinand Marcos. And finally, in *Beauty is a Wound* by Eka Kurniawan, the return of a dead prostitute is a lens through which we enter into the world of Halimunda, a fictional town in Indonesia, during the Second World War and after, in

which ideologies come to take different forms as well as occupations that are predicated upon the continuous exploitation of women's bodies. The novel writes against the social realist trend in Toer's work explicitly by introducing the fantastic and the macabre to work against the elevation of fiction and history as ideal types. The three novels brush against the grain of national narratives, leading us to a more complex appreciation of Southeast Asian writing. These, however, paradoxically produce region by writing along and against nation, which therefore highlights the similarity and perhaps simultaneity of the "era" we can think of as the postcolonial Cold War, and provide for the present retrospectivity to engage in a temporal negotiation of present and past.

The bringing together of contemporary writing from the region along with writing from the period is justified because these newer novels show us how the concerns of the postcolonial Cold War remain in the present, more than ever. Because of silenced histories, in various regional contexts, authors are excavating and reformulating the past purposefully in the unsilenced present, to rethink exactly how the period was experienced.

The works of the authors I am examining have been studied in isolated ways or in various comparisons with other authors, but they have not previously been brought together in the ways I have examined. These works allow us to see various facets of what we can think of as a period not only dominated by Cold War structures, but by questions of identity and place making, as well as the bridge between the colonial past and numerous futures. This being the case, they are political works in so far as the authors were all implicated in some way in the politics of the time, but they do not all become political statements. Neither is this thesis a biographical comment on the authors or a survey of the broad literary movements in each country. I instead

think of the aesthetic value of the works lying in strangeness and difference. At the heart of the project is an attempt to reconcile divergent notions of the aesthetic within a regional setting.

Chapter 1: Conceptualising the Postcolonial Cold War in Southeast Asia

The postcolonial Cold War situation in the Asia-Pacific, and more specifically, Southeast Asia, is punctuated with interpretive possibilities and potential, especially when scholars put into relation regionalism, literary expression, and the writings and lives of authors, with broader constellations of superpower conflict, and issues of decolonisation and independence. In terms of negotiating totalising narratives, situating a regional focus helps to challenge overarching narratives of global and national interpretive paradigms. Issues of chronology, experience, simultaneity, violence and emancipation, as well as nostalgia, are critical to Southeast Asian regional writing. Importantly, these strands can lead us to thinking through the Cold War.

In outlining the methodological approach of the thesis, this chapter expands on contemporary studies of the Cold War in the region and attempts to characterise literature as a foundational aspect of representation of Southeast Asia that at once reflects and constructs ways of reading the region between decolonisation and ideological conflict. This characterisation of literature is not dissimilar to that noted of film in the Philippines during the Cold War. As Francisco Benitez posits, "film's ideological value lies not only in its capacity to tap into popular anxieties, but also to provide answers or resolutions to social contradictions that cause those anxieties" (Benitez 2018, 24). This interpretation reflects the way in which the technology of film creates a particular "disciplining" reality. Novels and poems are both situated within the ideology of the Cold War, even as they simultaneously reframe that ideology.

Southeast Asia at a regional level is inviting of analysis from literary scholars. However, more often than not, there remains a dominant focus on country studies. Similarly, although there have been volumes of Cold War literature produced, the approach often seems to employ case studies within the region, or else focus on how specific experiences of conflict, such as the Vietnam War, have shaped global literature during the Cold War.

The issue of decolonisation brings up the question of what constitutes a "nation" and additionally, what comprises independent national consciousness. In terms of postcolonial theory, Leela Gandhi usefully points us to the fact that:

> while embodying the idea of universal progress and modernity characteristic of European Enlightenment, nationalism—it would appear—also incorporates the conditions for internal critique of its own 'foundational modernity' and further, that within the trend of postcolonial critique, or after it, the idea of imperialism has almost exclusively come to imply the processes and consequences which accompanied the historical domination of the 'third world' by the 'first', with the 'third world' designated as the proper object of imperialist histories (Gandhi 1998, 115).

Thus, using the colonial as part of the imperial framework, this approach also influences discussions of the Cold War period, as they similarly look at the three worlds and the interventions between metropole and colony that are then transformed into spheres of decolonisation. These connections are especially pertinent to Southeast Asia, a region often neglected in postcolonial theory, especially as scholars of key movements such as subaltern studies often cover the South Asian context. As Neil Lazarus helpfully indicates in terms of world systems theory, in critiquing postcolonial theory:

> scholars in the field have tended to pay insufficient attention to the fact that colonialism is part and parcel of a larger, enfolding historical dynamic, which is that of capitalism in its global trajectory. There has been a notable failure within the field to situate the historical projects of colonialism and imperialism in the determinant contexts of the development of the modern world system. (Lazarus 2011, 7).

This chapter explores a few critical dimensions to thinking about the relationship between writing in Asia, specifically Southeast Asia, Cold War studies (broadly defined), and postcolonial studies (also broadly defined). A series of methodological questions are asked and answered in this chapter. These questions include: how does writing in Southeast Asia offer us a chance to reconcile the scholarship between Cold War studies and postcolonial studies? How does the Cold War as a field of study benefit from such an intervention in examining regional/sub-regional writing? How do novels and poems afford us an opportunity to rethink postcolonial studies in terms of the political? Which current area studies approaches allow for similar perspectives? What methods in literary analysis are suitable for reading texts alongside social developments in Southeast Asia? How do the four registers identified in the writing by this thesis – of Exile, Continuity, Nostalgia and the Death World – provide a system of reference pointing to a methodological contribution within these fields of study?

This chapter's primary task is to explore how Cold War and postcolonial studies discourses are able to be put productively into conversation to explain situations outside the West in the latter half of the twentieth century, and more precisely, how the literary sphere is able to contribute to and reframe the discussion. An additional aim of the chapter is to apply hetero-temporal understandings of the period to allow for problematising the linearity of time and to offer a considered

means to thinking about the indispensability (and simultaneous inadequacy) of Western epistemological models. These Western epistemological models are broadly associated with hermeneutic and analytical traditions, as enunciated by Dipesh Chakrabarty in his work *Provincializing Europe* (Chakrabarty 2000). Thirdly, the chapter posits that place is not limited to the nation state, or to "local" situations, nor is it is necessarily mediated by the global. The regional is an equally apposite site for literary analysis, even as it is a product of geopolitical circumstances of the Cold War (Anderson 1998). In that regard, the circulation of writing globally and locally, beyond the region, does not negate, necessarily, its contribution to the "experience". The implication of this final point is that transnational movement and models of hybrid formations in these theoretical paradigms are not simply describing registers of actual movement, but also the placing into circulation of works of literature. This movement is not just the transmission of their meaning into conversations. It is important to know that, in the case of Pramoedya for instance, the physical movement of his books was curtailed during the New Order period, at times being published and then subsequently banned. In providing a conceptual framework, this chapter give prominence to the regional; inverting "world" and "national" literary frames to shift the critical telescope and thereby reorient our focus to regional writers and writing. The juridical and cartographical "absolutism" presented by the colonial state in Southeast Asia constructed an "internal absolutism, a right of state, which stretched far deeper/wider than any earlier Southeast Asian domain" (Anderson 1998, 318). This expansion of solidity to cartographic imagination then maps onto the works of literature in various ways, and scholars such as Odd Arne Westad and Lorenz Luthi have addressed regional Cold Wars productively in recent times.

While the postcolonial Cold War created a situation of constant flux, as an object of study it has definable methodological parameters. This is because the period has been studied extensively.

.Where the Cold War experience in Asia diverges from Western experience is through protracted armed conflict and struggle. This then locates very real conflict amidst the superpower imaginary of non-military (cold) conflict. The Cold War, as such, sits on uneasy theoretical foundations. It embraces approaches that identify the era as part of geopolitical, sociopolitical and economic struggle, and historians have usually applied these straightforwardly, without conceptual questioning (Gaddis 1997; Leffler 2010). But what characterises the interaction between the fields of scholarship that deal with postcoloniality and the Cold War is a lack of epistemic totality, or a particular dissonance between the concepts, evident in how the mediating force of academic study has made the fields disparate. To deal with this space between the two discourses, one must first consider how each field of discourse is limited and yet saturated with knowledge production, engaging questions such as geopolitics, trauma, experience, and periodisation. The fact that there is a dissociation between the two concepts reflects how imperialism was seen as being in retreat and rendered conceptually more and more empty through the period. At the same time, superpower bipolarity inaugurated a “speed” in worldwide developments that introduced new manifestations of similar yet different ideological positions. Models of bipolarity diminish horizons to a chessboard, in so far as these play games with space, but also chart out territories much akin to mapping empire, in a systematic logic that produces its own self-replicating associations (Brzezinski 1997).

In literary studies, the postcolonial is often couched in terms of a vehicle for the voices of the formerly colonised in engagement with and in dialogue with the

impacts of the colonial experience. And while we may ascribe the postcolonial condition most often to contexts outside the Southeast Asian region, it is worthwhile to be reminded by Benedict Anderson that, in Southeast Asia, most major Western European powers did possess colonial influence or played the role of colonisers: "only the Belgians and Italians were missing" (Anderson 1998, 4).

This lack of epistemological completeness in accounting for a condition that transcends distinct temporal horizons is often ascribed to contexts outside the epistemic comfort of the scholar who situates his or her gaze upon subjects within the western tradition. A continuous struggle to appropriate temporality from the totalising thrust of the colonial and postcolonial order is part of the postcolonial project itself. Achille Mbembe, in *On the Postcolony,* describes this lack through a positioning of African social formations in terms of temporal absence in the present. "[I]t may be supposed that the present *as experience of a time* is precisely that moment where different forms of absence become mixed together: absence of those presences that are no longer so and that one remembers (the past), and absence of those others that are yet to come and are anticipated (the future)" (Mbembe 2001, 10). This lack of totality is also critical to challenging the bipolar project of Cold War studies, in which the distinctions between time, conflict and the effects of conflict play out in memories of the death world.

Debates on the origins of the Cold War have occupied professional historians for over half a century. The explanatory force for these origins often relies on a very deeply rooted bipolarity that involves the appraisal of actions by the United States and the Soviet Union in superpower conflict. This thesis does not posit any strong challenge to the validity of such an examination of bipolar conflict. Instead, it asks about the totalising narrative thrust of the Cold War into regions, and how well

scholarship grasps these experiences. It certainly cannot be said with any authority that the Malayan Communist Party or other such regional organisations were always under Soviet-led directive, for instance. As Cheah suggests, "scholars advancing the Cold War perspective, therefore, are really speculating on the Moscow angle, or accepting British Cold War propaganda" (Cheah 2012, 32). Similarly, middle power foreign policy in the Cold War period has been demonstrated to have been active and productive rather than merely responsive to Great Power interactions. As it was for geopolitics, a similar notion could be applied to the ways in which literary expression found itself incorporating – but at the same time adapting to – strategies and forms from global "centres". This should be viewed as more than mere appropriation into a world literature model, or a Cold War one. In the case of regional writing during the Cold War, Day critiques Pascale Casanova's world republic of letters approach as being too static, arguing that instead we should focus on, "shifting polarities and an 'international' interplay between commitments to individual subjectivity, the nation, and shared postcolonial social realities from around the world that we find in the literatures of Southeast Asia" (Day 2010, 165–66).

The shift in Cold War studies towards a "global" approach, with all the limitations of globality but also the advantages of allowing the voices of actors who previously had no access to the narrative, makes for more sophisticated and reasonable evaluations of how the Cold War was lived across the globe (Kwon, 2010; Kwon, 2008; Westad 2005). Placing the scholarship in contiguity shows that how the Cold War was lived, especially in a regional sense, and how it can be linked to the experience and experiencing of "postcoloniality". This follows from a similar marginalisation – or lack – within colonial histories, "within this narrative shared by imperial and nationalist imaginations, the 'Indian' was always a figure of lack"

(Chakrabarty 2000, 32). This lack is implicit in Cold War readings, where ideological structures give rise to marginality, even as voice is given to sophisticated actors from the global South.

Postcolonial studies scholarship and Cold War studies are broad and intersecting fields, but at first glance, as noted, we see a disparity between the two. Scholarly observations have tried to capture various enquiries, both at the subject and methodological levels, of each field. Postcolonial studies can be seen as "a disciplinary project devoted to the academic task of revisiting, remembering and, crucially, interrogating the colonial past" (Gandhi 1998, 4). In methodological frameworks, especially in terms of literary studies scholarship, the postcolonial is often couched as a way of enabling voices of the formerly colonised to enter into dialogue with the impacts of the colonial experience. Historiographical works such as *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* and *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* by Dipesh Chakrabarty, written in part as a response to western interpretive tools, offer a challenge to the scripting of pasts in South Asia. Drawing on Gramscian terminology it looks to figures that at once embody intellectual life in the era of British colonial domination and rule, as well as the figure of the peasant and the subaltern classes,. These incorporate a challenge to the rendering of a global postcolonial experience through analytic and hermeneutic traditions emanating from the west. In these accounts, though primarily historical, Chakrabarty introduces us to other ways to enunciate the epistemic gap, noted earlier, which is often perceived as a lack. Walcott metaphorises the lack from a posited colonial perspective:

> These purists look on such ceremonies as grammarians look at a dialect, as cities look on provinces and empires on their colonies. Memory that yearns to join the centre, a limb remembering the body from which it has

> been severed, like those bamboo thighs of the god. In other words, the way that the Caribbean is still looked at, illegitimate, rootless, mongrelized. 'No people there', to quote Froude, 'in the true sense of the word'. No people. Fragments and echoes of real people, unoriginal and broken. (Walcott, 1992)

This thesis is sceptical of the ability of European theoretical models to explain literary voices from Asia but it does not ignore their relevance or importance. As Chakrabarty may have it, European modes of thought are both indispensable yet inadequate for explaining phenomena outside Europe and, as such, sensitivity to indigenous epistemologies is an important feature of analysis (Chakrabarty 2000, 253). While they operate in a broader scholarly engagement with "world literature", such models offer inadequate explanation of the validity of regional centred voices or the more localised forms of cultural production and exchange.

The bodies of scholarship on world literature and on regionalism are not usually linked because of a disconnect between area studies and the discipline of literary studies. Translation is one lens that can bring together both elements. Regionalism has an interesting history as a sub-field, but even the advent of global regions is a by-product of the modern Cold War. Albert Lau argues that "it was the Cold War that subsequently thrust the newly constituted 'region' into the international stage" (Lau 2012, 4). This regionalism, very similar in my view to Anderson's conception of nationalism, exists in various conceptual forms but is often philosophically marred by simplicity.

A distinction must be made, however, to distinguish regionalism from nationalism, which can be mapped, as Amitav Acharya explains "from external, imperial and orientalist constructions of Southeast Asia to internal, indigenous, and regional constructions" (Acharya 2012l, 4), and this is relevant as this shift occurred during the Cold War.

The importance of translatability within a world market of letters is apparent, especially for the construction and dissemination of ideas into worldly spaces. And the slippages created by translation can produce generative possibilities, especially considering the various productions of the novels or poems as historical products, and therefore, these also speak to various world markets constructed by the Cold War. It is useful to recall Razif Bahari's use of Mikhail Bakhtin to illustrate Pramoedya Ananta Toer's "linguistic predicament" in enunciating oneself, especially through a conflicted protagonist embracing the coloniser's language and departing from his traditional Javanese: "The world in language is half someone else's" (Bahari 2007, 5). Bakhtin's phrasing allows us to question the dominance of the national framework of a unifying language, exposing its postcolonial displacement of other languages and the provincialising of other linguistic worlds. Enunciation within vernacular worlds, however, does not exist in a vacuum and indeed dialogues with the present.

A critical self-awareness about language and the vantage point of English as an entry point is apposite in accessing these texts. For a Sinophone scholar or a scholar interested in Sinophone narratives, for instance, those will offer on the Cold War in the region, especially as I deal with writers from Malaya where the emergency is covered substantially, as a Cold War conflict and otherwise, in Chinese literature, but also in other contexts in the region, which are outside the purview of this thesis.My attempt to deal with Chinese language materials is relegated to the margins, as I am

not fluent in the language, but I do seek to have some work speak, especially in the retrospective chapter, where Jeremy Tiang's 2017 novel *State of Emergency* is examined to enunciate this point. Tiang incorporates into his (admittedly English language) text the perspectives of various dialect speakers of Chinese and the perspectives of the guerrillas within the Malayan Emergency and related events in Singapore's history, which allows a starting point for commentary through this linguistic position.

The importance of translatability within a world market of letters is apparent, especially though the construction and dissemination of ideas into worldly spaces. In Emily Apter's formulation, one can see the determining power of a global book market; "this drive toward a transnationally translatable monoculture is supported by the fact that linguistic superpowers increasingly call the shots and turn once formidable competitors (European languages) into gladiators fighting among themselves for global market share" (Apter 2006, 3). Her telling question, "in the marketing of Third World difference, what sells?" (Apter 2006, 4y–255), leads us to question the notion of "innocent" translations or the possibility of representativeness without politics. Thus, the act of translation is also a political one. As accomplished literary translator Max Lane notes in an interview, he wanted to translate writers such as W. S. Rendra and Pramoedya because he wanted to expose good writing to an English readership, but simultaneously, such a program of translation "is a result of another one of the crimes of the Suharto regime, namely, that it stopped the teaching of Indonesian literature in schools" (Lane 2020). Similarly, he sees his work as a translation of "ideology and perspective, not just text", a comment which serves as a guide to think along the choices made in the translations, and their repercussions for his own diplomatic career, which were negative (Lane 2020). Translation is therefore

a critical concept in the thesis, one which continues to allow a broader readership, but that illuminates the value of "political" texts. It also can be pointed out that the translation of *Hibakusha* is "bomb affected people", but under Japanese law, the term broadens to "people who were exposed directly to an atomic bomb or its radioactive fallout as well as people who were exposed to the bombs in their mother's wombs." Similarly, the consequences are even broader, including those that experienced the effects of radiation and trauma (Atomic Scientists 2015, 3). Thus, translating a term often spills into various meanings, and communicates a cultural significance which we attempt to recuperate in our own understanding.

This is a useful question to think about when examining the work of Ee, as his work is separated quite distinctly from work in Malay in the Malaysian context. As is evidenced, the novel or poem in Malay conveys a distinct set of concerns that can be charted to concerns over social change in the Malay world, not just in the national setting (Hooker 2000, 9). For Ee's poetry, this is necessarily a displacement for an individual who could not really depart from the Malayan experience, but whose experience is mediated through a predetermined idea of race relations that is in line with the state policy of multiculturalism and tempered by the fiction of peaceful interaction between them. The poetry of Ee has more in common, arguably, with the poetry of Singaporean poets such as Edwin Thumboo and Kirpal Singh than with other Malaysian poets contemporaneous to his work, such that their commonalities potentially attest to a common tradition. This division also heralds the separation of Malaysia and Singapore in 1965 and is equally a product of invented traditions, of "history's indifference to the common man" (Singh 2009, 32).

The polyphonic nature of Southeast Asia, however, makes comparability a difficult task, especially thinking through so many varieties of regional and local

languages, even for authors able to operate outside the nation state. Though this is the case, many authors within the region are writing in "national" languages, which are outside specific dialects, or writing within broader inherited languages.

In fact, the field of Cold War studies is yet to disentangle itself from an overwhelming reliance on heuristic models related to politics and its related subjects, for which the study of literature and aesthetic choices in the field open new dialogues, especially, to take one example, modernist literature: "the much messier, much more conflicted, but still vital role modernist literature and the other arts played in Cold War programs" (Barnhisel 2015, 10). The recent increase in scholarship and volumes dedicated to Cold War writing is an impetus for this thesis and influences the direction the thesis takes. The questions posed by this scholarship show how the Cold War was as much a battle over contesting ideas as it was a battle over contesting spheres of influence (Hammond 2020, 3). Within a given context, we are able to see the dynamics between censorial regimes, subversive literature, and the particular ideological conceptions of aesthetics (especially in terms of modernism and realism, but also more broadly). Similarly, it exposes the thinking of the Cold War as a past fact without thinking through how it was "not merely a question of time but also, in significant measure, a moral question: Which side of the bipolarized human community was more responsible for bringing about the global order and engendering political and military crises?" (Kwon 2010, 2). Expanding this to a moral question then makes us shift our perspectives in terms of the character of ideological conflict.

Scholarship investigating Cold War cultural diplomacy and the relationship between the state as an entity, archival production and works of literature, explicates experiences of what can be described as the cultural Cold War. This can be seen in the influential works of Frances Stonor Saunders (2000) and Andrew N. Rubin (2012),

specifically in *Who Paid the Piper: the CIA and the Cultural Cold War* and *Archives of Authority: Empire, Culture and the Cold War.* These two US and European focused studies are central to any study of cultural production in the Cold War and are, as their titles suggest, concerned with the power of state actors and organisations in influencing cultural production, be it an orchestra or novels by George Orwell. While Andrew Hammond's edited volumes on the Cold War are instructive, because they bring together collections of authors interested in writing during the conflict and are primarily focused on the various global manifestations of the Cold War through literature, this thesis argues that regional studies and an area studies approach can contribute productively to thinking about questions of representation, utopia, and even postcolonial legacy, as well as identity. They also complicate and give nuance to simplistic understandings of state linked funding and influence, as will be demonstrated in the chapter on the Philippines around the controversy of funding from the Congress of Cultural Freedom linked to F. Sionil José.

A literary history of the second half of the twentieth century cannot simply be thought of through centre-periphery modes of production, as this is too narrow. There is a plurality of spaces. Thinking around the postcolony often spills across disciplines and encourages scholars to think beyond merely historical or literary approaches to call into question notions of agency and social change, especially in creating vocabularies that make this possible. If we are to accept, like Graham Huggan, that postcolonial criticism "reinvigorates the spirit of anticolonial resistance—the revolutionary spirit if you will—while simultaneously recognizing the need to modify the vocabularies that surround it" (Huggan 2013, 4-5), then we should embark on a quest to reformulate postcolonial categories for their Cold War purposes.

Literature functions not only as a space for the discourse of the nation in a bounded and serialised form, but in periods such as the Cold War emerges as a counter-discourse that is seen as dangerous or meriting censorial scrutiny. This cannot be seen as being part of subaltern resistance, even though, as numerous postcolonial scholars have shown, the novel can illuminate such subaltern voices and be representative of them. I believe the poem, similarly, functions as a platform for this counter-discourse, even when it is a civilisational marker, especially in terms of *Hibakusha* poetry, as the poetry reads along and against traditions. Heonik Kwon explores Christian Appy's interest in the question of a struggle for and over meaning:

> According to Appy, the cold war was not only a struggle for power but also a struggle for the meaning of that power struggle—that is, a 'struggle for the word' as well as a 'struggle for the world'. Unlike Laidi's consideration of the philosophy of history as the main battlefield for the appropriation and contest of meaning, Appy's notion of semantic struggle avoids any unitary explanation of the global struggle. Instead, Appy highlights the plurality in the 'struggle for the world' and advocates the need to account for a variety of ways in which the struggle was perceived and understood by the different bodies of actors involved in it (Kwon 2010, 6).

The conflicts and local situations of the postcolonial Cold War had very real implications for aesthetics, and it can be argued that the aesthetics too had implications for the politics of the day, even as this study is not concerned much with reading publics and reception, barring the politics of censorship and censorial regimes. Framing the inquiry around how the literary in Asia and Southeast Asia functioned, as well as how it negotiated with power, alongside questions about how texts shape a certain vision of the contemporary, the thesis presents glimpses of possibilities around the emergence of a region. As Patke and Holden put it:

> Any attempt to think of Southeast Asia as emerging from decolonization into globalization through nationalism ends up having to recognize that cultural developments such as modernism and postmodernism affected artists and writers in the former colonies as part of two complexly interwoven processes: a tendency to look Westward for ideas about the aesthetic vanguard, which was partially counteracted and counterbalanced by intimations and intuitions of how artists and writers might draw sustenance from indigenous or non-European elements of societal and aesthetic modernity. Under these complex circumstances, literary modernism developed rather slowly and intermittently in the work of authors and artists whose commitment to nation did not preclude adaptability and combinative skill in reconciling the indigenous and the derivative elements of creative inspiration. (Patke & Holden 2010, 205)

This combination of adaptability and combinative skill is one that, as Henk Maier suggests of Pramoedya's *This Earth of Mankind*, exists like the *Hikayat Hang Tuah* in conversation with the tradition of Malay world writing. Benedict Anderson emphasises, in *Language and Power*, the role of Javanese referentiality and the salience of the import of Javanese terms into Indonesian, such as the Sukarno expression 'ganyang' (Anderson 1990, 146), which signals that Indonesian is a language of imports, and, therefore, can be set within the Malay world setting. In this sense, with Indonesian as a language drawing from outside sources, which a speaker can "mold […] in their own image" (Anderson 1990, 140), the texts of Pramoedya are not only Javanese, but give an overview of a late Colonial Indies, where the language of Indonesian as a unifier is contrasted to the multiplicity of realities that includes Javanese and that come together to express a national identity within the Malay world. In this regard I am borrowing from Maier, noting that the text does not only express Javanese or Indonesian, but places them into conversation in a broader Malay world tradition that is presented as a nationalist awakening story.

It is in this sense that I am borrowing from Maier, as the text itself does not only express Javanese or Indonesian but places them into conversation in a broader Malay world tradition that is presented as a nationalist awakening story. Maier says of Pramoedya's text: "its wordings are like another flower in a never finished garland…. modern and traditional". And he goes on: "these are issues that are not only relevant for linguists who too easily have repeated one another" (Maier 1997, 694), even going so far as to ask, what is "real Malay", what is "hybrid Malay"? And who is to decide this? (1997, 693). These questions situate the broader point about "adaptability and combinative skill" across more porous and fluid boundaries of writing that elide a simplistic cartographic imaginary, and yet evoke regional visions. The important point here to consider, especially in terms of traditional and modern Southeast Asian writing, is that 'modern' texts at times draw on traditional narrative structures, but also critically import hybrid categories from them, as Pramoedya does.

The literary Cold War, as a particular subject of analysis, is most comprehensively covered in Andrew Hammond's edited works (Hammond 2006; 2011; 2020). The volume *Cold War Literature: Writing the Global Conflict* in 2006 brought together a diverse range of perspectives on writing in the Cold War in different contexts. The volume is instructive insofar (as Hammond puts it in the introduction) the Western experience is an exception to the norm of Cold War conflict, which was often far less "cold" than it was "hot". The ramifications of superpower rivalry, local ideological appropriations, and various conflicts that seeped into third world contexts urge us to reconsider just what the Cold War meant for most of the world's population. As Hammond notes, "surprisingly, the work of African, Asian and Latin American writers, which has gained increasing critical attention since the rise of postcolonial studies, is rarely drawn upon in discussions of the geo-political events of the 1945–89

period" (Hammond 2006, 4). Thus, the book seeks to broaden a global appreciation, while attempting to chart out a "family of resemblances" that traces affinities, concerns, and styles in the texts produced around the world. The volumes help to structure the important questions in this thesis as a conversation, asking exactly what is writing from Southeast Asia during the postcolonial Cold War. In an article on the Bandung moment and literary connections between this and Cold War writing, Christopher Lee and Anne Mahler rightly point out that "put simply, third way literatures should not be understood as direct expression of these assorted organisations and programmes, but rather as reflective of a confluence between the intention of individual writers and the broader political world they inhabited" (Lee & Mahler 2020, 191).

World literature scholarship takes its conception from a notion of Goethe's: *Weltliteratur*. Within it we can see that:

> literature is a modern Western invention that has no precise equivalent in many other . [….] only if we recognize the specific temporal and spatial circumstances under which texts emerge and are read, in particular also non-canonical texts, can we start to think about the object perceived as 'literature' as not only fostering a sense of difference, but also as having the potential to reflect on what humanity has in common (Niekerk 2018, 247).

But perhaps what is common to humanity, as was once commented about the commonwealth, is not particularly "wealth commonly distributed" – a notion of power intervenes through commodity markets, conflict, or perhaps unequal distributions of knowledge, as well as the power of institutions sitting in complicity with their own dominance.

Xiaojue Wang's work is deeply interesting and incisive on the topic of Chinese literature on the Cold War period, moving between China and Taiwan (Wang). To engage with the Cold War in the context of the divide in 1949 between the Chinese

mainland and the now Taiwanese straits, Wang elucidates a replacement of concepts: "modernity and nationalism to replace the Cold War binarisms" (Shen 2015, 534–37). The five authors she covers in her work are emblematic of writing escaping from the ideological confines of the Cold War period, but her analysis is more significant conceptually in that it questions binarisms and deconstructs notions of stability in writing Cold War narratives that eclipse other possibilities of rendering literary histories. Wang's work escapes from the paradigms imposed so often on scholars through heuristic models created by the West, including world literature, and uses numerous sources from the Chinese. This then broadens our horizons conceptually and linguistically, to open new possibilities of writing the Cold War that are not necessarily confined to binary spaces. Thus, like Michael Szonyi's work on Quemoy, in his *Cold War Island: Quemoy on the Front Line* (Szonyi, 2008), reading spaces such as these, behind the "bamboo curtain", helps to decentre the iron curtain in Europe.

Postcolonial and Cold War studies can be similar forms of enquiry, but while the former is often preoccupied with experiences that are the result of imperial expansion and experience, the latter is concerned with notions of political bipolarity and its related consequences through superpower conflict. What is occluded outside bipolarity often appears to escape our epistemic gaze. A concept that is "occluded", to borrow from Ann Laura Stoler, is the idea of ideology as a sophisticated theoretical notion that speaks to both fields or bridges them together, as "occluded histories are part of what such political formations produce. They inhere in their conceptual, epistemic, and political architecture. One sense of occlusion comes to mind: 'a line drawn in the construction of a figure that is missing [or more accurately] "disappeared" from the finished product'" (Stoler 2010, 10). The chapters in this

thesis utilise contemporary scholarly conversations and dialogues and respond through suggesting a play at epistemic boundaries, formed by the literary. And while they do not always address occlusion directly, the epistemic limits are revealed in the chapters in terms of their frameworks of representation, especially when thinking about the finished literary work and its disappeared influences and conditions of production. These epistemic limits do not always overlap but instead, in my view, correspond to a broader (and perhaps darker) notion of a death world, as is elaborated in the work of Heonik Kwon. Although this thesis does not specifically relate to trauma and trauma studies, the broader experience of trauma in the third world serves as a sort of response or archive that has yet to be elucidated and for which a poetics has not yet been forthcoming, an occluded part of the whole, which should generate more than silence.

History provides a frame of reference for this thesis, and not simply as the product of various chronologies, but instead dealing with numerous contested "pasts" as its sites of analysis. This further includes a set of identified registers to structure our analysis of the period, which help us to see what is important about examining the postcolonial along with the Cold War in Southeast Asia. Further, these registers speak back to the main questions of how the Cold War is narrated in this regional setting outside its traditionally examined domains.. Time, as a central constitutive object of analysis in the thesis is both questioned as a product of linear flows and diagnosed as existing in a temporal dialogue within the texts, even as they are read and revivified in times and places perhaps not of their own choosing.

This grappling with the chronology of colonial and postcolonial experience – with postcolonialism, postcoloniality, and the postcolonial as dividing markers – sets postcolonial theory in the domain of language in some part. Much actual struggle can

be accounted for in reality as well, of course. But empire, and Cold War, are not simply phenomena of material oppression, but also experiences of being and of feeling, of resisting, and denial and collaboration. We can question the impulse of writing and power through the foundational works of the field of postcolonialism, especially through the elaboration of depictions that contain non-neutral subject/object positions, in elucidating the role of representation in constructing the other (1988).

Asian studies and area studies are both fields that exist within the relation between reality and the notion of a cultural community, or affinities between areas, and this defines Southeast Asian studies as well. The distinction between mainland and maritime Southeast Asia is an apposite one, especially when considered in terms of geographically distinct units, which further shows that this thesis is focused primarily on maritime Southeast Asian writers, especially since it considers Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. This focus acts to emphasise a particularity of geography, given that two of these polities are archipelagic in character. Japan fits into this matrix less for maritime comparability than to illustrate continuities and ruptures in Cold War chronology and shared "Asian" experiences. The growth of Asian studies, especially in the Western academy, is both the result of geopolitics but also a shaping of a new knowledge to serve counter to formulations that posited diffusionary models. Volumes such as the *Routledge Concise History of Southeast Asian Writing in English* are relevant and useful for this study, as they help us think through the regional frame with a comparative perspective.

The reach and explanatory power of Wolters' *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* in elucidating a portrait of various developments in a shared regional frame has influence on this work as well (Wolters, 1999). Writing

primarily from a historical perspective, his focus on literature in the region brings into view early writing and examples from premodern periods, but he makes the observation that, "literary conventions are a window through which the local ambience of writers and readers in a particular Southeast Asian subregion can be glimpsed; we are glimpsing something local people could not disregard" (Wolters 1999, 69.) This reading is supplemented by the growing body of work that concerns literary traditions across the Southeast Asian region, even as Southeast Asia does feature in a more limited sense in bigger studies of postcolonial writing. Perhaps apart from that on Pramoedya Ananta Toer, recent scholarship continues to treat regional writing in Southeast Asia as following a trajectory distinct from other writing in Asia. This is perhaps because of the linguistic complexity of the region, and indeed the volume by Patke and Holden questions the representative ability of English writing to explain the fabric of the societies it is dealing with.

> As Day remarks with regard to world literature scholarship:
> yet [Pascale] Casanova's 'world republic of letters' is a paradoxical space: it offers autonomy and creative freedom to writers, but in a fixed structure of centers and peripheries, dominant and inferior languages and aesthetic criteria, and material rewards and punishments. The Parisian centre always determines the structure. As it stands, Casanova's model cannot account for the literary world of Indonesia, which has a very different sense of what is central and what is peripheral to the development of its own modernity (Day 2007, 176).

This critique relates directly to some of our concerns about centre and periphery. But further, in relation to the Javanese tradition, this is the basis from which some of the novels of Pramoedya are examined by Day, and this tradition, he writes, "is not simply a by-product of, or nationalist response to, Western imperialism" (Day 2007, 193). This thesis attempts to reconcile questions of centre and periphery by restoring the validity of region as a central focus, and in so doing escaping simplistic "reactive" categorisations of writing.

The extant critical literature on Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Ee Tiang Hong, F. Sionil José and Kurihara Sadako explicates, broadly, themes that reflect exile, politics, nostalgia, place and dislocation, and death world. Their texts are enveloped by broader national frames and referents of the nation, but despite its prominence as a tool for both projecting power and also defying it in the twentieth century, this is not necessarily the only way to read them. There are links between these bodies of writing as well as the scholarship around them – though often the challenge in reading the translated materials is similar to the notion of "gazing" into the space of Southeast Asia and attempting to deduce a matrix of comprehensive knowledge. I suggest comprehensiveness not to posit a type of epistemic totality but instead seeking a realisation of wholeness in the represented subject, as if these books are able at once to serve as impressions but also documents of the experiences of lives and struggles against power.

The works of Pramoedya Ananta Toer have crossed boundaries, especially through translation, through a voice that is fashioned against the turbulent backdrop of the emergence of independent Indonesia. His voice is necessarily imbricated in issues of exile, and Pramoedya's significant periods in detention under both the Dutch and independent administrations in Indonesia, as well as his continued writing on the island of Buru within the Maluku region while imprisoned and made to account for his writings that countered the national narrative/ These works have received critical attention. Toer's novels offer the reader a vast array of concerns but particularly address colonialism and independence, as well as the role of protagonists in the making of political change in Indonesia, including in his memoir, *The Mute's Soliloquy*. Never offering simply a coherent and direct narrative, Pramoedya's work often "explores the theme of conflicting desires of humanity" (Richardson 1994, 27),

which then leads us to think about the novel itself as a site of humanistic enterprise, especially through the *bildungsroman*.

Pramoedya's novels were considered subversive and banned under the Suharto regime for a protracted period, giving his work an aura celebrated from outside but also invoked by the young in political struggle after the toppling of Suharto in the late 1990s (Augenbraum & Schwalbe, 2000). This involves his work in representing the suppression of dissident voices, as well as issues of censorship and strongman politics in Southeast Asia. Toer's work is keenly involved historically and, apart from charting narratives of the colonial and the growth of nationalism, the author at times involves his protagonists in the broader scope of "Indonesian" history, such as in the case of *Arok Dedes* (2000), where "the 13th century satire of event(s) [is told] as a satire of present events, especially in the 20th century" (Dewi 2013, 119). While this is the case, Pramoedya is not necessarily interested in replicating Javanese identities with great sophistication in his books and is in fact shown as ambivalent towards this identity (Tsao 2012, 105).

Pramoedya's works can be classified as postcolonial literature, in ways that, similarly, can be applied to the other authors in the thesis. His ideas are often presented through the medium of the historical novel, but interestingly, he often employs modern language conventions (Foulcher 1981, 2). As "one of the leading formulators of the aesthetic doctrine of Indonesian socialist realism in the early 1960s, [Toer] was still, as it appears, guided by an understanding of the relationship between art and society…to be written in terms understandable to the widest possible audience" (1981, 2). This guiding principle perhaps demonstrates a wish for his work to be widely appreciated and it is also a broad attempt to connect with the masses. The writing often gives an acute impression of society under colonial rule but is situated

within a broader Indonesian literary tradition that was expanding during the latter half of the twentieth century.

Pramoedya's characters often inhabit the rich landscape of the historical novel, but his work enunciates also in the biographical register. His work is often keenly researched and documents an age of change that is linked to the coming of modernity in the Dutch East Indies (sometimes referred to as the NEI or Netherlands East Indies). The work is situated within a very clear frame of Indonesian writing, but the experiences of Toer and his own political situation, the limited distribution and banning of his books in Indonesia, and his celebration globally ties his position within broader networks. These networks have been employed by scholars such as Pheng Cheah and others to understand the postcolonial literary event. However, the Cold War reception and readings of his work are salient in a regional context as well. We see that the concept of "national awakening" (Shiraishi 1987, 139) in Toer's work situates it not merely nationally but regionally as well, as colonialism was a force that implicated most of Southeast Asia. The work can be seen as not merely a national parable but a reflection of colonial modernity in the region. In themes such as the growth of print and hybrid identities, it is very much a repository for the imaginative reconstruction of the region, where flux and hybridity are considered integral to, yet often disavowed or uneasily incorporated by, nationalist movements and governments.

F. Sionil José's work is similarly political in nature, though his own experiences demonstrate a different trajectory from those of Toer, not simply because of the differences in the reception of fiction and the publication of criticism in the Philippines. Filipino literature in the postcolonial period pursues issues of a national identity in conversation with Spanish and American "colonial" relationships, with a

literary tradition extending back to Jose Rizal's formidable epic novels *Noli M Tangere* (1887) and *El Filibusterismo* (1891), often referred to affectionately as the Noli and Fili. José's work exists within the modern Filipino tradition but offers the idea that "the Filipino is in a state of confusion about himself and his identity" (Roges 280). This confusion is exhibited through the relation between past and present, contending with ideas of elite dominance both during and after the "colonial" period. Here we should be careful to distinguish types of colonial experience as they do not all manifest in the same way. American presence in the Philippines has a difficult legacy, but it is not considered formal colonialism, and we can see interstate conflicts in Southeast Asia in the second half of the twentieth century often manifesting as non-declared wars, especially in the case of the "Vietnam War". This postcolonial Cold War dance between identity, naming and conflict will be explicated further in the chapters.

José is recognised not only as a distinguished author within the Filipino canon, but also more broadly for his involvement in regional and global literary activities. One such example is his editorship of editions of the Asian PEN anthology, which, in its inaugural edition, was described as problematic due to its choice of translations and writing in a supposed "second language" by Asian writers (New 1968, 651). This alerts us to a certain inadequacy in translation of vernacular traditions, which is a problem for the analysis of this thesis, but also more broadly. José's works and his contributions allow us to glimpse a broader category of writing and consciousness that not only fits into a local place, but into broader colonial histories and Asian narrative possibilities.

With his background as a reporter, José is not simply seeking to understand the world, but to shape it. Self-reliance and identity are themes that stand out in his

work, but he is clear in his "championing of the dispossessed peasantry" (Casper 1983, 301). Within the writing, there is not just a sense of history but a continued story of dispossession and betrayal, and this is tied into Cold War events, such as the repression of the Communist-allied Hukbalahap rebellion and movement in the late 1950s in the Philippines, and similarly the dominance of elites. I find here an important parallel to Toer's work, in the examination of the social worlds of the characters, intimately tied to political struggle and national awakening. José was well aware of the regional context. He acutely reflects this in stating that "in our part of the world, a lot of phenomena cannot be explained by rational analysis or cold scientific deduction" (José 1998, 51). In speaking of the spirit world, he invokes key cultural categories that bind together Southeast Asian writing's fascination with the spirit realm. In giving his characters voice, his work has been described as intimately linked to the articulation of the subaltern figure (Arias 2008, 44). This articulation profiles the marginal and displaced and is thus quite clearly linked to other figures in Southeast Asian writing of the period. Marginality and the subaltern, key themes for postcolonial writing, are also salient for Cold War historiography in Asia.

Kurihara Sadako stands out as one of the two writers (with Toer) that have been translated into English, and this thesis works only with reliable translations of her poetry from the original Japanese. As part of the *Hibakusha* (Hiroshima and Nagasaki survivors) tradition, her work is relevant not only to notions of region and the experience of the postcolonial Cold War, but in some sense the death world elucidated by Kwon. She writes as a "survivor of Hiroshima, not as a scholar" (Kwon 1993, 77) and her work speaks not only to the catastrophic beginnings of the Cold War in Asia but to the anti-nuclear politics that were persistent as a critique of American and other states' policies in the Cold War period.

The dehumanising logic of the atomic bomb and its application in various contexts was a deathly feature of the Cold War period. The links between this writer and the other writers selected are also discernible through the Japanese presence in Southeast Asia, as noted. While limited to a defined period during the Second World War it had far-ranging effects and connects our texts historically in a far more direct way. Industrial modernity, observed by Rudolf Mrázek as a scholar of modern Indonesia, as manifested through the laying of asphalt in the Dutch East Indies, compelled him to write about language conventions. Similarly, Sadako declares, in a much more condemnatory tone, "Mankind stopped being mankind and completely became a machine" (Dougherty 2011, 5).

Kurihara's work is not isolated. In analyses of contemporaneous works, not limited to the *Hibakusha*, we can see a dearth of literary and filmic representations of the bombs that is very deeply embedded in Cold War logics. The difficulty of communicating the trauma of war spills into language, into the domains of representation and its signifying elements. As the circumstances of another writer, Ota Yoko, suggest, it can be seen that "the bombing of Hiroshima marked a break with the past so total that tools formerly available to the writer now failed to function" (Treat 1995, 31). There are important parallels to Auschwitz, in the sense that the dropping of the bomb can be traced as a signifying event that compels a certain inability to speak – a collapse and failure of reason, characterised by Kurihara for Hiroshima as "absurd" (1995, 32).

The work of Kurihara is suggestive too in that it maps onto industrial warfare and continued conflicts in the "cold" experience of war, which was more often real to populations in Asia. This contributes to the disaster and apocalyptic visions of nuclear fictions, both in a Japanese and global context, as an apt vision of the Cold War

period. Kurihara's work is postcolonial in its chronological break from the imperial and militarist Japanese past. It has a sense of renovation and technological modernity that sits ironically with the memories of technological destruction with the bomb. Kurihara's work sits within a community of writers, as does the work of Toer, José and Ee. These writing communities differ but are very much linked through interaction and exchange. In a sense, the introduction of violence is most explicit through the poetry of Sadako, forming a link between the chronology of the Cold War and the postcolonial, as well as denoting possibilities of apocalypse overshadowing the era and the "death world".

Ee Tiang Hong's writing is tied closely to protest against a singular and monolithic state discourse, and an example is provided here of the conflicted nature of his voice across boundaries, to demonstrate his dislocation and yet cognizance of the position of a postcolonial poet writing in an English tradition and the issues arising from this. His self-imposed exile to Perth in Australia following the racial riots in the late 1960s was a reflection of the voice of an author seeking to protest an imposed multiculturalism and ethnicity. His work is "excluded from the domain of 'National Literature', which in Malaysia refers exclusively to publications in Malay, the national language" (Gabriel 2014, 238). Ee's work contains within it nostalgia and critique, the former being developed more clearly in his poems after exile. As an English educated minority writer in the Malaysian context, Ee is comparable less to the national literary canon than to similar writers in Singapore, such as Edwin Thumboo, as already noted. His poetry speaks rather directly to the reader:

> Mine, especially, a hopeless case – a Baba born and bred in Malacca, now exiled, in
> of all places, Australia, which is farther east and right down under.
> (Although I'm sure Britannia

knows where it is – two hundred years of history, considerable interests,
including the literary.)
I don't hope in that direction, anyway; I'm happy where I am,
enough if somewhere people read me.

Unfortunately, they mightn't unless, as you say,
England approves, or America says OK. (Ee 126).

Ee's poems are often very self-reflective and employ vernacular turns of phrase. In the above poem, "hopeless case" is but one example in his corpus that speaks with the voice of the local speaking back against the conventions of English. This perhaps mirrors Ee's vision for writing in English in Singapore and also Malaysia. Holden cites him: "if English still carried the burden of colonialism, Ee argued, such a legacy would be 'internalised, reconstituted with the learner's own resources, finally emerging as something distinctive'" (Holden 2008a, 95).

This reconstitution perhaps also reflects the negotiated memory of colonialism in Malaysia, in the sense that it resembles but is reassembled more gently than in the anticolonial memory of Indonesia and the Philippines. This vision, very much linked to the past, both through the poems and the life of the writer, is what ties his work to our other authors in this thesis. Ee was personally deeply involved in the political, but also believed in the idea that poetry could reveal the truth, something which, it can be suggested, he found more reliable than historical narratives: "No, no, Kirpal, it is us poets, who finally tell the truth because we cannot help it" (Singh 2009, 28). This insistence on a place for poetry in political life is what makes Ee's work inseparable from not just the postcolonial context but more significantly the Cold War, and not necessarily only through ideological struggle but as a reaction to humanity's place in

the world, with the language available to express the experience of history and exile, as well as notions of belonging and home.

As Xiaojue Wang comments on the situation across the divide in Taiwanese and socialist China, "both…made a great deal of effort to represent their own version of Chinese identity as the antithesis to the other as the result of the mutual hostility that characterized the Cold War period" (Wang 2013, 23). This mutual antagonism and contestation is paralleled in discourses around sponsorship and networks during the Cold War. Moreover, such appropriation of identity within the political realm, although occurring through the institutionalisation of literature and culture at the national level, shows how culture was certainly political, and mobilised. This binarism shows that polarities existed in the Cold War in Asia as well as in Europe, and this example is chosen to illustrate how literature and culture were divided in the region too.

Similarly, Rommel A. Curaming looks at the Ramon Magsaysay Prize as exemplary of a possible ideological location of "the liberal conception of the individual" and modernisation theory going in tandem, where "antileft biases are made clear through indirection and omission" (Curaming 2009, 135–37). F. Sionil José was awarded the Magsaysay Award in 1981, and reports of his response to the citation describe that, "His city friends asked why his novels were sad. They were sad because memory had chained him to a past afflicted with injustices and, as he looked around him, the same injustices still prevailed" (Curaming 2009). It is important to recall that, as Curaming explains, the prize is regarded as "Asia's Nobel Prize" and has links to the Rockefeller Foundation (2009, 127), yet this prize requires a study on its own within the Cold War frame, and further in Asia, not just Southeast Asia. It is

also worth noting that Pramoedya was awarded the same prize in 1995, the year of Indonesia's "golden anniversary, Indonesia Emas" (Curaming 2009).

As these examples indicate, we can usefully read the Cold War and postcolonialism as having very clear networks of infrastructure, which were often met with challenges from other movements. LEKRA or the Institute of People's Culture in Indonesia is another example, this time of an organisation working within and against how culture could be presented during Guided Democracy (under President Sukarno) as well as under Suharto. These dynamics show our authors not only working with singular voices but within broader traditions. These "traditions" may not be entirely clear at first glance, however, as work on the platform Afro-Asian visions indicates, along with a number of initiatives to rethink global third world narratives, especially as "it was in the cultural space that Afro-Asianism left its most important legacies" (Lewis & Stotle 19; Afro-Asian Visions). These challenge the framing of the period simply in terms of superpower conflict and regional conflicts, within a broader global frame of decolonisation and building "global networks". As Zhou notes in describing the emergence of the Afro-Asian Journalists' Association that emerged out of the Bandung Conference in 1955, the "ethos of the AAJA was an extension of the Bandung Conference's emphasis on sovereignty and non-interference in journalism" (Zhou 2019, 169). These platforms and their growing scholarly relevance help us to seek out a broader constellation of intellectual links across culture.

Thus, this thesis, in reading regional texts, aims to chart the connections of ideas not merely within the historical location of networks, but to follow Pheng Cheah's directive that "literature does not merely map the spatialized world and give it value and meaning. Rather, its formal structures enact the opening of world by the incalculable gift of time" (Cheah 2019, 10–11). To some degree, Cheah aims to

“reworld the world” but the coordinates of this study reinforce region as a critical referent. My aim is to establish from Southeast Asian writing some distinct characteristics of the postcolonial Cold War in the region. These may appear elsewhere, but this thesis is less concerned with a cross regional comparison or with the notions of cosmopolitanism that have attracted some scholars. Nevertheless, Weihsin Gui gives us a helpful framing that highlights that “the relationship between nationalism, culture, and the global force field of literary cosmopolitics is open to revision and redefinition over time as social and political circumstances change over time, and these revisions can be represented through literature” (Gui 2013, 13). Gui’s study is instructive as it takes writing from Southeast Asia, much like Cheah’s work, and maps it onto fields this study is concerned with as well. More than that, Gui and Cheryl Naruse’s recent work on “Articulating Southeast Asia and the Antipodes” provides a critical commentary on writing in Australia, where they note that “Australia is a space where Southeast Asians in diaspora are articulated with one another” (Gui & Naruse 2019, 269). This move in scholarship is especially relevant to the position of the scholar articulating Southeast Asianism from Australia, as this thesis does. Thus, more positioning and looking to place making opens new ways of thinking about the category of “world”.

Situating a regional focus helps to challenge overarching narratives of global and national interpretive paradigms, making the regional a mediating space between national and global. Further, the national is qualified by the sub-national and place becomes important, especially in the novels of Pramoedya and José. The *Buru Quartet* is, in some ways, Javanese in its system of references, and yet we can also recognise numerous influences from elsewhere, and José’s novels often offer us a vision of Pangasinan as well as the broader Philippines. Similarly, Ee Tiang Hong’s

writing moves from Melaka into memories of places lost in time, and Kurihara's Hiroshima is a site of destruction and trauma, forever changed in the wake of atomic power. These sub-regional and national formations challenge the overarching validity of the nation state, while also working within its constraints.

In terms of such a challenge, we can think of a de-Cold War reading. The Cold War period is not merely chronologised or even decomposed (as the important analysis by Heonik Kwon suggests), but its conventional conception has also been challenged through the de-Cold War analysis of Kuan-Hsing Chen in his work *Asia as Method*, as the thesis posits:

> To de-cold war at this point in history does not mean to simply rid ourselves of a cold-war consciousness or to try to forget that period in history and naively look toward the future (the approach most state leaders and other politicians have called for). It means to mark out a space in which unspoken stories and histories may be told, and to recognize and map the historically constituted cultural and political effects of the cold war (Chen 2010, 120).

Similarly, political prerogatives link to the development of area studies as a disciplinary category, as much work in these fields has sought to fulfil a broader aim of understanding the world in relation to the global power prerogatives of two superpowers in the Cold War. Scholars have shown that organisations such as the Congress for Cultural Freedom and the United States Information Agency and Service (USIA and USIS) influenced developments in the global cultural Cold War to some degree, while interpretive frameworks for "regional studies" emerged as important centres to build knowledge about the battlegrounds of ideological conflict, not least about Southeast Asia. These have been examined but newer work on the cultural Cold War has, despite some key studies looking outside, mainly grasped the European and

American experiences. A correction to this can come by distinguishing between popular forms of expression and the role of cultural soft power and hegemony of major global powers, or perhaps by examining the expressions initiated through the literary as another focus area. This can create an alternative mode to examine the logic of writing that operates from the "ground up" which can shift away from the deterministic logic of global cultural agencies, without necessarily disentangling from them.

As the writer Albert Wendt notes, "for me, the *post* in post-colonial does not just mean *after*, it also means *around, through, out of, alongside, and against*" (Patke 2006, 3). As Patke remarks, channelling Perloff, a type of "freedom is no more a choice than it is an absence of constraint, but the search for its own historicity" and then relates this search or grasp of historicity to postcolonial poetry (Patke 2006, 7). But this impulse towards "localism", towards a "sense of place as an affirmation of living in the here and now", seems to temporally limit poetry to a place. In some sense such an impulse can be related to the hermeneutic and affective, as a rootedness that seems to evade transition (although perhaps not translation) in the broader sense of how imaginations can search out and cross boundaries. This simple congruity and contiguity is actually not so simple. As noted by Hodge and Mishra, the notion of the postcolonial (post-colonial even) is marked by a certain sense of discursive rupture that is in tandem with a violent disavowal of the colonial period (Hodge & Mishra 2005, 375).

Prefixing and categorising have their uses for thinking about locating culture in the Cold War, but there is an imperative to think through how a certain disjunction, (an asynchrony or asymmetry), emerges when we reconcile the scholarly narratives of postcolonialism and the Cold War. This type of asynchronous conjuncture, colliding

categories of thought and modes of representation, can be seen to be related to a broader sense of violence – a disruption in some sense inherent within the notion of a category, or the violence present within it, like an uneasy antinomy. If, as is related by Bhabha, the notion of the unhomely is a "paradigmatic colonial and postcolonial condition" (Bhabha 1994, 14), then in my view, a "condition" similar to both postcolonialism and the Cold War is the experience of violence, either muted or expressed, direct or inherent.

In excavating narratives, perhaps we are also excavating the conditions of their production. If for instance, the notion of differing Cold War worlds exists, then the discursive is not necessarily stable or even unifying: it fragments and diffuses across times and places far from the origins of a western "centre". As Aijaz Ahmad puts it,

> there appears to be, at the very least, a widespread implication in the ideology of cultural nationalism, as it surfaces in literary theory, that each 'nation' of the Third World has a 'culture' and a 'tradition', and that to speak from within that culture is itself an act of anti-imperialist resistance. By contrast, the principal trajectories of Marxism as they have evolved in the imperialized formations have sought to struggle – with varying degrees of clarity or success, of course – against both the nation/culture equation, whereby all that is indigenous becomes homogenized into a singular cultural formation which is then presumed to be necessarily superior to the capitalist culture which is identified discretely with the 'West', and the tradition/modernity binary, whereby each can be constructed in a discrete space and one or the other is adopted or discarded (Ahmad 1992, 9).

This notion of a split among first, second and third, worlds, along with Socialism as a major ideology and the critique of binaries, helps us enunciate writing's role in the construction of alternative plausible worlds of being that might not negate such Cold

War structures but do much to expose their limits. Speech need not be only resistance, and neither perhaps need it be nationally enunciated. Regions exist, and not only as a response to imperialist formations, even as we are made to believe that regional organisations such as ASEAN formed as a distinct response to plausible neo-imperialist ventures (Mahbubani & Sng, 2017).

The invention of the region is often a space for intervention as well. "In the empty immensity of earth, sky, and water, there she was, incomprehensible, firing into a continent" (Conrad 1988, 66): Joseph Conrad aptly summarised in his *Heart of Darkness* the unclear terrain of the engagement between force and ground, notionally an imposition of power that is unaware even of its own ontological stability. The region is similarly constructed in a system of disparate renderings; of scholarly knowledge addressing the field, by shooting at it from a conceptual distance, but also excavating the knowledge towards various academic and institutional prerogatives (Legge 2008, 23-50).

Postcolonial poetry is often marginal to the field of study of postcolonial literature, especially in the English language, and this marginality is further reinforced by the marginalization of the Southeast Asian region in both postcolonial studies and Cold War studies. As Ramazani notes, "the story of the globalization of English-language poetry remains largely untold" (Ramazani 2009, vi). This sense of the untold seems to call upon what Ramazani discusses as unhomeliness, in regard to the absenting of place in the shaping of postcolonial literature. This is further reformulated through Southeast Asian writing outside English, which similarly requires more telling outside language specific studies, and can be linked to the reality of the worlds that shaped them politically and ideologically. In their work *Indonesian Notebook*: *A Sourcebook on Richard Wright and the Bandung Conference*, Brian

Roberts and Keith Foulcher both chronicle the "provincialization of Indonesia and Southeast Asia that is written into the misremembering of the basic modesty mores in Java, together with his [Wright's] decision to represent himself as having interviewed the famous Indonesian novelist Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana in Europe" (Foulcher & Roberts 2016, 12). This misremembering is much like the production of knowledge that locates the region at the margins of the Cold War. However, one must acknowledge extensive work done by scholars in country and area studies to correct this.

One of Pramoedya Ananta Toer's letters from exile reflected to its addressee: "it's unlikely that you'll ever receive this letter. It's unlikely that I'll ever be able to send it. But I'm still going to write it—you see, I told you I would!" (Toer 2000, 6). Is this not then reminiscent of Jacques Derrida's remark: "not that the letter never arrives at its destination, but part of its structure is that it is always capable of not arriving there?" (Derrida et al. 1975, 66). But what about the "moment" and the historical patterns of what is deemed world literature and what is not? What implications does this have for texts sitting in "regional margins"? Are they only invoked in postcolonial studies readers, or even less likely, arranged into volumes on Cold War literature? In Toer's case the revision of history is intimately linked to an epistemic anxiety that the authorities attempted to quash. He reports that in the Buru prison he wrote an Indonesian version of the classic *Netherlands East Indies Encyclopedia* but "This manuscript, too, was confiscated and destroyed prior to my release" (Toer 2000). Within the broader aegis of political power, writing and the structure of the letter, the violence of power is often also the violence that translates into the epistemic.

Concepts have to be tested in order to live. I illustrate transgressions to their ordering but that does not mean they cease to exist. Being to me constitutes the central dynamic at the heart of the postcolonial Cold War; something that is expressed by the disembodied voices of authors in an alternative archive to the simple histories formed by government debris and the monumentality of the archive. In this regard I am dealing with literary expressions as alternative accounts of being in a past too entangled in its own multiform concerns.

For this project, I wish to make the rather immodest methodological claim that it tries to both disentangle numerous paradigms and create a new set of problematics that should help us redesignate such an era as the "Cold War", or similarly think about how "era" is constructed, especially in historiographical terms. This set of problematics can be thought of as a type of a subversion, without destruction, of the determining fields of scholarship of the Cold War. Within the tension between the existence of what can be termed a "death world" and an alternative archive there can be a challenge to the monolith of the predictability of literary history. Even during Pramoedya's detention in Buru he wrote, "no one can say the dead are silent … Death, I know, is everywhere" (Toer 2000, 74). In examining Amir Muhammad's documentary films on the communist movement in Malaya, Chih Ming Wang discusses how inseparable memory is from history and, through examining representations in the films, looks at how they challenge what history is from the national perspective, and reanimate the "forgotten" voices of the Communist Party, which have been largely excluded (Wang 2015, 128). Such questions about representation pursue the thesis's aims, as this thesis also wishes to critique the stability of histories of the Cold War era from a nation state perspective, and see how representations, both during and after, speak alongside and against these concerns.

Chapter 2: Exile: Pramoedya Ananta Toer's *Buru Quartet*

This chapter is concerned with the writing of the author Pramoedya Ananta Toer, or more specifically, his tetralogy the *Buru Quartet*, written in exile during the New Order period in Indonesia. The novels that comprise this quartet – *This Earth of Mankind*, *Child of All Nations*, *Footsteps*, and *House of Glass* – will be examined in detail in this chapter. Pramoedya Ananta Toer is seen as one of Indonesia's foremost writers and was also a journalist as well as short story writer. He was detained during both the Dutch and independent periods of Indonesian history by various governments, and is seen to exemplify censored and banned literary voices during the Cold War in the region.

The translated memoir of Pramoedya, *The Mute's Soliloquy*, will serve as a tool of dialogue between the life of the author and the material in these novels. I choose to study only the *Buru Quartet* as it provides a unified vision, through the incorporation of the *Bildungsroman* form, of the coming of modernity and nationalism to the late colonial Dutch or Netherlands East Indies. These four novels, along with the memoir, reflect the theme of exile in various ways, and represent a dynamic between silence and speaking. As representative novels produced during the postcolonial Cold War in the region, in them we see the author, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, not merely reading the emergence of independent Indonesia, but rereading it against the present circumstances of his writing. While this evolved over time, one is able to chart a space for the writing along and against Indonesian literature, and more broadly, Southeast Asian writing.

From the perspectives of postcolonial and Cold War studies, the former has had more of a scholarly impetus in examining Pramoedya's oeuvre, while the latter is a dimension that needs to be enjoined to the studies surrounding the career and work

of the author. This is especially pertinent in studies of Pramoedya's writing in the context of Indonesian writing, where it is placed into dialogue with Indonesian contemporary literature, but the dimension of ideology can and should be explored further (Miller 2015; Lindsay 2012). While some discussion exists in relation to postcolonial studies in the work of Keith Foulcher and Tony Day, the latter's work on writers in Indonesia and Vietnam seems to be the most in-depth Cold War treatment of Pramoedya. Hilmar Farid's doctoral dissertation is instructive in contextualising the works in the framework of decolonisation. The topic of the interaction of decolonisation, postcolonialism and the Cold War should be a focus for scholars interested in reading Pramoedya. Extant scholarship treats *This Earth of Mankind*, the first volume of the four novels, as a central text to reading the quartet, but this chapter will highlight especially the contribution of the third and fourth volumes to thinking about parallels between the nation state and the growth of resistance. This extant scholarship includes studies from Niekerk (2011), GoGwilt (2010), Thomas (2018), along with authors that treat *Bumi Manusia* with the rest of the quartet, including Hitchcock (2010) and Cheah (2003), among others.. Pramoedya Ananta Toer is one of Indonesia's best known public figures, as an author and intellectual. The *Buru Quartet* was dictated orally as well as later written in exile under imprisonment, while the author served fourteen years of detention (Lane 2000, 9). His manuscript papers were discovered much like the protagonist Minke's notebooks are discovered in *House of Glass*: "there were 123 notebooks. They were full of Minke's terrible scribble and there were many words and phrases scratched out and replaced" (Toer 1992, 117). These discoveries by Pangemanann in the novel mirror or replicate the lost notes of Toer through his own detention, communicating silences spoken only many years later.

An approach that interrogates temporality between two historical periods - the late colonial setting of the novels and the detention of Pramoedya -can aid by reconciling the conflicting timeframes presented by the novels and memoir. The vestiges of the colonial past, being narrated through characters such as Minke, who is the protagonist of the first three novels, and the author's "contemporary" imprisonment and exile are placed into dialogue. This dynamic between lived reality and the fictive dimension of a whole national consciousness is played out under misplaced ideological alliances, both in terms of Minke's involvement in the growth of Indonesian nationalism and the publication of his newspaper *Medan*.

It is notable that, along with the protagonist of the quartet Minke, Pramoedya himself was a journalist. Similarly, within the context of thinking through Pramoedya's participation in Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat (LEKRA)[5] and Indonesian cultural history, we can trace the controversy over the publication and censorship of the novels in the quartet as part of "New Order cultural opinion" within newspapers. This meant that there were accusations that he had a role in oppressing "liberal/ pro-Western and Islamic writers in the mid-1960s" (Miller 2015, 33–37). In the novels, the historical voice of dissident journalist Tirto Adi Suryo is channelled strategically through the uncanny voice of the colonial official Pangemanann, who speaks of his surveillance of Minke. This gives us a link to Pramoedya's own persecution by the state as well as to the Dutch colonial state's monitoring of dissident voices. It also mirrors another set of intellectuals conversing between times: "here upon my desk I had created magic threads that connected me with him". (Toer 1992, 331).

[5] Translated as *The Institute of People's Culture*.

This chapter argues that the *Buru Quartet* and *The Mute's Soliloquy* work in dialogue to produce a temporal reading of postcolonial Cold War Indonesia through the re-telling of the colonial past and the rise of nationalism in the landscape of the late colonial state, and in doing so allow for a narration of and an imagination of the Southeast Asian region in this period. This also opens to the rest of the world, through letters and travel. Through past and present, the novels evoke the rise of pan-Asianism and ideology against the backdrop of a state power, often censorial, that paralleled the reality of the author's detention during the postcolonial Cold War. The novels work as a form of structural parallel to the awakening of nationalism in the Indies and document, in great detail, the colonial social formations at play against the ideas of an independent "nation". These books issue from the author's imagination. But they also proceed from an exiled voice, one that draws from the past to make commentary on the present. They are informed more deeply historically as a voice that parallels the print technologies that lent themselves to the burgeoning of nationalist ideas, alongside the institutions of colonial knowledge. This knowledge functions in a few ways, not least how it operates through the characters. The Cold War in postwar Indonesia lends itself to these circumstances as a representational frame, but more critically, the novels and memoir demonstrate that power continues to operate as a formulation that generates identities that push back against their construction.

The short stories of Pramoedya Ananta Toer are demonstrative of his commitment to direct social commentary, which allows the form to speak to immediate themes of the time. They have been compiled in various volumes to address various periods of his writing. As Goenawan Mohamed points out, the "author explains, makes comments, and interjects", making the author an active part of the text. commentaries are "parts of his struggle against indifference, apathy, and aimlessness" (Mohamad 2000 9-10). This form of commitment, necessarily, evokes "the wretchedness of life as it is lived by the majority" (Watson 2001, vii).

In his short story collections, including those that cover both the revolutionary as well as independent periods of Indonesian history, we see a dramatization of various events, which speak directly to social commitment, but always aware of its dramatization, as in the tale, "Stranded Fish" "In this story, Idulfitri will get an inspiration after enduring eleven hours of hunger" (Toer 2000, 45). There are also further references to politics in *Tales from Djakarta,* as in the story, "No Resolution", where we discover that the protagonist's love interest had worked "as a hostess at the Concordia! The entertainment center for Japanese military officers" (Pramoedya, *Tales* 191). This then links to the protagonist joining the army, where the experience of the Occupation is "snuffed out" and instead replaced it with "Revolution". This tale engages with history, much like the novels in this thesis, and gives us a snapshot of life at the juncture between the Japanese Occupation and the independent revolutionary era Indonesia. These tales allow us to see various vignettes where the Cold War features, as it does in the novels, as an episode that accompanies the rest of the drama of ideological alliances uneasily forged in history.

In the volume *In the Mirror: Literature and Politics in Siam in the American Era*, Benedict Anderson and Ruchira Mendiones present us a series of stories that

emerge in the context of American presence in Siam during the Cold War period. This collection from various writers allows us to see the growth of Cold War publications such as Sulak Sirawak's *Social Science Review*, where a "defence of Thai cultural and political autonomy from excessive American influence—won him a small, but increasingly influential, youthful following" (Anderson 1985, 26). This, along with other publications in the region that sought to assert a regional identity, are important for the wider coverage of the postcolonial Cold War. While the American era was the reality in Thailand at the time, there was also a critical "revival of Marxism" (Anderson 1985, 32), which meant that Thais became more aware of these ideas, through, ironically, "the high capitalist paperback industry, not by state printing presses in Moscow or Peking" (Anderson 1985, 32). The important force that emerges in these stories is the role of Thai students, which merits further discussion about student movements and literature in Southeast Asia at this time than is possible in this thesis.

This chapter does not seek to evaluate all of Pramoedya's writings or to offer a survey of a literary life in the period discussed, looking to establish only a source of thinking through Southeast Asia along the lines of postcolonialism, the Cold War and decolonisation pitched against the late colonial period. Thus, the past dialogues with the present, and these novels continue to establish why it does. This is significant because, as opposed to other survey works, this study aims to place into conversation the books mentioned above and their role in thinking about regional writing during an enclosed historical period. That said, secondly, it is not a historical sketch, as other works have aimed to place Pramoedya's writing into historical contexts either national or global, and this chapter seeks not to make extensive comment on the relation of the quartet to other contemporaneous writers.

As we can examine the quartet as a story that goes "beyond simply wanting to understand the world to wanting to change it", we then see a relation between Minke and the shaping of a national consciousness, though perhaps placing it into the simplistic category of "Marxist" writing is to play into the hands of the authorities that branded it such in its prolonged censorship. Indeed, if we move to thinking about writers such as Tirto Adi Suryo, to whom Pramoedya is said to have attributed the figure of Minke, it can be seen as the voice of the emergence of an authentic Indonesian resistance against the state (Lane 1996, 12–13). As Vickers puts it:

> Pramoedya's life and writings are a guide to understanding modern Indonesian history, an epic and highly serious vision of the story of Indonesia as a nationalist tragedy that began at the turn of the twentieth century and was betrayed by Suharto's New Order…Pramoedya's writings provide an alternative historical agenda, one concerned with power and everyday experience. They are also writings that are jaundiced, partial and partisan, elevating nationalism to the centre of Indonesian life, arguing that nationalism should be rooted in the people and that it should be a modern nationalism, to which most aspects of traditional culture are irrelevant (Vickers 2005, 5–6).

These points should be noted when reading the quartet. Additionally, it should be recognised that traditional culture is largely downplayed around the conflicts the author faces, which are ones of the modern. However, I would argue that other social forces at play are examined in depth, and we see a constant struggle for approximations of identity on the part of various individuals, such as the conflicted Pangemanann, an operative of the state, who believes Minke "achieved far, far more than I had been able to in my much longer life. Silently, I honoured him" (Toer 1992, 8). The destruction of the barriers between a "big state" narrative and the various currents of resistance in the quartet mirror the Cold War emergence of dissidents and writers such as Pramoedya himself, in writing that speaks to a constant dialogue

between historical periods and authorities. Thus, while emphasising Indonesian identity and national awakening, Minke and the other characters are betrayed by historical forces outside their own grasp, while attempting to change the world. It is important to be aware that the backdrop of Minke's writing is the historical reality under the Dutch East Indies, which was subjected to a censorial regime in which "Indonesian authors and publishers […] were never given unrestricted freedom to publish whatever they wanted and colonial authorities had a hefty arsenal of legal tools with which they could control writers" (Tickell 2017, 82). Similarly, as Hilmar Farid explains of the situation in 1965:

> Pramoedya's house was attacked. The military came not to protect him but to [sic] arrest him instead while his house was looted and ransacked by a mob. Ten years of hard work was destroyed and no one knows what exactly happened to the tonnes of books, old magazines and newspapers, and other forms of historical sources that he had assembled (Farid 2014, 61).

The writing is set within a Malay world context, which is hybrid and yet solidified (think of the concept of "tanah air", or perhaps "littoral epistemologies" (Gabriel and Fernando 2015, 123), which allows it to be porous enough to cross borders that define the nation state but also does not necessarily rely upon a formulation to read it against or in relation to Malay and Indonesian works across time. Instead, it features as an example of Malay world writing that is also a set creative act within a region. This is not to claim that the writing easily or always corresponds to it, especially as the notion of the regional in Southeast Asia is a heuristic construct developed within the very period that is the backdrop of the writing. This chapter instead emphasises the play between these categories to think about literary experience and the texture of this experience, as a sensory mode in which writing participates. Finally, this chapter cannot account for local and global readerships, but aims to instead substitute

quantitative circulation data with a more experiential reading of circulation that allows us to dance along the archival and informatory impulse of reading the writing as an act of production and open it to multiple re-readings and possibilities. This at once corresponds to Nancy Florida's notion of writing the past and prophesying the future but does not sit easily in the choice of our texts, as most of the *Quartet*, while engaging with Javanese culture, eschews it for a modern form of nation. Noting that the novels break away from the textual forms of indigenous writing, we are also made aware of the politics of status and language. And tellingly, in his memoir, Pramoedya writes in a letter: "don't look on studying foreign languages as a burden, Rita. Think of it as a game. By playing with a foreign language you'll come to enjoy it" (Toer 2000, 285). This game between languages and meanings plays out in the *Quartet* as well.

Pramoedya's characters are often embedded within the rich landscape of the historical novel, but are also acutely enunciated in the biographical mode, which offers us the chance to map a life within the Cold War onto the response to colonial circumstances. His work is often keenly researched and documents an age of change that is linked to the coming of industrial modernity in the Dutch East Indies, but the experiences of Toer and his own political situation, the limited distribution and banning of his books in Indonesia, and his celebration globally, implicate him within broader networks. For instance, as Scherer documents, he was a "guest of the Chinese literary body to commemorate Lu Sun in October 1956. It was there where he began to understand the importance of the role of common people in building a strong nation. It was also there where he began to be skeptical of the value of western liberal-economic development" (Scherer 1985, 22). While the narrative in the *Quartet*

does not continue up to the Second World War, Pramoedya continued to work within a nationalist frame during the Cold War.

These networks have been employed by scholars such as Pheng Cheah and others to understand the postcolonial literary event. However, the reception and reading of his work are salient in a regional context as well: we see that the concept of "national awakening" (Shiraishi 1987, 139) in Toer's work situates it not merely nationally but regionally, as colonialism was a force that implicated most of Southeast Asia. The novels impress upon the reader the validity and persistence of networks of indigenous "Asian" nationalisms, and we see many examples that validate this perspective, including Minke's marriage to Mei in *Footsteps*, from whom he continues to solicit advice beyond her death, through her portrait, as she herself could not fully commit to her "socially expected" duties within the frame of marriage, as she was committed to the Young Generation struggle in China. Toer's personalising of these networks, to include Minke into these frames, also allows a foreshadowing of the porosity of national boundaries and the somatisation of the subaltern body. This liminal figure of the prostitute, which comes to "haunt" Eka Kurniawan's narratives in our representative chapter, features in Pramoedya's work in the figure of Maiko, a Japanese prostitute trafficked into the Indies, who has Burmese syphilis. We encounter Maiko quietly, but it is a function of the novels to challenge notions such as those introduced, in *This Earth of Mankind*, in attitudes expressed in letters: "the Native psychology hasn't yet developed as far as that of the European: His wiser considerations are still too easily pushed aside by lustful passions" (Toer 1982, 222). This can be juxtaposed against Pangemanann's need for the company of Rientje De Roo in *House of Glass*, expressed in the voice of the colonial state. These prejudices

carry through into the fourth volume, where we are told in the voice of Pangemanann himself:

> It didn't seem there was much likelihood that the Indies would be a second Philippines… Unlike their counterparts in the Philippines, the educated Natives of the Indies were still preoccupied with matters of sex. There was plenty of evidence that they were busy working out ways to win European women, or their Eurasian descendants. For most of them, organizations were a new toy. It was a new realm for them, where they could follow in the footsteps of their ancestors who for centuries spent their time clawing at each other, killing each other, and slandering each other in order to obtain a woman (Toer 1992, 222).

This dismissal of "Native" organising by the colonial apparatus merely reflects the colonial discourse of the period, while there is a strange affinity between the Philippines and Europe observed in the expressions of various officials, as expressed in *Child of All Nations*: "Many Filipinos are educated… The Filipino natives were closer to European science and learning, closer to understanding the power that rested with the European peoples, to knowing how to use that power, and so they rebelled" (Toer 1996a, 263). However, Minke is surprised by this. He notices that "workers in the Philippine harbours refused to work. Coolies refusing to work! I thought, amazed" (Toer 1996a, 263). This "amazement" is part of Minke's development, but the figure of the Philippines is at once one of more sophisticated nationalism, while also describing the destruction of the Indies by the Dutch, especially through capital and sugar.

Through exposing both loyalist and liberal thinking emerging from the Netherlands, Pramoedya expresses the great contradictions at the heart of the European colonial and enlightenment project and demonstrates a patchwork of ideas that travel throughout the Indies. This is expressed poignantly in the conflicts of

various characters, where operatives such as Pangemanann realise that "colonial corruption had corrupted me too, corrupted my soul…" (Toer 1992, 155). And similarly, we see representations within newspapers of the time illuminating the conflicts between powers in Southeast Asia at the time.

The images of colonial officials such as Raffles offer a nuanced view of the struggles of colonial powers in the region, including indigenous aspirations to be represented in their likeness. While noted historically to be despotic in some sense, Sir Stamford Raffles is represented in the fictional newspaper positively: "Raffles did more good for the Indies than the Dutch did in three hundred years. Raffles abolished slavery and began to build primary schools for the natives" (*Footsteps* 153). This, composed against debates around the relevance of the French Revolution in later volumes, plays out among the characters to contest what Europe is. Thus, the novels provincialise Europe, nicely demonstrated too in Minke's discussion of tradition and modernity in relation to Javanese culture against developments in the French Revolution. This is also expressed in discussions around prostitution in *Footsteps*:

> And so what about taking mistresses and what about prostitution? Well it began with using their only capital – their bodies. The resident of East Sumatra also prostituted himself, didn't he? With his power? And what about all the Native kings who had prostituted themselves, selling their authority to the Dutch? To the plantations? … The aim – money, money, to get money without working. There was risk! (Toer 1996, 179)[6]

Minke, who sees these divisions, detaches himself from such corruptions but through the narration Pramoedya employs his fictional voice to fight against not only the colonial apparatus but traditional authority. As Minke expresses it: "My world was

[6] It is useful to note that the narrator on page 178 of the same novel, *Footsteps*, expresses himself as an "All Knowing God", in an expression that is used previously in the quartet and foreshadows the conflicted heart of Pangemanann, who has elaborate files on Minke and other nationalists.

not rank and position, wages and embezzlement. My world was this earth of mankind and its problems" (Toer 1982, 125). Thus, a committed realism is expressed by the author, showing an affinity with the liberation but also illuminating its prejudices. This is pronounced in terms of language, where Minke is seen to have a preference initially and through the course of the novels for using Dutch instead of Javanese, and later, even as there is more Malay used, Minke still argues about this.

The work can be seen as not merely a national parable but a reflection of colonial modernity in the region. In drawing on themes such as the growth of print and hybrid identities it is very much a "repository" for the imaginative reconstruction of the region, in which flux and hybridity are considered integral to, yet often disavowed or uneasily incorporated by nationalist movements and governments. The notions of flux and hybridity suggest a broader Malay world narrative between dispersals of categories and pure ones (sungguh and kacukan or, generally, "pure" and "mixed", which are Javanese terms), which manifest in play among narrative strategies, as illustrated by Hendrik Maier (Maier, "Riau" 674). The play here is especially evident, as we know that Minke is not merely protagonist but propagandist, and a propagandist who eventually is caught. We are to read against history, both colonial and Indonesian: "*at the very least, Nyo, even though it is just a beginning, you have started your work as a propagandist…*" expresses Nyai Osontoroh in a letter (Toer 1996, 197, italics in original). In a work that emphasises print, Minke heroically embodies the "Native" printer and publisher himself, and exclaims when his weekly magazine exceeds the circulation of colonial papers:

> My heart full of pride, I would often shout within myself: My fellow natives, my people, now you have a paper of your own, a place where you can air your grievances. Do not worry… Now you have *Medan* where you can state your opinions, explain your views somewhere

> where every one of you can come to seek and find justice. Minke will take your cases before the court of the world (Toer 1996, 240).

What is illuminating in the final two volumes is the reach of Pramoedya's description of the growth of the nationalist movement, which has a lot to do with how the turn of the century was narrated against the burning of his papers by the authorities. In *The Mute's Soliloquy* Pramoedya compares his own predicament with the fate of other writers in world literature, having read "Anna Segher's writings on Auschwitz and Dostoyevsky's *The House of the Dead*; I had toured Siberia; and now I, too, was going into exile: entering another barbed wire dominion" (Pramoedya 2000, 25).

The *Buru Quartet* offers the reader a vast array of concerns, not just colonialism and independence. It reveals the role of protagonists in the making of political change in Indonesia. Pramoedya's work "explores the theme of conflicting desires of humanity" (Richardson 1994, 27). Richardson, exploring gender in a comparative frame, explains that "Pramoedya employs the I of woman as a sign for humanity" (Richardson 1994, 29).[7] The *Buru Quartet* similarly employs this, through Nyai Osontoroh as a heroic figure against oppressive categories, but importantly, he narrates from the male perspective and this is demonstrated continuously, even if we see some examples of subaltern women, often prostitutes, being given voice. Richardson also usefully points us to the allegorical connection between sexuality and *revolusi*, "rooted in the social and historical context" (1994, 34). These parallels are part of the confusion and violence of the moment. However, for the *Quartet* novels, we are able to observe a more direct link between social categories and sexuality, and yet also channel it through revolution or the awakening of social movements. Sexuality and revolution are often

[7] Here the author is discussing another short story, "Dendam" by Pramoedya, and her evaluation that the story is bursting with "real life" (30) is useful as we see quite a bit of dialogue in the BQ that expresses similar, though mediated through translation.

gendered and through Pramoedya we see a foreshadowing of the critique of the gendered domination of colonialism, alongside subversion of such through the body. In *Child of All Nations*, the European Pilkemboh (a local slang to denote a "funnily" shaped male sexual organ), takes a mistress, and she, who has smallpox, exclaims "take me! Take all you can get from me, she thought, and may you soon be destroyed" (Toer 1996a, 156) As Surati, the mistress, spreads the epidemic to the whole of Tulangan (including Pilkemboh), it stops the vehicular traffic in the area, which Pramoedya writes affectingly as "the chimneys lost their grandness, craning forward, looking down on Tulangan as if wanting to know what was happening, nodding sadly, but no eyes cared to look up at them" (Toer 1996a, 156). And continuing, "doctors were brought in from all over Java to end the epidemic. A big sugar mill must not be destroyed just because of smallpox. *Capital must be kept alive to grow, and people can be left to die*" (Toer 1996a, 156, emphasis mine).

As part of the critique of the situation, the continuation of colonial domination is also reflected in the impotence of the Native. As L. Ayu Saraswati usefully points out: "colonized masculinity; as problematic as this concept may be, coexisted in hierarchical relations of power…. Colonized men became racially and 'politically impotent' after Java was defeated" (Saraswati 2011, 117). We see a dialogue between precolonial and occupied Java in the novels, and this therefore instructs us in terms of the Javanese chronicles and the operation of indigenous history, but it is only a backdrop. Minke writes on behalf of the "Natives" and his claims are grand, although considering that we are tracing in the steps of Tirto perhaps the historical scale is needed for this representation: "in all of the Indies I was one of only a handful of Natives who followed the official reports on the Indies economy…" (Toer 1996, 337). Similarly,

Tiffany Tsao's work looks to complicate "Pramoedya's relationship to his Javanese roots and to Marxist ideology" (Tsao 2012, 105).

Pramoedya's works were considered subversive and banned at different periods under the Suharto regime for a protracted period, giving his work an aura celebrated outside Indonesia and invoked internally among the young in political struggles after the toppling of Suharto in the late 1990s (Augenbraum & Schwalbe 2000, 191). This involves his work in writing about human rights, as well as issues of censorship, which are major experiences in the region during the Cold War. Toer's work is keenly involved historically and, apart from charting narratives of the colonial era, at times involves his protagonists in Javanese history, especially in the case of *Arok Dedes*, where "the 13th century satire of event(s) [is told] as a satire of present events, especially in the 20th century" (Dewi 2013, 119). In these ways, Pramoedya's novels brush against the grain of the dominant historical narrative of the nation, allowing for the emergence of counter narratives that play with the idea that there is a singular, stable, "national" narrative of history. These subversive works are often personalised and reflected through the protagonist as well, Minke reflects, "…my whole life was now dedicated to my two beloved children [meant to refer to his publications], *Medan*, coming out daily, and its older brother, coming out weekly" (Toer 1996, 240). Consciously paralleling the author's role in the dissemination of print, the voice of the writer parallels a voice of informed solitude. In Pramoedya's memoir, he recalls a "Negro spiritual, 'There's a happy land somewhere…'", in which we are related to the future, and yet though this voice emerges out of solitude, the happy land of pensive deliberation is juxtaposed against the directness of the prose in the novels, a mode expressed to Minke by Pangemanann in the third volume: "I

like the way you talk Meneer. Bold. Sharp. No mincing words or suchlike" (Toer 1996, 416).

The *Buru Quartet* has received significant critical attention, being incorporated into both focused examinations of Pramoedya in Indonesian literature and transnational world literature studies (Cheah 2003; Hitchcock 2009), as well as in the sense of "theorizing" the texts and their place in postcoloniality (Bahari 2001), even though, perhaps, this set of novels sits within the author's own estimation of equality among all his works: "I consider all my works, equally, as my children" (GoGwilt 1996, 155). Through this critical attention, we are introduced to various readings of the nation, and yet critiques of capital are present in the texts too, which fit them into the uneasy economy of Cold War texts. In *This Earth of Mankind*, we are told that, "all the colonial wars for the last twenty five years have been fought in the interests of capital; fought to ensure markets that would guarantee more profits for European capital. Capital has become very powerful, all-powerful. Capital decides the fate of humanity" (Toer 1982, 224). And in *Footsteps*, "I remembered the anonymous pamphlets telling the story of the forced labor system and of how many people have died because of it … Of the greed of sugar and the barbarism of the plantation administrators…" (Toer 1996, 159–60).

But it is the condition of exile and the narration of the quartet, as well as the conditions and writing of the latter part of the quartet (as Pramoedya was eventually allowed writing materials), that most interest this study in terms of the ambit of ideological delimitations and restrictions of the modern nation state. This is especially true in so far as that state aimed to fling off the yoke of colonialism. However, this period became one of centralisation, and turned on the annihilation of certain elements of ideology and of those suspected to be involved in communist activities

(McGregor & Kammen 2012; Cribb 2009). This form of state power is refracted as a failure of the nationalist project in Pramoedya's novels, through which a very different sense of Indonesia is gained – or perhaps lost. In fact, this sense of "failure" can point us to an ontological incompleteness. The work, written in exile, seems to appeal to the concept of the aesthetic process, as described by Bhabha: "The present that informs the aesthetic process is not a transcendental passage but a moment of 'transit', a form of temporality that is open to disjunction and discontinuity" (Bhabha 1992, 144). Within print we see the inscription of and the limitation of possibilities, mediated through nationalist ideas emerging in the region and within European frames. Pointedly moving towards the region, there is an instance in *Child of All Nations* where the protagonist opens a German magazine:

> My German was terrible, but there was an article about the Philippines. I felt I had no choice but to force myself to untangle its meaning … The educated Natives in the Philippines had put their hopes in the Spanish liberals back in Spain, just as I had put my hopes in the pure Dutch liberals … a small group with this dream tried to bring it to reality, inviting others to dream the same way. They set up a newspaper. A newspaper! Filipino natives setting up their own newspaper! (Toer 1996a, 273–74)

This reflection on print technology reclaiming the narrative "dream" from the metropole within Southeast Asia is a reflection in turn on how the novels generate the agency of a Southeast Asian consciousness against trends in colonial knowledge.

This notion of transit from Bhabha – in some sense reflected in the "transit" in the condition of exile, but also between familiarity and the unfamiliar terrain of the nation state – is balanced similarly against the notion of violence, both real and imagined, enacted upon writing and ideology in Southeast Asian postcolonial polities. A condition of "exile" turns upon the aesthetic as a transitory creation of possibilities

that interrupts and also exists as another temporality: exists as a "time" of its own, a time also suspended in the days on Buru Island. What continues to inform this exilic voice is a sense of commitment to the national vision, even if the narration is sustained by a conversation between modernity and tradition, "while the author's bleak, black humor interrogates both" (Anderson 1991b, 367).

Such a conception of the aesthetic being produced in a process of transit can be mapped onto the exile of a writer and the censorship of his works, within a state of emergency, in the same way as it becomes the eponymous title of Jeremy Tiang's 2017 Singapore novel. The epigraph of that novel is from Walter Benjamin's famous statement: "the tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule" (Tiang 2017). Necessarily, this relates to the figure of the exiled writer, within circumstances where the emergency exists as a spectre created in relation to communist activity in Indonesia, somewhat uneasily paralleled by the circumvention of the publication of the novels, and the author's enforced inability to write or communicate. Emergency can also be read as the emergence of contentions to late colonial policy, as read in part through the figure of Pangemanann (with two n's) in *House of Glass*.

As an experience or mirror of exile, or emergency, the aesthetic is then reinscribed into reality from the margins of Indonesia. It is written in the "national" language within a borrowed medium in the form of the novel, but perhaps the process is liberated through the aesthetic and the time created within it. This time, as illustrated in the opening epigraph of this chapter, is also demonstrated in the author's somewhat detached commitment in the face of "big" national events such as the killings of 1965–66 in the twentieth century. As a form of solitude, this perhaps suggests a different experience of time within imprisonment, a time that reinforces a

desire to live amidst all the death in exile.[8] Even the dispossession of the author of his libraries is reinscribed fictively instead of through history, through a now censored version of a colonial past and told in a socialist realism deemed anathema to state interests. Benjamin would discuss "empty, homogenous time", but the time of state-sanctioned exile is perhaps an interesting rejoinder in need of definition, or release from timelessness. Burton reads signals in Bakhtin's examples; however, Burton suggests, it is the productive idea of "multiple interrelated senses of time, not merely in the same historical era, but also with respect to the same text: often, it is the struggle or dialogue between them that animates the narrative" (Burton 1996, 46).

While Pramoedya's work can be situated in relation to the early manifestations of aesthetic movements in LEKRA, this is not to suggest that either his work between 1950–1965 or the LEKRA cultural movement can be easily mapped onto a socialist realist model. As Michael Bodden suggests, "from the outset, the concept of 'socialist realism' was a fraught one, even among the Left in Sukarno era Indonesia. While left-nationalist writers like Pramoedya Ananta Toer claimed that Indonesians needed and could construct 'socialist realist' works, and indeed Indonesian literature had a legacy of works that were, step by step, moving in that direction", this view was, to say the least, not shared by other prominent figures in the PKI such as D. N. Aidit (Bodden , 2012, 456). Scherer's description is perhaps more suitable for the novels Pramoedya produced in this period: while gesturing towards a more progressive writing, "its

[8] Here Pramoedya in his memoir recounts an evocative metaphor of his mirror, "my mirror is a pitiful thing, nothing more than a foggy and scratched shard, yet it still can hold an image – even if on its back side is death. And though all of us will one day make our way to the back side of the mirror, for now, there is still incentive to go on living, something that continues to goad me, perhaps that I might do something of significance before I die". Interestingly, he makes comment on the poet of the 1945 generation Chairil Anwar in the same paragraph, who "once wrote, 'after meaning, comes death.' Is that true? Of what significance did this pioneer Indonesian poet have for the people of his own time? How far can we go before we stop thinking of life?" (Toer 2000, 75).

theme is how men make history and yet at the same time become history's victims" (Scherer 1985, 14).

The point about a progressive outlook is that it may be indicative of an alignment, rather than total accord, with the aims of a unified movement. It is worth noting the influence of travel and connections between Pramoedya and writers in a global literary space that may be aligned with the "left", and the "shift" in his allegiances towards a more committed stance (Heinschke 1996; Foulcher 2008, 2). In 1963, Pramoedya did indeed indicate his support of a declaration toward socialist realism. As Heinschke notes: "he aimed to rectify history by reintegrating into the canon that part of the literary tradition which had been suppressed by colonial cultural policies. The further objective was to look for exemplary works that could guide contemporary creation of literary texts supporting society on its way to socialism" (Heinschke 1996, 167–68). Even this scholar admits, however, that "Pramoedya did not radically deny all bourgeois aesthetic ideas, but did try to find solutions, valid to that time, to some of the problems of autonomous art" (Heinschke 1996, 167–68).

Exile and history writing are related, especially when narrating a nation through the margins of both literary society and journalism, but also in terms of place. As the *Quartet* is a document of exile, in a sense, it is also a set of fictional readings of the turn of the century in late colonial Indonesia. So it is perhaps unsurprising that Pramoedya (interestingly not choosing Minke) would recall that, "the figure of Nyai Ontosoroh, in particular, emerged as a response to this situation [the telling of the tetralogy in Buru to improve prisoner morale], as a woman who stood up, alone, to the injustices of Dutch colonialism, she was a character who provided a model of resistance and courage…" (GoGwilt 1996, 156). This narrative, supplemented by the detail in his memoir of torture and killing in the camp, adds an additional layer of the

literary effects of exile, and the writing then turns on the hinge of the nation state's oppression, existing in the doubling between colonial and postcolonial presences.

These doublings are also produced by exiles, or displacements, as effects of power. The point of this displacement, or exile, is that it not only exists in the presence of an oppressive power, but also is conceived within a unique outlook of the author, conditioned by elements of the mystic that are interspersed with an aesthetic vision. Heinschke describes this as a "'moderate autonomy', a concept that demands some commitment to society coupled with detachment from society", going on to state that "Pramoedya presented literature as a discourse of a 'potent self' i.e. a person who has transcended the world of selfish interests, passions, and external attachments (*lair*) and who intuitively experiences and controls the world of invisible forces (*batin)* inside and outside himself" (Heinschke 1996, 157). Perhaps, however, this notion of detachment is more accurately paralleled by the enforced condition of exile, and thus, it is not just about Pramoedya's literary principles Id as a writing philosophy in his public discourse, but also that we can see a fuller notion of "solitude" and "exile", and how these concepts are different in relation to different periods of his life.

With regard to the reception of the *Quartet*, we have to apply a considered, yet clear understanding of how this is measured. It is submitted here in this study that "reception" or the circulation of texts is not something limited to specific localities, or even through translation world-exchange models and their attendant privileging of certain works over others, but also, the reception of the works as "experienced" in different times and at different junctures. In the same way the question of writing in the national language, *Bahasa Indonesia*, merits some attention. "My work in Indonesian is aimed at popul106ahasag *bahasa Indonesia*, and making it a modern, living language … when people speak Indonesian today, it should be a better, richer,

greater language than before" (GoGwilt 1996, 157). Pramoedya sought to "enliven" the national language in writing a narrative of resistance, aimed at its popularisation. While there have been various translators of the works across his career into numerous languages, one translator, Max Lane, was caught up in broader circumstances of "reception" that question the idea of language and the dissemination of fiction along with provoking censorship. He recalled:

> I was a middle level staff member in the Australian Embassy in Jakarta in [the] early 1980s. In my spare time I started translating *Bumi Manusia*. In 1981, I informed the Ambassador that I had completed the translation and hoped soon to publish it through Penguin Books Australia. While I saw the project as a major contribution to bettering Australian-Indonesian cultural relations, and something good for the promotion of Indonesian literature in general, the Ambassador and the Australian Government saw it as an undiplomatic activity. *Bumi Manusia* had been banned by the Suharto regime in 1981. So I was in effect publishing a banned book. The Ambassador arranged for me to leave Indonesia as soon as possible in order that I be out of the country before the Indonesian government found out about this activity. During this whole period, the Australian government was complicit in the murderous activities of the Suharto regime. (Lane 2020)

In the novels, we are aware of the politics of language around Dutch and later Malay in the circulation of print periodicals. As Pramoedya tellingly demonstrates, these are not merely issues of language but of hierarchy, power and status as well. However, we see a certain turn against traditional Javanese and Javanism in the attitudes of some characters along with the voice of the narrator: "Every aspect of life had come under the influence of Javanism. Words, for example, had been made into mantras … these words were looked upon as some kind of spiritual acronyms, freed from semantics, cut off from their etymology, severed from the word's own meaning" (Toer 1996, 374–75). These attitudes reflect the author's own attitudes in turn.

This intervention of politics into circulation and reception is important. As a circumstance of the period it is critical for enjoining the postcolonial to the Cold War, especially because ideology is often taken for an accepted reality, not seen as fomented, and also "built" through various modern state apparatuses. The commission of certain institutions was linked in both the late colonial and postcolonial states to political agendas, though this at times was "ideological", in terms of Cold War boundaries in nature as well, here in terms of Guided Democracy we see a certain form of fiction being promoted and a censorial regime, and later censorship, under the New Order; but in the case of Lane's translation of the works of Pramoedya the sensitivity to his translation had to do with Cold War relations between Australia and Indonesia. In the Cold War period, institutions sponsored through US institutions such as the "International Writing Program", which translated works globally, showed that, "the discourse of liberalism, renewed in the late 1940s and early 1950s … informed and shaped literary works and criticism in the early Cold War" (Liu 2017, 613).

The political role of translation in the Cold War shows how the postcolonial world, defined in part by ideological aims of the superpowers, extended to writing. Andrew Rubin observes importantly that in this context, "these changing conditions of cultural practice belonged to a shift in the modalities of cultural transmission, in which culture could be mobilized, possessed and articulated" (Rubin 2012, 49). Despite the porosity of national boundaries, important in appointing individuals and funding through organisations like the CCF to publications such as *Encounter*, and so on, it still seems salient to recognise that such cultural activities "gave density to the separation between aesthetics and politics but at the same time structured the domain of transnational culture" (Rubin 2012, 56). This feature allows us to make the broader point about Cold War bipolar features operating from a recentering of margins.

Within the quartet the notion of the pan-Asian emergence of consciousness is a potent challenge to Western imperialism. As the retired Java doctor expresses to an audience including Minke in *Footsteps*, "the emergence of Japan has begun to change the face of the world." And through this he encourages the audience "Start now! Organize! The further you are left behind, the harder it will be to catch up. You will lag further and further behind the Japanese" (Toer 1996, 177–78).

As modern novels, the works of Pramoedya are often representative of and demonstrate the tools of colonial modernity, as well as anticolonial resistance to these forms. These forms, in part, were the result of the drive to quantify the nation by the colonial regime, as Benedict Anderson notes: "the real innovation of the census takers of the 1870s was, therefore, not in the *construction* of ethnic racial classifications, but rather in their systematic *quantification*" (Anderson 1991a, 168). This impulse to quantify, to surveil and control native populations, is what Anderson discusses with regard to the work of Thongchai Winichakul on mapping Siam, in the sense of a "new state-mind" (Anderson 1991a, 171).

This idea of a state-mind is especially well portrayed in the novels, in the figure of the conflicted colonial-educated protagonist questioning the will of the state mind, in laws that were not stable nor static:

> Justice must stand firm, even in a colonized country like ours. Who else would ensure this, if not the natives themselves? Because justice is something that is purely a human affair, it is only human beings who can defend it. But they protected only those who knew the laws and those who knew how to use their knowledge. Those who did not know were, in fact, the victims and targets of these laws (Toer 1996, 386).

This form of law expressed through the injustices of the colonial system, in some sense, is pervasive of colonial experience. Ann Laura Stoler, a scholar who in other

works examines mixed marriages (metissage), and the laws under colonial rule[9], notes that "House of Glass is the name Pangemanann gives to his report, but 'house of glass' refers to a more fundamentally disquieting space in the colonial imaginary – at once the fragile security of the Dutch police state … The quest for affective knowledge – that which moves people to feel and act – was the coveted pursuit of state intelligence, but beyond its grasp" (Stoler 2007, 226). This affective knowledge is more profoundly located in the growth of nationalism, embodied in the novels through Mei, who marries Minke but communicates beyond the grave through Minke's discussions with her portrait, asking for a more committed resistance to power.

Patke and Holden put the circumstances of writing across the region with an emphasis on adaptability and combinative skill:

> Any attempt to think of Southeast Asia as emerging from decolonization into globalization through nationalism ends up having to recognize that cultural developments such as modernism and postmodernism affected artists and writers in the former colonies as part of two complexly interwoven processes: a tendency to look Westward for ideas about the aesthetic vanguard, which was partially counteracted and counterbalanced by intimations and intuitions of how artists and writers might draw sustenance from indigenous or non-European elements of societal and aesthetic modernity. Under these complex circumstances, literary modernism developed rather slowly and intermittently in the work of authors and artists whose commitment to nation did not preclude adaptability and combinative skill in reconciling the indigenous and the derivative elements of creative inspiration (Patke & Holden 2010, 205).

[9] Significantly, Minke and Annelies face a similar fate in their marriage in *Bumi Manusia*. See Ann Laura Stoler, "Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: European Identities and the Cultural Politics of Exclusion in Colonial Southeast Asia" in *Carnal Knowledge and Colonial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, for a detailed historical exploration.

This combinative skill is drawn upon in establishing Minke as a major figure of independence in the *Quartet*. Minke is modelled after Tirto Adi Suryo, but also, he is looking to work through native society, while embracing outside influences. While the author was often supportive, in his own writing, of national developments such as Sukarno's guided democracy, in his memoir Pramoedya couches his encounter with Sukarno in a way that emphasises the importance of the voice of the detached critic, "I don't believe President Soekarno liked me very much. He thought I was arrogant" (Toer 2000, 270). This detachment allows us to see Minke's progression as a journey along the author's as well, which works in defiance of authority, and is an active voice in the public space.

The important representation of print culture is central to the novels, one that we should return to as it guides us through the four books. Minke is not only working as a writer, but also, eventually as he moves into medical school, the whole notion of the "body" of the nation is engaged, as well as the place of the indigenous within the master narrative, and of information from outside the archipelago. Print culture is also informative of many other issues in the texts, with Minke stating: "I pushed aside the Surabaya and Batavia papers… it had become my custom to read out reports about Japan. It pleased me to find out that their youth were being sent out … you could say I was a Japan-watcher" (Toer 1982, 52). In the same breath, the protagonist goes on to describe his greater interest in the Mellema family, his occupation with print is testament to the modern dissemination of knowledge that is at once local, but not limited to this. The news is a window to the broader region, continent, and world. Interestingly also, Pramoedya's own involvement in the publication of *Bintang Timur*'s culture page for a substantive period is testament to his involvement in the cultural life of the republic, if not of left leaning intellectual movements. This very

logic of writers associated and aligned with left movements and their publications was constantly drawing the attention of authorities in the region, and Pramoedya's own experience of detention was in some sense the culmination of this, but we must also take into account the broader context of LEKRA, the PKI and the 30 September issue, all of which have been explored in other relevant studies. Such an association, as explained earlier, did not equate to a clear delineation of his work or own identity.

Pheng Cheah posits that "patriotic culture is a form of self recursive mediation, an organic prosthesis of the living national body. It aims to resurrect the national spirit through the formation of a critical public sphere that continually presses against the state in order to inspirit it and transfigure the degraded present" (Cheah 2003, 11). This figure is useful for thinking about how the postcolonial struggle can be appropriated and become "haunted" as a nationalist narrative, instead of being an organic entity. Locating the spectral in Pramoedya's novels, Cheah suggests that "Pramoedya ascribes to culture, especially literary culture, a fundamental causal power in the dialectical process of national becoming because it sees it as the highest expression and embodiment of vitality" (Cheah 2003, 252). Awakening to a national identity is a fractious question for the region, with the mass killing in Indonesia creating mass death as a phenomenon in turn, which is then also erased from the nation. The mass killings in Indonesia in 1965–1966 still pose a challenge as to identifying the exact perpetrators and "primary sources about the killings have been scarce", even though "more secrets have opened up" after Suharto (Roosa 282-3). While the September 30 Movement that linked the PKI in Indonesia to a nationwide attempt at subversion, according to the state narrative, was then subsequently crushed and resulted in mass killings that ended up in the hundreds of

thousands (Roosa 284), it seems fair to see the nation and its identity as both a site of vitality and a site for militarism and destruction, giving it a Janus-faced reality.

As Bahari notes, "although he is lauded as 'the great Indonesian novelist', by many western critics, Pramoedya's literary status in his own country is controversial for obvious political reasons, as well as contentious among literary critics who attack his novels' 'unstructured and unresearched themes, simplistic plots, contrived conclusions, and undeveloped characters'" (Bahari 2001, 14). The plots of the novels work in tandem to establish a fabric of the late Dutch East Indies, and the repetition of historical events is ambitious but tends to move to digressions that attempt to explain various historical circumstances. In these complex historical narratives with numerous repetitions, we are guided through the development of nationalism, through Budi Oetomo and Sarekat Dagang Islamijah, later also abbreviated in the translated texts, which seeks to explain the various trends within early 1900s nationalism but sidetracks us from the central plot. The novels are an attempt to consciously rewrite history, but we are often given characters that seem all too eager to conform to their respective historical categories, not least in Khouw Ah Soe and others.

This becomes complicated in one instance, that can be unpacked further. In a particular incident in *Footsteps* where a local official Minke meets in his portrait to Stamford Raffles, which represents a form of mimicry to represent the benevolence and values Raffles could stand for, but also the aspirations of the indigenous to the colonial image (Toer 1996, 189).

Looking at Pramoedya's own interaction with the world of the Cold War and his commitment to national liberation – and also lament later on that this liberation may have been betrayed, as he remarks to Chris GoGwilt in an interview – "nationalism has no priority for the current regime in Indonesia. Their concern today

is how to get money. Everything revolves around capitalism" (GoGwilt 158).[10] We can see that he was also adopting "modern" narrative strategies and language and this language is shown by GoGwilt as "Minke's increasingly active participation in the mass political movements of anticolonialism becomes, too, the story of the emergence of *bahasa Indonesia* in 1928 by Indonesian nationalists" (GoGwilt 153). From S. M. Ardan's account in 1953, Pramoedya could be even regarded as a writer who defied the categorisations of contemporary ideology, even when existing very much within the conflicts of the Cold War and being affected by prison. According to Ardan, in that moment, "Pramoedya despises … killing, destruction, rape … he abhors the guilty party whether he happens to be a member of the Dutch administration attempting to reoccupy Indonesia, the communist leader Musso, a member of the Indonesian national army, or whatever" (Ardan "Overseas" 53). This moral consistency in the position of the author is also a sign that the legacy of the Cold War's conflicted projects is blurred in modern Indonesia. The remnants of imprisonment and injustice are echoed in his memoir, and language as a modern technology, especially the borrowing of one language, or another, with one form of imprisonment for Pramoedya followed by another in both colonial and independent periods, eventually ends up the same in terms of their human impact. "In my life I have seen a great deal of death … For me death is not something extraordinary. It's a specter that has haunted me since childhood ... one thing certain is that the dead have no more problems" (Toer 2000, 71–72). What is clear in his thinking is a congruence between types of oppression and their consequences, but also, the coincidence

[10] In the same interview excerpt he states, rather tellingly, that "with the fall of Sukarno, the Third World also fell apart" (158). They discussed the Bandung conference in this same discussion amongst other issues.

between the modern period, his fictional and personal worlds, and the most telling result of war – the death world.

Language is conceived in terms of an epic engagement that crosses between times, ethnicities, regions, the coloniser and colonised, and even between living and dying. Niekerk pulls out from Pramoedya's memoir this list of deaths speaking against history: "Buchenwald, Ravensbruck, Dachau, Auschwitz, and all the other human slaughterhouses, even those in Indonesia, cannot silence the dead". The dead will speak "but in their own way, and at their own time" (Niekerk 2018, 255). This language, or speech, is not exclusive to a certain time but, instead, operates in multiple temporalities and as a haunting presence from the dead. Similarly, the incompleteness of the translation of *The Mute's Soliloquy*, being half of the full two volumes, mirrors the incompleteness of the text being communicated to the reader.

Importantly, the concept of the language world, or perhaps numerous languages existing together in a certain space, is exemplified by Pramoedya in a description of his mother, who "liked to read and could understand Javanese in Roman script, as well as Malay and Dutch. She kept up in Surabaya and Semarang daily papers and all the books and magazines that we received … At night, when encircled by her children, or sometimes when lying down and nursing the youngest child, she'd weave for us stories based on the materials she'd read" (Toer 2000, 128). This telling fragment about the author's mother's language abilities is critical to thinking of the crossing and hybrid identities and multiple languages spoken in the Indonesian archipelago. Because of the fluidity of the situation of multiple tongues in the archipelago, we can ask, what exactly is the act of state power, or even transition,

in the shaping of new tongues? Pramoedya may offer us a suggestion, one that says that Dutch was invaluable to him in his life *(*Toer 2000, 137).[11]

But Bahasa itself, even at the disposal of the polities of the region (in this I refer to the Malay world subregion of maritime Southeast Asia), as Henk Maier notes, is not merely a "language" but instead a whole set of cultural practice *tahu bahasa* should not be translated as 'to know a language', as Westerners with their assumptions about identity and language so often do, but rather, 'to know the good and relevant manners of a certain group of people, including their language, so as not to offend them and bring oneself to a difficult position'" (Maier 1997, 676). Similarly, in so far as "Southeast Asia is an exceptionally diverse region in terms of geography, culture, politics and languages" (Patke & Holden 2010, 26), we are able to notice that in the *Quartet* what is being attempted is a remarkable convergence of these different language worlds, one that influences the view Pramoedya presents of the nation state.

In one sense, the *Quartet* is operating, as Maier mentions, in conversation with Malay world literature over time, but it is hard to make the link between traditional court poetry and the textual style, because Pramoedya is writing a modern novel and relegates Javanese chronicles to sidenotes. While certain mystic elements pertain to the author's sensibilities of his craft, "the attention to the local requires a sense of active commitment on the part of the writer to the nation and its concerns… the increased focus on the local … does not lead Pramoedya to abandon the Western example … his argument [in a specific text] is emphasising the social function of literature" (Foulcher 1981, 18). In fact, one is tempted to say that Asian print media forms a serious and salient language in the novels, as it continues to influence Minke

[11] "I might never forget the misery I felt while studying that language in primary school, but now I give thanks to the fair-skinned Dutch whose language became an irreplaceable tool for me in my life" (Toer 2000, 137).

in his publications, and demonstrates knowledge of the emergence of the Young Generations as well as the Japanese defeat of Russia in 1917, along with Filipino nationalism.

But in terms of narration between traditional and modern forms, there is a response to the traditional forms too. The character Miriam writes to Minke from Europe and voices these reservations: "if you lived in Europe for one or two years, though, perhaps your views might change…When I listen to Papa's stories from the *Babad Tanah Jawi* [a 'classical' Javanese text], it is not rare for me to shiver in horror at the viciousness, barbarism and cruelty: all a luxury, Minke …. The world for your people is Java" (Toer 1996a, 103). This interrogation of classical texts, however minor they may be, and their recasting in power struggles of the moment in the volumes constitutes an adept way for Pramoedya to craft his novels around past and present, through the juxtaposition of stories of the struggles for power. This shifting question around barbarity and justice, perhaps in collision with reality, introduces a dynamic between the past, lived traditions of Java and the reality of the novels placed in a world of numerous encounters with various influences. As characters move to Europe, especially Nyai Osontoroh, who eventually marries Jean Marais, and through letters from Maysoroh, who eventually becomes a singer in France and breaks her engagement with Minke, the novels demonstrate a flow of ideas and peoples across boundaries. Earlier, the journey of Annelies is also important in this sense. The role of letters enacts the contest between ideas and forms in the novels, but they too seem to lend to the heralding of print as a means to communicate big ideas through personalised speech.

The precolonial past and its numerous collisions (though perhaps not as forceful as this may suggest) is well discussed in Mrázek's examination of communist journalist

Mas Marco's writings,[12] in which "Malay often also appeared to be a language of exile, a 'linguistic exile', a voluntary exile from an easy sense of home, and a simple shifting between places… Frequently, unexpectedly, he broke his language, fissured it, with an utterance as from another world. Dutch words and technical jargon he used often, overused even. Sometimes a Javanese word appeared as an incongruous flash and remained as it was, unaffected by its verbal and syntactic surroundings, occasionally even sticking out from the newspaper page in Javanese script" (Mrázek 2010, 32).

Importantly, however, one should qualify that the exile suggested by Mrazek does not fully account for the affective relationship nationalists developed with Malay. Instead, Benedict Anderson posits, incorporating languages such as "revolutionary Malay" over local languages and their mixing shaped new "modalities of consciousness" outside of those imposed by the Dutch (Anderson 1990, *Language* 125-6).

This description, in a sense, illuminates the point about the migration of languages and the tradition, in which the coloniser's language is a residue, haunting the present in print technologies. In this sense, the intellectual appropriation and incorporation of certain languages also forms a point of reference to read into the texts. Similarly, the incompleteness of the translation of *The Mute's Soliloquy*, being half of the full two volumes, mirrors the incompleteness of the text being communicated to the reader.

The operation of time in the novels, at once progressing but also composed in another time and within a dislocated space, is paralleled neatly by the operation of time in modernist fiction broadly, in what Paul Giles calls "the retrodynamic impulse

[12] Marco Kartodikromo, also known as Mas Marco, was, as A. Teeuw notes, "a journalist, initially a member of the Sarekat Islam, and later of the P.K.I. (Communist Party) … He was arrested in Indonesia several times and he ended his life in the Boven Digoel concentration camp… he seems to have written short stories as well as a number of novels in Javanese and Malay" (Teeuw 16).

common to all aspects of modernism, with Proust's art of reversal illuminating ways in which modernism itself was predicated upon strategic inversions of time" (Giles 2019, 52). This reflection, in disrupting the singular motion of time and perhaps inverting it, is apparent.

The time of exile offers a way of thinking about the operation and function of time in Buru, where *The Mute's Soliloquy* reads as an extended and deeply evocative account of the structure of time in Pramoedya's experience as a political detainee, one which perhaps resembles a past time of imprisonment rather than that of postcolonial modernity. This postcolonial "momentariness", according to Hodge and Mishra, is demonstrated in the aspiration to "capture a seemingly unique moment in world history, a configuration of experiences and insights, hopes and dreams arising from a hitherto silenced part of the world" (Hodge & Mishra 2005, 378). This uniqueness that perhaps becomes compounded with other discourses is precisely the confluence of terms that shatter the singularity of the postcolonial, and perhaps also asks, when is the postcolonial moment and what is the silence *within* the postcolonial? These silenced narratives, enunciated through texts, emerge through the asymmetry between a grand narrative of postcoloniality and the speech of the literary.

This presence of both "supposed" synchrony, meaning and the Cold War conflict, as well as the emergence of different time zones, is linked to the dynamic between the modernist agenda of building the individual through colonial modernity, and the dissonance between space and time of time zones. This is a play between opposites and similarities, and is reflected in the mediation or bridge between two epistemologies seen in the parting of Annelies from Minke, about which he reflects:

> whether light or shadow, nothing can escape being pushed along by Batara Kala. No one can return to his starting point. Maybe this mighty

> god is the one whom the Dutch call the Teeth of Time … the small are made big and the big are made small. All are pushed on toward that horizon, while it recedes eternally beyond our reach, pushed on towards annihilation. And it is that annihilation that in turn brings rebirth. (Toer 1996a, 14).

The distances traversed here are also mediated through time, in an eternal yet circular motion, that drawing upon the Javanese god of legends, Batara Kala, is able to intervene in people's lives. This god may also correspond to that conjured in the Dutch expression, in a split that does not operate in one local register but also in that of the coloniser. This can be contrasted to a singular empty time of modernity, or colonialism.

In *House of Glass*, where contemplating why European colonial modernity was able to occupy and replace traditional Javanese polities, the views of Pangemanann suggest that on the one hand, the Indies "Natives had no sense of rights, no sense of law", while, there was "solid study in the archives" that allows the character to attribute the victory of the Europeans in Java to them having "clear and firm principles" (Toer 1992, 62–71). This narrative is interrupted, by another character suggesting that in the fourteenth century the Javanese were writing poetry and inscriptions while "most of the Europeans were illiterate" (Toer 1992, 70). This dialogue between the archival and the present (perhaps not entirely accurate, and ignoring the fact that chronicles were perhaps written and read only by a certain audience), allows for yet another dialogue, between the time of the colonial and the precolonial distant past. The experience of entering the archive and excavating what really belongs in other temporalities to uphold values that explain the present perhaps

explains the curious role of civilisational inferiority and superiority that is at play in the works.

The time of insularity perhaps also exists as an alternative operation of time. As is noted of Minke "if you keep staying indoors like this, you will lose much of life's richness… Five years indoors like this, stuck in your room, will use up the health and strength of ten years" (Toer 1996a, 178). This insular time is suggested to operate against vitality and youth. Similarly, a suspended time, without exposure, is also attributed to the lack of "progress" and development of the native population, recalling the imagery of the racial as a category that is oppressive, because it chastises the "native" for lacking the capacity to progress. In his work *The Myth of the Lazy Native,* looking at the representation of Malays, Filipinos, and Javanese from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, Syed Hussein Alatas points out that "the ideology of colonial capitalism sought a justification of Western rule in its alleged aim of modernizing and civilizing the societies which had succumbed to western powers" (Alatas 1977, 7). Under this framework, "under the cover of dispassionate objectivity, the injustices of the Dutch were expressed in sober terms but not so for the native rulers" (Alatas 1977, 12).

This point about race and ethnicity is perhaps an important one from which we can link postcolonial concerns to more interesting ideological concerns, in the sense that Kwon discusses two colour lines in the twentieth century, moving from race to ideology (Kwon, 2010). In this relation between ideology and ethnicity, there comes into the equation the operation of such through institutional frameworks in colonial modernity. In some sense, this remark from Nyai Osontoroh to Minke in the first volume of the quartet is telling: "I've never been to school, child, Nyo. I've never been taught to admire Europeans. You could study for years and years, and no matter

what you studied, your spirit will be educated to do the same thing: to admire Europeans". And from Annelies: "I'm not an Indo … I don't want to be an Indo. I only want to be like Mama" (Toer 1982, 31). This point about Annelies wanting to be a native rather than a child of a mixed-race background, is played out in the novel, but often these power relations and racial taxonomies are manifested in marriage. The novel is explicitly interested in the role of the Japanese as forming a modern polity, with aspirations to a greater East Asia. As the "retired Java Doctor" voices this: "Up there was to be found an Asian people who stood tall and firm and were respected. They were recognised by all the civilised peoples of the world as their equals. What other people had achieved that recognition apart from the Japanese?" (Toer 1996, 125). The docility of the native as a colonial concept, as pointed out by Alatas, is produced in a situation of misplaced responsibility, and Pramoedya explores that too. "The principle of misplaced responsibility is based on the following: a situation is created by colonial rule. The situation affected a change in native society, and native society is then blamed for the resultant situation" (Alatas 1977, 205).

The novels demonstrate an acute sense of the hope some intellectuals placed in the emergence of a rising Japan and China in the early to mid-twentieth century, with the emergence of the Young Generations in different parts of Asia, especially in Japan. As Nijman says, "like these young Chinese have a real passion to catch up with Japan. Once you have begun to write in English, you'll be able to establish direct contact with publishers in Singapore and Hong Kong" (Toer 1996a, 65). This, however, does not equate to the same view of the Chinese as an ethnic minority in Indonesia. We see the distinction in the novels' portrait of the Indonesian Chinese through figures such as Khouw Ah Soe, who is seen initially at Nijman's office as

"just a youth dressed in Shantung pajamas, without any shoes…just a *sinkeh*", an ordinary Chinese immigrant (Toer 1996a, 64).

The novels make clear how important it is that Minke sees beyond his own thinking, in fact to "learn […] from other ideas that aren't European" (Toer 1996a, 77). This dynamic between the impression of an immigrant totality and the contribution of a minority to the newspaper is indicative of the other racial structures and ethnic differences that are imagined in thinking between and across identities. Minke is surprised at Nyai Osontoroh's wisdom initially, despite her lack of formal education, and here too, is seen to have to disabuse himself of perceptions. Minke's friendship with Jean Marais, who married a native himself, is indicative of the hybridity of interpersonal relations. The language of European human rights and civilisation spurs "Natives" into activism,[13] but at the same time it deprives them of these very values.

The Philippines feature in this regional imaginary too, via the references to nationalist hero José Rizal. The dreams of the Indonesian intellectual class participating in a universal modernity grounded or centred in Europe, is posited in comments such as: "Yes, in Europe, the land where the peak of human achievement and brilliance was stored in a museum." This idea, however, is betrayed, as in the case of Rizal and other independence figures: "what was important was that the authorities in Spain cursed him and took action against him" (Toer 1996a, 273–74). This betrayal of a perhaps misplaced enthusiasm for the project of self-government is understood by Minke as due to the greed and plunder of the European colonial powers in the region: "I found myself thinking of the greedy ogre in the wayang stories of my ancestors" (Toer 1996a, 274). This misplacement is fatal, as in the illustration by the

[13] I use the capitalised "Native" that is used throughout the translations.

narrator of the case of Khouw Ah Soe's enthusiasm for the Philippines, which results only in leaders such as Rizal being trampled.

"Locomotive! Locomotive! Locomotive! It announced itself constantly with its own incessant rhythm. Lo-co-mo-tive! Hissing crazily along the rails, spouting black smoke into the sky, screaming with its whistle, it woke the people from their dreams, declaring itself the mightiest being on earth" (Toer 1996a, 280). Technological modernity, and its reading through onomatopoeic resonance, is able to communicate to us not simply the encounter with modernity, but to enliven the apparatuses of technology into real being. This vernacular rendering of technology is also seen in contrasting terms by the author in being exiled himself by a tool of technology, a ship: "Time and again the engine stalls and ship, chug-chug-chugging to a stop, becomes a bobber on the mid sea waves. Yes, this is our ship, possession of the largest archipelagic nation in the world!" (Toer 2000, 13). The records demonstrate that experience of the technology was an ambivalent encounter, at once monstrous, but also exhilarating: "Do not fly so fast on the smooth iron tracks, you sniffling steaming monster, do not let this beautiful meeting end so quickly…. I prayed that the ride would never end…" (Kartini in Mrázek 2002, 8). This expression recorded from Indonesian nationalist "feminist writer and activist" Raden Adjeng Kartini,[14] giving words to the experience, is the wording of a sensation in a similar way as that explored by Mrázek. "[T]o recall Wittgenstein again, words can replace feelings. 'Hurts' for instance, can be used instead of weeping. The word 'revolution'

[14] Robert Cribb and Audrey Kahin offer this dictionary entry on Kartini (2004): "Raden Adjeng Kartini (1879–1904). A Javanese feminist writer and activist, she was the daughter of a progressive bupati. And her letters, published posthumously as *Door duisternis tot licht: gedachten over en voor het Javaanse volk* (From Darkness to Light, Thoughts about and on Behalf of the Javanese People, 1911), edited by J. H. Abendanon and with a foreword by Louis Couperus, and in English translation as Letters of a Javanese Princess (1964). Joost Cote has provided a useful updated translation of her letters in his *Kartini: the Complete Writings*, published in 2014.

similarly, can be used to replace a sense of struggle and change. The word 'revolution' no longer describes revolution but replaces and displaces it" (Mrázek, 2002, 41). This replacement, or mediation through the writing of Pramoedya, conveys a sense of movement even within exile: perhaps the locomotive as enunciated would reflect the memories of the Buru prisoners in their encounters before being brought to Maluku; in spoken terms, as Pramoedya read it aloud, the animation of the word to create the imaginary realm of motion, when exile meant agricultural labour and stasis.

This type of mediation, of the in-between force of technology, is well described by Pheng Cheah, in stating:

> the good magic of modern knowledge creates an Indies-wide native public sphere that can truly express the Indies people's living needs and true interests (Cheah, *Spectral* 288).

In writing about the Japanese occupation his memoir, the experience of Pramoedya's family is mediated through technology, where moving into a *kampung*, the family had to subsist on illumination provided by "one twenty-five watt bulb" (Toer 2000, 179). Similarly, on the broader naval front of the war: "the ocean swallowed ships of all nations, the prey of torpedoes from submarines" (Toer 2000, 119). Pramoedya's own skills were sharpened by working under the Japanese for Domei, with writing on a typewriter that allowed him to be "able to type two hundred and eighty letters per minute"[15] (Toer 2000, 75). The presence of heightened technological awareness amidst conflict is conveyed, but also it is a source of wonder and terror.

Pramoedya's place among other Southeast Asian writers is often eclipsed by his status in Indonesian studies of writing in the modern period, or perhaps coloured by his global significance. Significantly, as Cheah points out and as this chapter has explored, his voice is very much tied to the aspirations and concepts around the

[15] As Hilmar Farid and others point out, contrast this to his clunky typewriter in Buru and later another typewriter provided by Jean-Paul Sartre (Farid 64, see footnote 46 in original).

nation, which "Pramoedya ascribes to culture, especially literary culture, a fundamental causal power in the dialectical process of national becoming because he sees it as the highest expression and embodiment of vitality" (Cheah 2013, 252). And Cheah attempts to locate the plausibility of Pramoedya's organismic schema for understanding the relationship between the state and the nation, in reanimating a critical public sphere in new order Indonesia. However, this reading balances the national and universal in complementarity, without a mediating regional force. For Pramoedya, the imaginary of the region, or even a broader Asia, is very much present in the *Quartet*. The moment of writing, especially enjoined to a broader Cold War context, but also, in articulating an anti-imperialistic sentiment (if one is to reduce it to that), is participating in a shared sentiment. While Pramoedya is often recognised within the global sphere for his commitment to anti-authoritarian writing, this can best be situated within a regional analysis of Cold War Southeast Asian writing.

The awarding of the 1995 Ramon Magsaysay prize, "celebrating greatness of spirit and transformative leadership in Asia" to Pramoedya (Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation website), interestingly echoing the figure of Minke in the novels, is a testament to his regional identity, but more particularly, the "liberal conception of the individual", tied to Magsaysay's reputation as a Cold Warrior, which "goes in tandem with modernization theory" (Curaming 2009, 153). And it is important to note that the prize, awarded across spheres of human life, is also a reflection of a more universal humanist ethic. This is in contrast to his reputation and continued limited readership in Indonesia, while the texts themselves communicate the broader visions of a historical modernity and read in some part as historical novels, as noted.

One has to consider audience as a factor before making pronouncements about a "regional" sphere of reading, as demonstrated by Volland regarding a proposed

proletarian prize for fiction: “despite the internationalizing trends expressed through the pan socialist literatures of the 1940s and 1950s, reading habits in the countries of the socialist bloc were defined by the particular preferences of various audiences” (Volland 2009, 109). This perhaps communicates to us an inability to reconcile different readerships and regional preferences, and highlights literary experience. It is perhaps important to consider the nexus of themes in the novels, which correspond to those in other writings of the period across the region: of anticolonialism, the advent of postcolonial modernity, print culture, and the shared journey of the protagonist with the nation. More importantly, however, it seems clear that Pramoedya’s novels focus on the parallel between narration and nation, which is a critical concern to writers in the region, be they poets, novelists, or playwrights.

Chapter 3: Continuities: Francisco Sionil José's *Rosales Saga*

> All through history, too, tyrants have flourished, whether in Asia or in the West. Still, man's search for freedom and the elusive meaning of life continues so that, in the final analysis, the clash really is not between East and West but between those who seek freedom and those who deny it, between those who proscribe it and those who want to extend its boundaries. The clash continues, not between the old and the new but between those who want to brutalize humanity and those who want man to perfect himself (José 1998, 192).

This chapter focuses on the writing of Filipino novelist Francisco Sionil José. It covers five of his prominent novels arranged into a series as *The Rosales Saga*. These novels are *Po-on*, *Tree*, *The Pretenders*, *My Brother My Executioner* and *Mass*. In relation to the bigger argument of the thesis, the chapter will outline ways in which both the author and the texts, in their critique of society through four generations of characters, map out an alternative history of the Philippines. José is a significant and prolific author in the Filipino context and his work has been recognised both as a journalist and as well as a novelist and editor of the journal *Solidarity*. His writing explores themes such as Filipino identity, displacement, and his work is significant in thinking about class relations and society in the Philippines.

This alternative history is as much sub-regional as it is Filipino. Ilocano identity is emphasised, giving the narrative a particular inflection but also at the same time illuminating the way urban and rural landscapes act as places of memory, unpredictability, and displacement.

This chapter furthers the inquiry about the novel in Southeast Asia post WWII, in what can be described as the Cold War period, and the function of it between

postcolonialism, the legacies of colonialism and related structures and issues of society, such as the dominance of elites. As Shirley Lim Geok-Lin remarks, "it is too easy to call José's fiction protest literature", and similarly, this study seeks to think through the numerous categories which explain the "dynamic evolutionary nexus of individuals and experiences we call society" (Lim 1989, "Epic" 72–73). The central aim of this chapter is to interrogate the five novels that comprise the *Rosales Saga*, which were not published in chronological order, but later became a series of narratives that link together through an Ilokano frame and speak to themes contemporary to colonial and postcolonial experiences in the Philippines. This chapter seeks both to illuminate the Cold War's place in the writing, alongside decolonisation and the continuity of structures of elite domination, and to construct a mode of thinking that enjoins past trends with realities encountered by the author and the characters. These continuities, I would argue, speak to broader Southeast Asian fiction, insofar as the novels illustrate the persistence of the colonial period not only in English language Filipino fiction but more broadly in the region.

Postcolonial theory in many ways encompasses Third World and subaltern experiences, but often is unable to cover all world regions. This broad application can and should be applied to Southeast Asian writing, and the dominance of South Asian writing studied within the field of Postcolonial Studies itself should be challenged. This chapter serves to both situate José's saga within the context of postcolonial studies – although another study (Albus 2012) has done this to some degree, but also, more importantly, to bring about a more sustained conversation, along with Holden and others, to highlight Southeast Asia's relative absence from postcolonial perspectives. In this chapter, I link postcolonial studies with the Cold War through the journal *Solidarity,* edited by José, and the novels that form the *Rosales Saga*. While

the postcolonial context is regional, the national also merits a critique that is common to postcolonial and Cold War contexts. Thus, region is also read through nation. Further, the parallels between 'strongman' leaders serve as a form of link between the Indonesia chapter, where Suharto and Guided Democracy was a reality for a substantial period, and in the Philippines, where the Martial Law period under Ferdinand Marcos offer another ground for comparison.

In examining José's work, we are able to examine how the modern Filipino novel speaks to Southeast Asian writing and works within the tradition of leading Filipino nationalist Jose Rizal. It moves ahead from the nationalist parable to speak to the nation as a fragmentary whole bound together by dislocation and misplaced belonging. While characters like Tony Samson in *The Pretenders* obtain education in America and through their doctorate see their friends with a view that made him "look at things more dispassionately than both of them" (José 1987, 39), they are implicated in trying to belong, despite their displacement from Rosales or the Ilocos, and to correct betrayals both in the present and the past. This concept of betrayal runs through the five novels examined in the chapter; however, the betrayal is not merely colonial or ideological, it continues into the lives of characters at all levels of society.

As Mina Roces observes, while they feature images from Rosales and Pangasinan, the novels are not necessarily working as a "national epic", even though this is how the works are often considered (Roces 1994). The novels were published non-chronologically, but they can work in a chronological sequence, beginning with *Po-on* (Dusk), which was written last, in 1984, and then *Tree*, written in 1978, followed by *My Brother, My Executioner*, 1978, and *The Pretenders*, written in 1962, and finally, *Mass*, 1980. These novels do not have many links, however, apart from some genealogy that runs through them (Roces 1994, 294). Also, while there is a

sense of chronological flow, the first novel was published last, but comments in a very engaged sense on belonging and the revolutionary war at the turn of the century. The links between the novels are defined through identities and the shaping of sub-national identities, both as a counterpoint to nation making as well as being complementary.

Arias puts it well in terms of *Po-on*. The novel:

> underscores the challenge of the subaltern: the search for an authentic voice. The postcolonial voice is one of intersection and juxtaposition: where past, present, and future collide, where the displaced search to find both a real and ideal homeland, and where the imperialist ideology and native sensibility compete for space and dominance within the heart, mind, soul of the subaltern and the land itself. (Arias 2008, 44)

This sensibility works through the novels. Although *Po-on* deals only with the end of the Spanish era, the idea of how to construct the self is important, as is the question of how numerous selves are produced in the context of an emerging authentic Filipino voice (initially borrowed through elements from nationalist writers such as Jose Rizal and then subsequently locating the works in the more social realist strain of writing). This then, as Philip Holden points out, follows from a tradition earlier established by writers such as Salvador Lopez. However, the scholar qualifies it in this way:

> yet, the transparency of representation of such a national *Bildungsroman* is undermined by the fact that these male protagonists – scholars, acolytes, political activists, public relations executives, or journalists – are engaged through their writings in the act of representation, an activity coded in the narrative as effeminate or productive of non-normative masculinities (Holden 2008b, 160).

José's narrative also interrupts the national narrative, as Holden demonstrates via its use of English as a "language in a multilingual environment, then, haunts the gendered narrative with doubts concerning the genealogy, present adaptability, and

most crucially future trajectories of 'modernities established by others'" (Holden 2008b, 162).[16] The point Holden is making in terms of scripting the nation is that the use of English is fundamentally a challenge to the easy scripting of the postcolonial nation. Such a protest, translated into the language of persecution, led to deliberate torture and persecution by the state by elements seen as contrary to its aims, as we see in *Mass,* where Pepe Samson, for his role in an organisation called "The Brotherhood" is rounded up and tortured, asked if he had been to China in the previous year (José 1983, 187), and further, tongs are applied with electricity, "like a sharp claw tearing at my genitals" (José 1983, 190), by two interrogators, named Sidewall and Tarzan. The nightmarish sequence illustrates the state's fascination with destroying the individual assumed to be acting against its interests, especially in the context of the domestic Cold War. This therefore helps us think about how literary representations act to construct an alternative rendering of the Cold War in Southeast Asia as they appeal to domestic fronts. If Kwon urges us as scholars writing around new approaches to the Cold War to attend to "questioning the dominant assumptions and attending to diverse experiences" (Kwon 2010, 25), then our analytical gaze should shift to more diverse conceptions of the Cold War in domestic terms, not only framed around direct conflict in the region. This means shifting our gaze to policies used and deployed by regimes in certain situations, which elicit Cold War themes, but speak to domestic control, such as the events around the Plaza Miranda bombings in 1971, and contested memory around these issues, as the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) was seen to be involved by some, while others were "convinced Marcos was its mastermind" (Reyes 2018, 462); similarly, in the Malaysia chapter,

[16] Here Holden is in dialogue with Partha Chatterjee's concept of "modernities established by others" (Chatterjee 1993, 20).

some mention is made about the contested nature of the 13 May 1969 riots (Soong 2007). These therefore allow us to read domestic politics within the broader frame of the Cold War and use these to reimagine how Cold War categories were restructured through these regional experiences.

The novels are documents of the Cold War, but also are postcolonial, that at once operate as alternative renderings of the Filipino past but also highlight pertinent issues to Southeast Asian writing after the Second World War, such as the deliberate choice to write in English. Similarly, both novels are at once Cold War related as well as relating to domestic concerns, as these operate interchangeably. As novels they emerge from a particular geographical "region" in the Philippines but they do not read only as Ilocano novels. José can be credited with producing "the most substantial body of fiction during the period of Marcos's rule" and features rebellion by "a young male protagonist", which produces "only a further series of dilemmas" (Patke & Holden 2010, 84–85). What this then refers to is the place and location of the provincial in inflecting the larger narratives, because José looks to speak to the nation. This provincial identity, through Cabugawan and Rosales, Pangasinan, haunts the narrative. It does so even as, as we see in *Tree*, the place remains a constant. In the face of corruption and greed, "who then lives? Who then triumphs when all others have succumbed? The balete tree – it is there for always…" (José 1988, 135). The permanence of the backdrop illustrates a return to the rural but José does not limit himself to an idealisation of the rural, as illustrated by the far from ideal attitudes of Pepe Samson in *Mass*: "but it is the riffraff who really take advantage of their own kin" (José 1983, 24). The books are markedly realist, the pastoral features as a reference point only.

The rural and urban elites and the masses are dealt with through a social realist imagination. The encasement of the writing within the novel as a form in this case borrows from the independence novels of Jose Rizal, but also appropriates and speaks through the lens of a broad scale history that emerges from the Spanish and American periods. These novels form layers of unravelling but also competing and coexisting functions for these linguistic lifeworlds. Often, they exist alongside competing forms of new identities that are also nationally and class bound. This is especially clear in the transitions between characters and their conflicts, most pronounced in *The Pretenders* where Tony Samson gets married to Carmen, who is the daughter of a rich businessman, and who finds himself in conflict with his own academic study of the Illustrados and eventually takes his own life. His American colleague, who happens to be an agricultural economist, a character not unfamiliar to the developmental landscape of US projects in Cold War Southeast Asia at the time, critiques those around him as being the real thieves at the end of the novel, not those from the poor. But as Godo, Tony's friend perceptively notes:

> well, the beginnings of another revolution are around us again. The Huks may have failed [referring to the Hukbalahap communist led rebellions] but there is another uprising coming clearly, and this time there is one unmistakable ideology behind it. The poor against the rich. And it will be a revolution which may wipe out this society from its false moorings (José 1987, 120).

This class conflict, evident through the novels, is exemplified through continuities of elite dominance, but it is important to be aware that José is not in line with all the assumptions around socialist realist representation. In fact, in his own writings, he recalled how, in his meeting with Mochtar Lubis, the Indonesian author, who clearly did not abide by the LEKRA line, Lubis "recounted to me how it was under [sic] Sukarno regime, too, when writers like Pramoedya Ananta Toer – either a fellow

traveller or a communist – harassed and oppressed writers who did not toe the Sukarno line. I understood what he meant, and more so afterward when I looked at what the writers of Marcos have done" (José 1998, 73). Thus, his style cannot be associated with a complete adherence to a socialist realist representation.

José recalls that writing during the Guided Democracy period, which Pramoedya actively supported, prior to Suharto, looked to censure materials that were not in line with national objectives. He was a key part of Filipino PEN and this involvement, with José's writing, does speak to a more humanistic objective, but this must be qualified against his work as the editor of *Solidarity*, a magazine published through his own publishing house. The work of *Solidarity* in providing academic and historical commentary on culture, literature and the arts, along with its focus on regional writers, including from Japan and Australia, is an example of the way José worked through the frames of the postcolonial Cold War. His journal was accused of being a Central Intelligence Agency, US tool, in that it was funded by Congress of Cultural Freedom money, and eventually he sued those for libel who accused him of these affiliations, or of at least of knowingly participating in a CIA scheme. This background is quite important in considering the state of publishing in Southeast Asia, especially in English during this time. During the case, José had the court hear about his articles demanding the expulsion of American bases from the Philippines, as he remarks, "I won the case, but the CIA label stuck" (José 1998, 94). Thus, the contested nature of the Cold War in the region is also one of affiliations, and José's publication should be considered as worthy of study as those of *Encounter*, established by Stephen Spender, with a nuanced view towards CCF funding

recipients.[17] Thus, the Cold War in the region demonstrates a continuing salience around the debates of sponsored funding and aesthetic choices.

Further, the CCF is covered in regional interactions in terms of the American Richard Wright's accounts of Indonesia which meant the organization was "inserting Wright into a community of Indonesian universal humanist writers who were specifically interested in cultural exchange with the rest of the world", which was further supported by the CCF in their 1955 'Conference on Cultural Freedom in Asia' (Foulcher & Roberts 2016, 18).

José's writing and life are intertwined with the emergence of the Filipino nation, although they must be mapped onto the Marcos era if we are to make sense of the prerogatives behind the narration. These, moreover, cannot be separated from the reality of the emergence of decolonisation and ideological struggle, and the spread of institutions in the cultural Cold War, which were mapped onto real rebellion and conflict in Southeast Asia. The influence of these institutions, not necessarily "new" to the period, emerges in the form of a complex relationship between José's own political leanings that favoured socialism (but not communism), a desire to write towards freedom from different forms of oppression, and his interaction with regional and world writers at this time. More importantly, the support he received from the CCF in establishing *Solidarity* as a journal is key to understanding the nexus between print and Cold War superpower financing. The role of the CCF via the CIA was to diffuse the potency of leftist nationalist movements. This was especially important in Southeast Asia at the time. In this regard, the archive of *Solidarity* is an exquisite

[17] Even in the case of *Encounter*, as Frances Stonor Saunders demarcates and reproduces from communication, "there will be some sense in publishing some kind of statement telling the readers that the editors of *Encounter* were not aware of sources of funds to the Congress of [sic] Cultural Freedom; which will be true at any rate of most of them" (Saunders 383).

tapestry woven from thinking about the region at the time of its formation and as a heuristic concept within area studies.

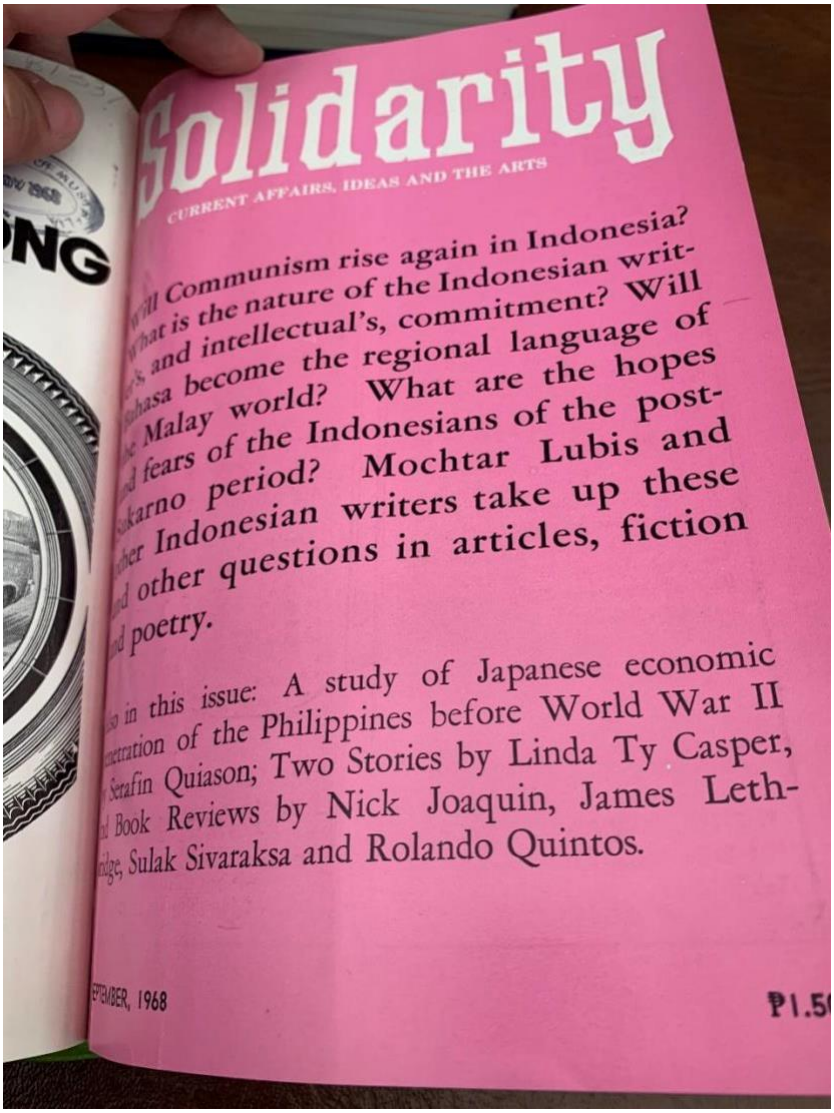

Figure 1. An example of a cover from *Solidarity*, September 1968. National Library of Australia[18]

As Figure 1 demonstrates, a typical cover of *Solidarity* engages with critical issues of Southeast Asian affairs and is contemporaneous to the writings of the novels. In José's editorial prefaces, he often goes beyond the Philippines, and a clear dimension of comparative work is being introduced through the journal across the

[18] v.3, no. 3 to v.3, no. 12 (1968).

region (Solidarity Manila). The journal featured literary work by contemporary poets and authors, along with studies on issues of "rural reform" and politics, which use a Filipino lens but also engage with academic work from outside the Philippines and Asia. A more substantial study of *Solidarity* is warranted on its own, but the scope and impact of the journal in establishing categories around the postcolonial Cold War period, and engaging with critical debates around this time, is highly pertinent in establishing a reading context for José's novels, and further, imagining a region.

As a publication that was a repository of ideas about regional culture for over half a century, *Solidarity*, printed out of Sionil José's Solidaridad publishing house, was basically a platform for ideas around regional culture. These conversations, mainly in English, helped to develop a sense of region, not merely through institutions but by developing links aesthetically and otherwise, even if there were no formal efforts to collaborate. This "archive" of material in print works alongside, or perhaps in some ways also contrasts with the novels, revealing the ways in which culture operated in Cold War Southeast Asia. This was not within the communist bloc, of which a number of sites existed in the region in various languages, including Chinese, and which have been taken up by some scholars. *Solidarity* was operating as a non-profit organisation. José was invited to events from the Congress of Cultural Freedom and attended a forum in Berlin in 1960. Here he made contact with Ivan Kats, which lasted till much later. José himself denied any involvement with the CIA and quite clearly so, though he reflected: "I suppose there is no choice for me but to live with it, and refute it with libel charges where necessary" (José 1998, 62).

> Before I returned to Manila in 1965, I asked the Congress [of Cultural Freedom] if they would support a publication, a journal that I would set up. The answer to my query was yes. They gave me an annual budget of ten thousand US dollars… *Solidarity* was also opposed to any ism that

> curtailed the freedom of man; as a journal supported by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, this was explicit; it was also a belief which I held strongly, then and now…. *Solidarity*, however, addressed broader issues; regionalism, for instance. I was very much impressed by the attempts of Europeans to bring about regional harmony in the Continent, a dream which continues to grow into reality… I opened the pages of the journal to a wide variety of writers who were interested in the Philippines and Southeast Asia – many of them from the Southeast Asian region (José 1998, 58–59).[19]

Edwin Thumboo states that "*Solidarity* did more to advance the understanding of Southeast Asia and the sense of it as a region, than any other journal" (Thumboo, 2005), which is quite an important endorsement from a contributor to the journal, where Thumboo's poetry is featured alongside commentary.

The concerns of *Solidarity* cross over notably with the concerns of José's novels. Issues relating to land ownership and urban/rural divides, for instance, are replicated in José's novels. Agriculture is a central backdrop of the novels, but the novels are also mobilised into class struggle. The character Ben in *The Pretenders* declares, revealingly, "the tenants don't know how to work the land. They are so damned ignorant. What do the tenants know about farming and efficient production?" (José 1987, 182). This point is demonstrative of how particular levels of colonial and native knowledge are somewhat replicated but also dissociated within the postcolonial realm, especially through land politics. Land politics then also introduces an association with place, but it is not simply limited to this, as the stories grow out of the city and region, far from the "semantic quibbling which haunts postcolonial terminology" (Gandhi 1998, 3). Even at a distance, the imagery of the agricultural

[19] José speaks of returning from Moscow when he heard of the charges that CCF had links to the CIA. He tells of how his pro-communist views collapsed when visiting Moscow on the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution, at seeing the state of the country, and while he was pro-Huk before, this did not align him as such with the pro-communists in the Philippines (José Rappler).

forms a reminiscence for things past. For Tony Samson, "a pang of homesickness possessed him, and in this cold anesthetized room, a host of remembered images bloomed in the recesses of his mind, the Cabugawan of yesteryears, the small, thatched houses… the eternal fields of gold and green" (José 1987, 124). Similarly, the sub-regional distinction in the Ilocos allows the writer to evoke images through writing and further, we can think about distinctions between the pastoral as a site of "the potential for autochthonous development – realisation of the dreams the common people struggled for – and its suppression by a native capitalism in cahoots with global imperialism" (Sivanandan in Lazarus 2011, 12), in which Lazarus invokes the *Rosales Saga* as a key example of this point. Thus, the pastoral is a place not of only nostalgia but of "peasant economies…undermined and disrupted – with capitalist class relations being superimposed over them" (Lazarus 2011, 12).

The jungle is also a place of injustice, As Don Vincente remarks, "there is always an element of injustice in this world and many wrongs are committed in the jungle" (José 1978, 103). These wrongs escape the boundaries of the Huk rebellion. In *My Brother, My Executioner,* as a novel of the Huk Rebellion, the reality of large scale abstractions is confronted by small scale realities, as Luis Asperri reflects in a letter to his father:

> do I really love humanity or truth or that abstraction called freedom? How deceptively simple it was for me to address myself to these ends and how illusory they are finally becoming.
> The reality is not quite like these. In truth I am afraid of losing my comforts… (José 1978, 139–40).

These questions then illuminate the struggle between various identity categories within the search for a revolutionary identity, juxtaposed with the continuities of the landscape through colonialism. J. Neil C. Garcia points out correctly that colonialism was fundamentally epistemological (Garcia 2004, 1), and this lends itself to an

examination of the use of language such as English as an expression of "formal longing", in a way that mirrors the novel in Enlightenment Europe. As Garcia relates, "there is more than politics to the concept of nation" (Garcia 2004, 72). This important reference to the novel as a creative act brings us to identifying how the five novels in José's series epistemologically locate a century of the Philippines outside, but also within, the ambit of colony and nation.

Decolonising, from the vantage point of the regional, more often than not reveals similarities across national contexts. At the same time, it begs the question asked by Tuck and Yang in their study relating to decolonisation as a metaphor alongside Nazry Bahrawi's critique of nostalgia in Singaporean Malay writing. In Bahrawi's account, the question of "rindu" or nostalgia, within an urbanised frame, is "riddled with multifarious meanings of longing, as a frame for understanding these counter-narratives" (Bahrawi 2019, 512). It operates against the nation state in the form of the *kampong* or village, and places the nostalgia within an archipelagic imaginary, "outside our specified time period, and national borders" (Bahrawi 2019, 512). From this perspective, the sub-national is extrapolated into a deeper engagement with regional connections. There is some contrast, however, in the feelings of the characters, as revealed, for instance, in the statement: "I may have come from the world's end—Cabugawan" (José 1983, 155).

This expansive nostalgia for a region is both paralleled in different feelings of belonging, as in the construction of the "Brotherhood" group in *Mass*: "one day, Toto…asked if I wanted to join a student organization in the university" (José 1983, 22). But these belongings are different: the Brotherhood is an organisation focused on new ideas, and though Pepe may feel displaced in Manila, this is where he receives his education in terms of university and food (there are elaborate digressions over his

adventures with Japanese food – consumed in order to feel rich – and with dishes unavailable at home, like *siopao*), and has sexual adventures as well. These then make the novel *Mass* much more than just a protest novel, with the backdrop of the bombings of Plaza Miranda and the contestation between the CPP and the Marcos government as to who caused it (Reyes 2018, 462; Scalice 2017, 659–73).

In terms of belonging, one can read against the operative idea of postcolonial space, or even the narrative structure of history making. As Chakrabarty notes, the Subaltern Studies collective wrote with an impulse to react against elite accounts of history, to instead "produce historical analyses in which the subaltern groups were viewed as the subjects of their own history" (Chakrabarty 2009). This point is especially interesting in the domain of literary fiction as it communicates the themes of the novels themselves. Belonging and the search for it is perhaps a partial metaphor for the representation of subalternity. Belonging is not merely a question of the condition of the displaced hybrid figure of the migrant subject, but also exists domestically as a problem in the context of the Philippines. For Tony Samson in *The Pretenders*: "he never felt as lonely as he felt now – not even in America in the iron-cold winter when he almost starved, nothing of this terrible loneliness had ever touched him before" (José 1987, 170). José is writing also about differentiation within the Filipino communities. As Hergen Albus notes of the novel *My Brother, My Executioner*, "the people in the barrio had always been differentiating him and his brother having darker skin" (José 1978, 121). Thus, a real critique entails thinking about identity and attitudes within both local and colonial contexts. In terms of the postcolonial context, these novels are rich in their search for identity and belonging.

A number of scholars and other authors have penned journal articles and magazine pieces about José, and have had the opportunity to interview him, and these

serve to bolster our study at present. Importantly, in the volume edited by Edwin Thumboo as a tribute to F. Sionil José, we see in Ronald Klein's chapter the discernment of José's engagement with Japan. This engagement has to be considered by scholars, and I would argue, is important in thinking about Southeast Asia as a region. The thesis looks to establish Japanese experiences as part of a Southeast Asian frame, and one central link is how non-Japanese authors treat Japan. As Klein notes in José's work, Japan is present in the region through familiar Japanese brand names or places, and through description of Japanese geography and lifestyle. Also, there are cross cultural interactions in his general body of work, not all of which are covered in my thesis. But it is important to note that he wrote his books from different locations, and at the end of *My Brother, My Executioner*, a novel which he wrote quickly, we read the location as "Dominiko Kai Shibuya June 29 1972". Japanese commodities and technologies play a part in the novels: for instance, "two weeks before the actual fiesta, the streets were rigged up with varicolored bulbs and from all the houses stretched buntings of brightly coloured Japanese paper" (José 1988, 19). However, José is careful in his commentary in *Solidarity* to also present a critical voice with regard to the left's position on Japan in the Cold War context, suggesting that "the ideologues of the left, imprisoned by their doctrinaire approach to the Filipino reality, have misread it, and continue to misread it" (José 1998, 81).

This type of critique that refuses idealism, does however fall into a late Cold War romanticism for an Asian model, "[W]e can look East for inspiration, to Japan, which has adopted Western technology without discarding its own precious identity" (José 1998). Alienation in José's novels is paralleled by the feeling of alienation of those outside the country, somewhat mirrored by Sionil José's own experiences: "I cry because in Shinjuku I am lost" (José in Rappler 2020). But where does one truly

belong? Emulation of Japan, as José expresses it, is partially because he sees regional successes against Filipino realities in his travels and experiences. José's disdain for poverty allowed him to speak in Singapore in admiration of Lee Kuan Yew and his policies: "while I think that the function of any government is to extend the frontiers of freedom, sometimes, it is the only thing that is left with the poor" (José 1998, 30).

The edition of *Solidarity* in August 1973, on Japanese relations with the region, includes articles from various authors and a piece called "Tokyo Journal" by José himself. It examines directly the role of Japan in the region. José's article includes discussions with fellow intellectuals on Japanese novelists and describes visits to institutions such as the University of Tokyo. "I got to know what the radical students did three years ago when they occupied the campus and stopped classes; the university today is still pretty much in shambles" (Jose 1973, 14). The editor of the *Japan Times* is referred to as a "friend to many Filipinos…the Japanese are ashamed of the gross activities of their businessmen in Southeast Asia" (Jose 1973, 16). Surprisingly, in the next edition of *Solidarity*, Indonesian poet Taufiq Ismail published "Visitor to the War Museum" where he writes:

> …to live again those years as a guerrilla
> when freedom was as a dream forever
> and our thoughts are still free of money
> and things
> of theft and corruption and the misuse of power
> and that is why I walk slowly
> …
> to the pegs where headscarves hang
> the bayonets with pennants
> the modes of streets fighting and battles
> I touch the black steel of Japanese
> machine guns

… (Ismail 60–61).

The poem, looking at the independence struggle in Indonesia, alerts us to a particular vision of decolonisation and the Cold War, where these forces are intertwined, and the Japanese technologies of oppression are also the tools of independent Southeast Asian states.

Colonial rule and the legacies of colonialism are part of region-making in the period, and the characters in the novels are to some degree grappling with various facets of the residue of colonialism. This must be placed within the context of the experience of the Japanese Occupation and the link between this and the resistance movement that existed during that period. This is of course alongside the complicit politicians, as illustrated by the assessments of Tio Doro in *Tree*: "he had also played superb politician by keeping away from entanglements either with the guerrillas or with the Japanese puppets. As I heard him say all too often 'The bamboo survives by bending to the storm'" (José 1988, 98). Such indigenous posturing is relevant because the middling role is suggestive of how local actors managed political influences during the Cold War; striking a balance between varying ideological positions, as part of the middle powers movement. The role of middle powers was perhaps limited in Southeast Asia, as states fell into even more subsidiary roles, with continued interest from decolonising powers. How stories of rebellion are crafted and told is an important part of the logic of revolution. As demonstrated in the case of China, "military stories therefore became indispensable for winning the Chinese revolution in the past and for the triumph of the world revolution in the present" (Chen 2010, 132). This is evident in writings around resistance in the Philippines by Jose Maria Sison, for instance, who was a leader of the Communist Party, and of its armed wing—the New People's Army. In the poem, "Ang Gerilya Ay Tulad ng Makata"

(The Guerrilla is Like a Poet), Sison writes of the guerrilla being "enrhymed with nature", "swarming the terrain like a flood", carrying out the "people's epic, the people's war" (Sison 1968, 26–28). This poem not only draws links to the Cold War in South and Latin America, but to Vietnam as well, through the dimension of the guerrilla, something which is covered in the Huk rebellion in José's *My Brother, My Executioner*.[20] The situation of writing revolution in case of the Philippines, especially with Rizal as a central figure of colonial resistance, is also important in terms of the idea that no such mobilising force was equivalent in ideological struggle. The dynamics between the Huk and the conflict were part of the national formation, though not necessarily part of the world revolution.

José reflects that:

> I have often said that in the Philippines, fiction has difficulty catching up with reality, and though literature is a 'lie,' the fact is that it contains far more truths than the newspapers. The writer, knowing his milieu, can make sense of the unusual and the bizarre around him, giving them the authority and verisimilitude of metaphor (José 1998, 57).

This truthfulness of fiction serves within the novels to work against the broader brushstrokes of characters who hold positions within various social structures. In a set of novels written in transitional Cold War settings, it seems as if José juxtaposes the pastoral with the solidity of the Filipino character. In *Tree*, we witness the transition to the Japanese Occupation in the Philippines – "as for the balete tree, it weathered the war handsomely" – which is juxtaposed against the resistance fighters on the next page, where "the men who had fought the Japanese so well as Huk guerrillas would now fight their landlords and the Army, which they perceived as instruments of the

[20] Some Cold War studies, such as Lawrence Freedman's *Kennedy's Wars: Berlin, Cuba, Laos and Vietnam*, find links between these guerrilla movements in the 1960s, but are generally a comment on US foreign and defence policy, while they shed significant light on these conflicts.

landlords to perpetuate their ancient, miserable lot" (José 1988, 98–99). Thus, the struggle would turn inward to older questions of strife over land and control. These characterisations help us work through the transition between historical eras. Given that the Japanese Occupation is often read as a watershed moment (notwithstanding the fact that Western colonial power would mostly return to the region) we can see that allegiances of various Southeast Asian groups shift easily. Compare this with the MPAJA (Malayan People's Anti Japaenese Army) fighters in Malaya who later became part of the CPM (Communist Party of Malaya). Thus, communism existed as a concept in the region, but it existed in parallel to other historical developments, as exposed by writers who have explored these transitions.

An important distinction exists between fact and fiction in the Cold War context, especially in terms of imagined and real conflicts in the global South. The idea of national fictions is mapped to certain realities created by these fictions, such as that of the Illustrado elite. A sense of national betrayal in José's novels is premised on class but can be extrapolated to other contexts as well: "the Filipino intelligentsia imbibed much of the elitism of its colonial master while it paid noisy homage to the grand ideals of justice, freedom, and nationhood" (José 1998, 81). We are able to understand that the politics of patronage and land-owning elites are part of the regional structure. As Benedict Anderson points out: "the period 1954–1972 can be regarded as the full heyday of cacique democracy in the Philippines" (Anderson 1998, 16).[21] This meant that, while the press was by and large free, oligarchy ran the country. Under "the guise of promoting economic independence and import-substitution industrialization, exchange rates were manipulated, monopolistic licenses

[21] It is important to note here that Anderson also includes the Communist Party of the Philippines as being, in this period, "characteristically" vulnerable to caciquism, (1988, p.16, see footnote 45 in original).

parcelled out, huge, cheap, often unrepaid bank loans passed around, and the national budget frittered away" (Anderson 1998, 16). These relations and critiques of class are well demonstrated in *The Pretenders*. As Tony Samson expresses to a Senator, "men can be enslaved by their own people, by their own prejudices, by their own rulers…" (José 1987, 87–88). José looks to expose the corrupt nature of politicians and at the same time the betrayals of people working against their own. Tony Samson is betrayed by his wife Carmen, whom he leaves after discovering her adultery (José 1987, 162). For Carmen, Tony is "no more than a *provinciano*, charming in his own barrio way, who must be protected from his own simplicity" (José 1987, 4). This battle between the aristocracy and the virtue represented by Tony's quest for knowledge is representative in part of the types of struggles that occur within the postcolonial nation between groups. However, Tony himself has betrayed Emy and fathered a son, whom we later learn is Pepe Samson in *Mass*, and thus José looks to expose betrayals both on large and personal scales.

This question of scale is perhaps relevant to broader geopolitical discussions, but it is also relevant in terms of how the novels are read and received, as well as how they are shaped into narratives of nationhood. For instance, as Isagani Cruz demonstrates, the five novels have varying levels of sophistication in narrative technique, but the reason *Mass* was popularly received was in fact the reception that it elicited abroad in Holland – due to its translation into Dutch. Similarly, the reception of the novels in Asian literary circles is tied to José's links with other Southeast Asian writers, such as Edwin Thumboo. Some individuals, like Amina Said, have translated works of José into French, and "visited the Ilocos so that I would be able to describe accurately the color of a rice field, the deeds of Mabini and Bonifacio, a *balete* tree, or the smell of copra…" (Said 2005, 190), while she notes that "many people are

surprised to hear that such a thing as Philippine literature exists, and they are hardly aware that this literature is written in English" (Said 2005,188). It is important to know that José was being translated into languages in the Eastern bloc, and he received royalties from book sales from the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia (Podberezsky 2005, 192). Indeed, the translation of José's writing into various languages, including those from socialist states, has allowed his work to communicate a distinctive Southeast Asian regional imaginary across Cold War divisions, while still remaining Filipino and Ilocano at the same time.

The unique perspective that José's work brings is that it ties together local and broader issues with Spanish and American colonial experiences, institutions (such as the priesthood and others), and "independent" Filipino actors. These act together and against one another but need to be considered in conjunction. While their implications are different in various places, they show how colonial/postcolonial distinctions are often arbitrary. The postcolonial concept of hybridity is easily seen in the distinctiveness of the religious practices of the Filipino Catholic church, which has numerous superstitions of local provenance built into the broader church influence (which is a legacy in itself of Spanish colonial expansion). As Albus notes in terms of the novel, *Po-on*, it is claimed that "the Church was not interested in justice or the abolition of inequality" (Albus 2012, 143). This textual representation of institutions constantly emerges in the novels in their relation to Filipino identity. The figure of Tony Samson himself, who eventually succumbs to his own sense of displacement alongside other conflicts, is perhaps a telling composite or hybrid figure too.

José's portrait of a colonial institution that played out into postcolonial modernity allows him to represent a broader point about injustice being a constant both in colonial and postcolonial contexts, even from institutions that offer

redemption and supposedly proffer justice. This correction to justice then serves by way of Jose Samson's note as the epigraph to *Mass*: "Truth is, above all, justice" (José 1983, vi). This sense of justice is also seen to be a parable through fiction, in the sense that Casper suggests: "beneath its surface realism, José's work is also a parable of personages like Marcos, a fellow Ilocano" (Casper 1987, 20). This is suggestive of a broader arc of portrayals through family that is also intertwined with bigger national developments. The colonial institutions are also modified, reflecting the Southeast Asian context during the Japanese Occupation, distinguished by the presence of the Japanese. Within the novels the Occupation offers some clear context relating to the independence movement: "the man used to be a farmer, not a guerrilla, but a Japanese patrol had come upon him—and to the Japanese all those with malaria were guerrillas. They would have killed him had he not escaped. Wounded, he had fled to the hills to become a guerrilla" (José 1978, 158). This interesting portrayal of shifting identities, and the shaping of new ones, is particularly apt in understanding the dynamics of decolonisation, Cold War "communist" insurgency, occupation, and the emergence of new state systems, but also locates within it an unidentifiable source of "colonial" knowledge that is at once liminal and a metaphor for rebellion.

The notion of justice is then tied to a corresponding sense of injustice on the part of the native – the native here being both the ethnic group of the Ilocanos, but also the native on many other levels, even in terms of how different actors view what the aims are for the lower classes in society. *In My Brother, My Executioner*, Luis says, "I cannot help feeling that you seem to think the lower classes are aspiring for utopia. I can assure you—most of the time all they want is three meals a day, education for their children, medicine when they get sick" (José 1978, 133). In terms of colonial studies, Albus makes an important assertion by invoking Foucault to

demonstrate that the native is "reduced to being an object at the disposal of imperialists and colonizers… [I]t will never be possible for the native to reach the highest level of being, the one of the European" (Albus 2012). This certainly applies to the novel *Po-on*, where locals are described in a letter from Tom to Jim, the Americans, at the end of the narrative.

> You ask what the natives are really like. There are many tribes and dialects. In Manila, there are the Tagalogs; they are like most of the natives, a small people with black hair. They are very graceful, particularly the women. They have dark eyes and since there has been some intermarriage with the Chinese and the Spaniards, there are many half-breeds. They are wily, passionate, irresponsible, and can not be trusted (José 1984, 204).

Such racist tropes are voiced by the author to elucidate the American position on the Philippines, and how they represent and reproduce a colonial logic.

The growing body of scholarship on the Southeast Asian region during the Cold War, alongside Cold War histories that venture beyond bipolarity, are promising indications of a significant academic re-evaluation by scholars in relation to Cold War politics. The bipolar structure is fragmented, as is noted in studies that give nuanced attention to not merely the Asian experiences of the Cold War, but also importantly in relation to Cold War settings at "home", with scholarship turning regional within the US and the Eastern Bloc. This turn towards a deeper appreciation of the period is made more significant by conceptual work done by scholars such as Kuan Hsing-Chen, in terms of "de-cold war" (Chen 2010, 120). To de-Cold War in this sense is not necessarily to displace the narrative of the Cold War in Southeast Asia, but instead to open up new interpretive possibilities in order to subvert the clarity of ideological positions and legacies.

This point is perhaps important as histories are not a static or linear process but instead are shaped by larger forces that can reconceptualise in circular ways the role of time. Duara's conceptualising of regional networks is instructive: "When the modern production of space became hegemonic, these networks were in many ways themselves recruited by capitalist and territorial organizational systems. But some of these networks continued to maintain their transborder and multiscalar character" (Duara, 2010, 242-3). Duara's focus on thinkers such as Rabindranath Tagore, in terms of an inter-Asian nexus or cosmopolitanism, suggests that "however, their thought was in advance of their time in that it could not be sustained by the plural societies in which they lived. Ideas of race, culture, anti-imperialism and imperialism to be found in pan-Asianism all spelt a lethally close relationship with the dominant trend of nationalism" (Duara 2010, 253). This point about projecting a thought ahead of its time while also belonging to a trend of nationalism that is not simply shed during the Cold War era, in fact is very much within this nexus of collaboration but contestation among regions and sub-regions. The concept of shaking off the Cold War – or to de-Cold War – invites a questioning of the nature of resistance from the colonial period, and into the postcolonial period. In José's first novel, he makes mention of the guerrilla Eustaquio, or Istak, who embraces resistance and in doing so transforms a part of himself: "he was not a healer anymore. He was a destroyer and the gun which he now grasped seemed a part of himself." And while he is conflicted slightly in his mind, the dead American in front of him brings up the question, "what right do these white men have to be here, millions of arms lengths away from their own land?" (José 1984, 198–99).

This attempt to de-Cold War, in the terms laid out here, offers an opportunity for writing to speak against these bigger structures; in some sense to write as an act of

decolonising. The novels as cultural documents, as well as the publication *Solidarity*, are important in writing an alternative narrative of the Cold War in a region where broad issues of regionalism and rural settlement are juxtaposed against big national projects and developments. At moments in the novels, guerrilla warfare is present but encased within local "family struggles" and within issues of representation – for instance at this point in *My Brother, My Executioner,* "'Surely you don't believe all those stories about the Huks [communist rebels]. I would be more worried about the Constabulary and the civilian'... 'Don't the papers tell the truth?'" asks Trining (José 1978, 174). This moment of confusion in categorising and labelling insurgency is muddled in the remnants of colonial legacies and their relationship to ideological struggle. Similarly, José's own membership and setting up of International PEN offers a broader lens through which we can read modes of expression during the period, not merely in bipolar considerations of aesthetics, but in ways this are necessarily complicated in a world literary space. Reading these as novels produced during the Cold War, but without the frames of the Cold War, we work against these big categories that frame intellectual discussions of the period. These discussions then spill into other contemporary dialogues.

The novels are not quite revolutionary literature, but the writing can be couched within realist descriptions, that can lend some perspective to concerns of ideology. As Shirley Lim notes, the philosophical quest for the meaning of life in the novel *The Pretenders* is "situated in the material context of class conflict – a fundamentally Marxian analysis of the human condition, the novel question(s)…the presence of God and the grand design wherein some are exploiters and the rest are exploited" (Lim 1989, 78). This, pitched against the national narrative of progress, allows the fiction to rescript, through an awareness of class conflict, the

contradictions inherent in concepts of national progress. However, these various class formations are also juxtaposed against imperial formations and dominant ideas. As Morales records, José himself expressed that he was:

> until President Ramon Magsaysay came to power 'very pro Huk' because of his concern over the plight of the farmer….in connection with his interest in land reform José travelled, as a journalist, to different parts of the country, leading to his dismay that wealthy landgrabbers were still defrauding the peasantry as they had his own family years before (Morales 1989, 116).

The concept of the Filipino as a "lost soul" in search of an identity, as Roces puts it, is very much linked to the uncertainty of the postcolonial period (Roces 1994). Ironically almost, the culture of the martial law period (post 1972), which changed from the 1980s into a people power movement, created a "bloodless method of revolution" (Roces 1994, 315) basically means an aesthetic uncertainty was also mirrored in the nation and vice versa. This lost soul is a tormented one, but also one that finds some growth and longing for place, as we seein the relationship between Tony Samson and his illegitimate child, Pepe Samson, who is persecuted in the novel *Mass*. Emy, Tony Samson's love back in Rosales, speaks to him of rootedness, almost as his identity, of place in the world: "no he could not brush her memory away as he would dust from a book. Emy was in him as real as his breathing…" (José 1987, 42).

Within the series, there is a semblance to Jose Rizal's works, and its concern with influences in society, such as the clergy in *Po-on.* Priests are seen as ill willed, greedy, and are satirised in the same way as the two volumes that emerged at the end of the revolutionary period (Albus 2012, 7). However, reflections on the past are of course written with reference to dialogues being undertaken with other national narratives, and Rizal's two novels and other writings serve as a mould for the

construction of another narrative. Both *Noli Mi Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* were written in Spanish and spoke to the theme of colonial oppression. The five novels together act as a satire of the Philippines into the contemporary postcolonial context, but these are not of course the only books to do so in Filipino writing. As E. San Juan, Jr. notes of Carlos Bulosan, "when I say that Bulosan is a political poet, I do not mean that he concentrates on ostensibly political subjects – for there are no such subjects per se … what I mean by 'political' is the fact that Bulosan takes a stand on immediate social issues from a radical perspective" (Juan 1976, 64). Though Bulosan worked in America and his books were published before José, we see a semblance of similarity in the notion of writing that is conscious of social issues.

Po-on is part of a broader branch of Philippine literature concerned with the end of the Spanish period, but then leads into discussing nationalism and the distinctions of nationalism, as well as resemblances across time, as we see in the portrayal of the guerrilla resistance against the Americans. The historical novel, as Gloria Gonzales demonstrates in the Philippine context, is a "dual space: both as an oral and textual utterance. The moment the oral or phonetic utterance is transcribed on a piece of paper, orality ends … As an inscribed representation, the novel becomes the 'exchanged object' that can be passed to the reader" (Gonzales 2017, 188). In *Po-on* for instance, it seems clear that "it is through this mentee-mentor relationship that the novel's nationalist didactics unfold" – that is, between peasant protagonist and mentorship of a landowner and a revolutionary ideologue (Gonzales 2017, 53). Because of the importance of letter writing in the novels, Holden also suggests, the act of writing within the text has the effect of "cannibalize[ing]" the literary texts, thus the letters, which are, in the case of *My Brother, My Executioner*, never delivered. They "enact a fantasy of complete referentiality, of pure communication

with their addressees … yet on another level they clearly have no communicative function: they will not be delivered, and they are thus elaborate exercises in Luis's own subjectification" (Holden 2008b, 164). This helps to clarify the function of the text within the Cold War, in seeing it as a form of literary referentiality against a world of thinking, and in some sense, they are circulated as objects on a world literary scale that enacts some principles of a social realist critique while at the same time participating in their own minor status as marginal documents unmaking colonialism. This fantastic element is certainly interesting, as it seems that the world of the novels is usually closed on a sub-national level, and yet the possibilities of numerous sitings are available in the form of communicating against the nation, the sub-region, and the broader Southeast Asian regional conception.

As Ponce suggests with reference to the migrant Filipino community and letter poems, "it is the epistolary form of address, sent from a range of geographic places and socioeconomic positions, that is particularly arresting" (Ponce 2012, 25). However, these letters are "thoroughly gendered and sexualized" (Ponce 2012, 25). Ponce views the *Rosales Saga* letters as strongly evocative of a form of masculinity that is able to speak for the nation (Ponce 2012). It is as if the letters chart the growth of the independent voice, only to be never delivered, thus creating a *bildungsroman* that lacks a trajectory towards a public space.

The notion of a national dialectic emerging between the peasant and landowner introduces a nationalist form, which follows from the burning of the village: "burned by the Spanish colonizers as an act of retribution for the accidental killing of Padre Zarraga, the newly appointed young Spanish parish priest". Similarly, it is important to note the relation between the family unit and the tribes around the Philippines, where Gonzales makes it clear that there are these affinities amongst the

other ethnic groups. However, this does not correspond to the indigenous peoples in the Philippines, especially the ifugao and igorotes. In the novels they are idealised in ways that are comparable to certain colonial representations: as native characters, they exist outside the narrative and form part of the landscape. This is an instance perhaps of borrowed colonial attitudes, in that, as Albus suggests, in José's view, "it is much easier for a colonized people to inherit the vices—not the virtues—of the conqueror" (José in Albus 2012, 22).

As I hope is clear, the books do not necessarily have a "Southeast Asian" focus, in as much as they do not necessarily speak of the region directly but they do include broader regional and "national" developments in the experiences of the characters. Often the nation is obscured too, with the focus routed between the city and the village, but this is typical of Southeast Asian writing. Historical characters in Philippine independence, such as Jose Rizal, are represented, and this turns José's narrative outwards from an Ilocano set of novels into parables about nation making and the peripheries that such figures are also relevant to. "Rizal is dead, Eustaquio [later Istak]. You may have never heard of him, but he is Known to many of us who believe in justice. The Spaniards executed him last week at the Luneta" (José 1984, 136). These engagements with the history of Philippine resistance to Spanish rule are important, and often reappear in the novels. The characters, mostly names familiar to a Philippine readership and broader external readerships, construct an alternative sense of writing of the nation. José is attempting something other than a self-congratulatory nationalism, as when he reflects: "so what do you do when you realize that the Filipino's worst enemy is himself" (José 1998, 4). Similarly, this national focus is paralleled by a selfhood that is reflected in the nation, as an artificial construct.

This is perhaps made less opaque through the emphasis on colonial impacts in the region, as well as the impact of the Japanese Occupation. This rebelling against occupation as a thematic is not necessarily pronounced through the novels but features within the consciousness of the narrative. Similar to its role in Pramoedya's *Mute's Soliloquy*, it seems clear that the Japanese Occupation existed not merely as a hiatus between colonising and decolonising but that the extreme violence perpetuated during the period only anticipated future struggles in the region. But like the character of Pepe Samson, we can turn against these larger concepts, as reflected when he is asked to listen to Toto, who "made me stay to listen to his prattle about the economic classes, the need for hot-house ideology and all that razzle dazzle about the future of Filipino society… I did not have to listen to him. I was from Cabugawan; he was not telling me anything I did not know – the exploitation, the squalid hypocrisies" (José 1983, 25). This rebellion against the grand narrative is a quiet struggle against oneself that plays out against nation. As the narrator tells us at one point in the *Saga*, suicide as a theme is "an admission of total failure, and the destruction of the self is the end of one person's struggle, an end where from there would be no birth or resurrection…" (José 1988, 71). This idea of a "turmoil of conscience" plagues the characters of the novels. And the haunting of the characters is not only of the material world. José is described by others, such as James Fallows, as "the man in touch with the spirit world" (Fallows 2006, 42), because of his reflections on spirit and literature, which stimulate his wonder: "the mystical, the unreal experience becomes normal, a part of life that is not usually lived…" (José 1998, 88).

Although they are written primarily in English, the novels include Spanish, Filipino and the localised adaptations of English, which means they play on the margins of singular language worlds and move between historical times. Their

Filipino sensitivity also means that there is a certain degree of localisation that we are able to observe on a regional level as well. Words like *burgis*, *kumbento*, *barrio*, *syokis*, and others are indications that the language should resemble actual speech, which deepens the effect of the reality being communicated, easily recognisable within a local context. Such mixing is similar to the mixing of English and local languages in the hybridisation of languages in other postcolonial contexts. This means that writing the novels in English, in some sense, is a form of strangeness that within "colonial and postcolonial multilingual settings is immediately realized, and never quite forgotten" (Holden 2008b, 168). That is to say, the writing emphasises how the textual incorporation of local idioms within the English language is not necessarily exchanged within the local context. In the novels, the return of the local is often also the replication of elite structures. The local interacts with American influences, as the character Betsy says in *Mass*, "except, the Americans have shackled us to their concepts, their megalomania" (José 1983, 144), in a conversation about the place of the Philippines in Asia.

While the novels focus on national and historical contexts, they are set within and outside the Ilocos region of Luzon in the Philippines. Quite a number of points can be derived from this choice of primary setting: that the novels follow the trajectory of characters within and outside a place of home. Tony Samson's departure and inability to settle back in are reflective of a kind of exile that can be paralleled to diaspora or even the exile present in Toer's work. Though José did not face much censorship, the exile experienced by the characters operates in a similar fashion. Minke embraces Dutch but later accepts the need to write to the "Native" sensibility, for instance. The works are not necessarily Ilocano novels, in so far as they are ethnic categories. The search for Ilocano migration and the materials for such by Tony

Samson at the Widener Library turns up the book written by the character Dean Lopez, *An Examination of the Symbolic Pattern of the Ilokano Language*. Despite the Dean's proclivity to affix his name to the collective work of the graduate assistants, Tony cannot bring himself to loathe Lopez; "it was he, after all, who had sent him to America and the beginning of wisdom" (José 1987, 34).

Questions about bloodline and nativity, as Ponce suggests, make it clear that the Filipino as a subject is always intimately tied to the Spanish imperial discourse: of naming but also being part of a project of remaking the name to represent a community of people. Certainly, as a proponent of national writing, José and his work are tied into the project of making the Filipino in opposition to, or working against, dominant categories that are set up to render the figure invisible. This question of nation making through language is also interrupted by a deep power structure, which is reflected in José's novels and in how "the institutionalization of English under US colonialism in the Philippines created and exacerbated ethnolinguistic, regional, and class differences among the populace" (Ponce 2012, 18). This very important point, or points, are discussed at great length and with literary effect in the novels.

The Pretenders asks: "How can one be a revolutionary in an age where revolutions have become commonplace? There is only one way – and that's by creating an entirely new definition of revolution itself and knowing your position once you have made your definition" (José 1987, 88). This reflection from Tony in his discussion with Senator Reyes is important in thinking about the character of political change and resistance in Philippine history in the novels. But this should be enjoined to other concepts within colonial and postcolonial scholarship, especially on the relation between the postcolonial subject and the rest of the world, and how they interact. In some sense, as Albus points out, the "development of hate" can be seen as

part of dispossession of the figure of the rural class, as shown in characters such as cousin Pepe in the novel *Mass*, who goes to the provinces to join the revolutionaries (Albus 2012). There are also revolutionary visions in the books, reflected in statements such as "Conquest by force is not sanctioned by God. The Americans have no right to be here. We will defeat them in the end because we believe this land they usurp is ours; God created it for us" (José 1984, 204). A revolutionary atmosphere is charted in central or municipal places, not merely the provinces.

> Ah, Plaza Miranda – throbbing, malodorous heart of Manila! It is here where they all meet, the scavenging politician and his wordbound listener, the government official and his gross hypocrisies, the penitent and his worldly vows. The blooming banners, the shabby buildings loomed around us. It was four, humid and hot, and the crowd was so thick we could hardly move. Not all were students – many were the poor (José 1983, 112).

The nature of revolution is written about by Antonio Samson in *The Pretenders*, and he writes in his dissertation that "the revolution has to originate from the rural areas". However, it is important to consider this in the context that his father in *The Pretenders*:

> is in prison for a murder in his time with the Huk. He was a rebel out of deeply rooted hate against the landowners fed from his personal history. Here is an autobiographical element of José's history, who also tells the story of his grandfather, who one day had to note to his surprise that the land did not belong to him but to a landowner (Albus 2012, 171).

Slogans such as "down with the burgis" in *Mass* are indicative of the influence of mass politics, however, people power and the distinction of this from communist rural insurrection mirrors the differences the author has explored between popular and ideological forms and their manifestation in reality. In Gatcho and Delorino's

account, “the works of F. Sionil José are the interplay of characters between social and economic classes to perceive their hardships and the options that they have” (Gatcho & Delorino 2019, 85). Within their study, the works reflect a form of destitution and loss of land, and while they do not focus on the five novels chosen here, they do reflect on a more general level that the Philippines suffers in his work “constantly in the hands of its own people. The corrupt and concentrated power in the hands of a few does not ensure the survival of the country’s entirety” (Gatcho & Delorino 2019, 85).

Voicing institutions like the priesthood in the novels, for instance in the conversation between Father Jess and Pepe in *Mass*, can be an important way to tell the stories of seemingly homogenous social institutions and to demonstrate their numerous workings in society. As Father Jess notes, “In the end Pepe, we are all victims of circumstance. A world without injustice is not here; if it were, there would be no policemen, no courts – and yes, no priests” (José 1983, 101). Because Filipino history is dominated by “ilustrado” based histories, it seems clear that “José is interested in rescuing Philippine history from its false ilustrado-centered interpretation and providing a native revolutionary hero” (Morales 1989, 105). Similarly, the social conventions and material habits of the elites are appropriately excavated and presented as outside of those of the ilustrados, especially in *The Pretenders*.

In some sense, the persistence of remnants of the landed elite is seen as hampering a process of “true” decolonisation. As noted by Albus, “those Filipinos seen as forefathers of the revolution did not seek revolution, but the retention of the existing structure of society with equality and only later with separation from Spain… it is therefore conclusive that a structure of society putting the ilustrados into leadership resulted in a perpetuation of the colonial structures in rule” (Albus 2012,

210–11). This point is significant because the remnants of the ilustrado elite and others are key factors in thinking about oppression in *The Pretenders*, which focuses on Antonio Samson's struggle to belong. In fact, the novel opens with an epigraph by Samson himself from his book entitled *The Ilustrados*. It questions their position as "alien rulers" who at the same time looked after their own interests: "Did they plead for freedom too? And dignity for all Indios—and not only for themselves, who owed their fortunes and their status, to the whims of the aristocracy? … could it be that they wanted not freedom or dignity, but the key to the restricted enclaves of the rulers?" (José 1987, iii).

This excerpt is a single but important example showing how the relations between ilustrados and latter-day capitalists feature in a narrative of aristocracy and big industrial oligarchies above the masses, and the dynamics of their intersection and divergence are charted out in the novels. It is instructive to note that Lundkvist writes of José that "he has a deep understanding for both classes but his heart is for the people without property" (Lundkvist 64). When, as Lim notes, Dantes speaks, "José dispenses with the character's humanity in order to focus on the ideological evils he stands for… 'I make the rules, for I am what I am – the patron, the hacendero, the feudal lord… I like the role. It gives me a feeling of deep satisfaction, almost orgiastic… of superiority'" (Lim 1989, 89). With "I am what I am", this passage is a play on the biblical God and the unjust nature of men who take lordship into their own hands, but also speaks to national and regional patron–client structures. A further parallel to prostitution in terms of the masses is demonstrated in his novel *Ermita*, which while outside the saga, is still relevant to show the function of his novels as social critique, and in fact, giving voices to subjects that are not necessarily represented in the national narratives.

F. Sionil José's *Rosales Saga* spans almost a century of Filipino history, and its writing took place during the period of the Cold War in the region. Conflict is presented as something both internal to the Filipino as a parallel to the nation, but also characterised in resistance to external occupation by the Spanish, Americans and later the Japanese. The continuation of class critique and the clash between various classes and their own conflicting roles within society are explored, in ways that communicate a clear social critique within the context of the independent Philippines and the Cold War, along the divisions of representation between modernism and realism, while reformulating this from the Philippines. And yet, José's writing locates identity in continuities that spill over from Rosales itself, with an Ilocano voice in the characters that draw them to homelands but also at the same time witnesses their displacement from the Ilocos. The experience of place alongside nostalgia caused by its loss communicates a broader experience from an Ilocano perspective but is also generalised to a Filipino one. It looks to place, much like how Francisco Benitez discusses the filmic representation of the "Badjao" or "sea gypsies" in the case of the "Romeo and Juliet romance, *Badjao*" as a Cold War inflected representation, looking to Sulu in the south of the Philippines as exuding "an exotic and timeless aura", and yet, the film proposes liberation in the form of human rights in "an enduring and universal desire for freedom" (Benitez 2018, 38–40). This therefore is reflective of the nuances that emerge when we go beyond a political binary, into liberalism as an ideology tempered as part of expressing Cold War concerns.[22]

Mirrored in the Southeast Asian Cold War novel generally especially in terms of "anti-imperialism, populism, nationalism, the difficulty of being oneself as part of

[22] Lisandro Claudio's recent study *Liberalism and the Postcolony: Thinking the State in 20th Century Philippines* is also an interesting reflection on these themes.

the collective effort of building a communist state—were all present" (Day 2010, 154), the texts typify the continuation of colonial and precolonial links to the urban themes of the betrayal of the people by the corrupt politicians, landowners, and the characters themselves in the *Rosales Saga*. These issues therefore expose the artificiality of the nation itself within the reality of the domestic Cold War in Marcos-era Philippines, where the conflicts among characters and classes are shaped into conflicted identities; and where the balete tree provides sustenance and continuity while various struggles, even those of the self against the world, continue to plague the identities of the characters.

Chapter 4: Death World: Kurihara Sadako *Kuroi tamago* [Black Eggs] and other poems

This chapter argues that the poetry of the Japanese *Hibakusha* writer, Sadako Kurihara, reveals the atomic legacies of the end of the Second World War spilling into other realms of time, not merely those related to the Cold War and, more broadly, shows how these legacies collapsed into a regional experience of systemic violence through proxy wars. This notion of proxy wars is developed in the scholarship to the extent that scholars have discussed regional wars, but the geopolitical framing often excludes the voices of writers. This chapter writes against dominant narratives of violence, with the aim of speaking against the state.

Sadako Kurihara is a poet who deals primarily with the effect of the atomic bomb in poetry and other forms of writing and performance, and was an activist for her entire life against the use performance, and was an activist for her entire life against the use of nuclear power. Her prominent work in poetry is examined here as one example of a critical response to the dimension of Japanese imperialism in Southeast Asia, as well as western intervention in the region, and the growing Cold War militarization that she protested against as an anti-war author.

This writing against dominant narratives parallels Kurihara's poetry and life, which have to be read as working in tandem against discourses of militarism, nationalism, and Asian empire. There is some sense of exclusion, especially in her writing but also in terms of broader *Hibakusha* literature. The literature is encumbered by silences and isolated from other spheres of writing and reading. These "silences" do not mute, however, but instead create the conditions for reading. The dynamic between reading and silencing – and between the functioning of the reality on local levels and on regional or global levels – is a constitutive mechanism that sets itself

against the global conflicts. The poetry bears witness to the tragedy of the destruction of not only the local environs, but also the destruction of bodies and generations of people. Kurihara's poetry allows us to contend with the possibility of destruction in Asia through deployment of large-scale weapons. This is far from a mere fantasy, and grounds a tragic voicing of the experience of war in Asia. Taking the poetry as a literary mode, we see the subjectivity of experience enjoined with a commentary on society and destruction in the Cold War context. Importantly, a link can be made between the American presence and use of large scale weapons in Japan and their broader efforts at paternalistic neocolonialism, which enabled them to continue influencing the affairs of Southeast Asian nations such as the Philippines. This forms a critical link between the presence of Cold War ideology and a new form of colonialism.

The compression of time against and alongside memory within the poetry is a key legacy of the numerous traumas that emerged through wars (hot and cold) and spills over into contemporary reality to live on in disaster accounts. Writing about the conditions of disaster in Japan is often nationally framed. It works towards centring Asian experiences against the devastation of the Holocaust, globally. For a trenchant critic of war such as Sadako Kurihara, the words that are used against war are often linked to the words of life and death and have a direct relation to the experience. Her poetry communicates devastation, with an urgency that is palpable. The purpose of this chapter is to create links between various forms of region making and to reintroduce a broader conception of region which will speak towards a shared memory of violence and continued struggle against the trauma of war. This "event" based poetry or literature speaks not only to the nuclear legacies of the Cold War but translates into a broader appreciation of the role of writing in creating spaces that speak for the silence. This is exemplified through speaking with silences on the page, as poetry as a medium is able to communicate this more effectively than prose. As with the previous chapters, this chapter is interested in the construction of "region", but importantly, the link that can be drawn between the Japanese sphere of experience and region making is Japan's projection of a Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, as a political entity, alongside imperial designs and Occupation of the region. Through the experience of the Japanese Occupation as an imperial exercise and the imaginary of inhabiting a Southeast Asian space that itself was emergent through post-war constructions, the Japanese dimension in Southeast Asia can be narrated as one that joins Japan in a shared space within regional constructions. This also means

that within Japan itself, a postcolonial moment is created through critiques of imperial Japan in Asia. Poets, among others, have committed themselves to this critique.

Far from being an exploration of writing in the entire Southeast Asian region, this thesis questions the imaginary of region from the perspective of pan-Asian connections, established at many points in the twentieth century, which provide a palpable link between the experience of empire, the challenges of wartime in the region, and the Cold War. Thus, while the thesis apparently examines literature from "maritime" Southeast Asia, we can usefully interrogate "regional" constructions that were developed only during and after the war, not taking them as sacrosanct. Thus, such material from Japan invites further conversations on the role of Japan in Southeast Asia (notwthstanding this is already substantially documented) and allows an exploration of the strands of thought and writing, something that may or may not be called influence, existing in this shared Asian space. This relationship between Japan as a regional actor should be considered further as it allows us to re-evaluate traditional concepts of region that reinforce Southeast Asia as an epistemic whole. In so doing, Japan emerges as a space where the idea of Southeast Asia is in fact produced, as some scholars have noted (Serizawa 2020).

Although we tend to think of the novel form as heteroglossic and thus able to communicate a national cultural imaginary, poetry speaks to asynchrony more adequately and is able to capture the multi-temporal nature of an event that trickles across time. As Minear puts it, "for Kurihara, to live is to write poetry" (Sadako 1995, 14). This intertwining between life and writing is an extension of the writer as a person who commits to the form completely, though it should be noted that Kurihara wrote in many other forms as well. This commitment, as related by Minear, does not seek to glorify the literary, however, but instead conveys a deep pessimism. Here I

will invoke a key line in Kurihara's volume *Kuroi tamago* or *Black Eggs*, which, as her translator Richard Minear writes, is an invocation of a lines from the film *Hiroshima Mon Amour*: "'I saw Hiroshima. You saw nothing.'[23] If Japanese people collectively today were to say to people in Southeast Asia, 'We experienced Hiroshima,' however, the response would surely be, 'You Japanese experienced nothing. The invasion of Asia and the atomic bomb blew past you like the wind'" (in Sadako 1995, 19). The poet is conscious of Japan's occupying role and is not attempting to write an apologia for the state. Quite the opposite is happening in the writing.

Kurihara goes on to write about her experience, along with the experience of other survivors and victims, rising to the level of anti-nuclear ideas, but critically, this follows from the idea that war cannot be an expression of one experience against another power's occupation. And yet experiences of occupation and empire, as well as decolonisation, are critical to thinking about this period. The link that we can draw between writing and the postcolonial Cold War in the Japanese context is a somewhat surprising intellectual discovery, in that the Cold War in Japan is experienced as an effect of the colonialism pursued by the Japanese state; an aggressive militarism that culminated in expansion in Manchuria and subsequently elsewhere. This discovery stands alongside the conflicts among numerous strands of thinking about the place of Japan within Asia subsequent to its almost complete absence as an imperial power from the Asia-Pacific after the Second World War. And yet, to probe deeper than just the surface of state narratives, the Japanese experience is more an Asian experience of postcolonial Cold War than it is a "western" experience, noting that, as Heonik Kwon

[23] This is from the publication, as referenced by Minear, "Genbaku taiken no konnichi-teki imi" [The contemporary meaning of the experience of the atomic bomb], in *Hiroshima no genfuke o idaite*, 147-148, but also inspiration for her poem, 'I saw Hiroshima', *BE 208*. (Richard Minear (trans.) *Black Eggs*, p. 37, footnote 25 in original.)

puts it, “the historical experience and the collective memory of the Cold War are radically divergent between the West and the postcolonial world” (Kwon 2010, 26). Kwon goes on to problematise the idea of the “conflict” as a “single, globally identical phenomenon” (Kwon 2010, 26), but beyond this we can look to the memory of destruction from the atomic bombs coinciding with further destruction in the region during the Cold War.

Kurihara’s poetry, spread across the latter half of the twentieth century, is not limited to just the event of the bombings, but broadly engages with what is elsewhere present as an inability to disentangle the strands of trauma and war memory, which in turn make conflicting presents deal with pasts. To begin the chapter, we open with a move towards hope, but that hope is not optimistic. This is demonstrated clearly in the poem “Let us be Midwives” (September 1945), which reads with the urgency of the events around the bomb. It has the sub-heading, “An untold story of the atomic bombing”, and so operates as an urgent document, using the verse to communicate silenced narratives. The poem conjures a crowded basement, where huddled individuals are working together to facilitate childbirth, despite it being a “hellish basement”, where “the smell of fresh blood, the stench of death” is palpable. This presents a vision that offers little to produce hope, yet there is redemption.

> And then: ‘I’m a midwife. I’ll help with the birth.’
> The speaker, seriously injured herself,
> had been moaning only moments before.
> And so new life was born in that dark pit of hell.
> And so the midwife died before dawn, still bathed in blood.
> Let us be midwives!
> Let us be midwives!
> Even if we lay down our own lives to do so (Sadako 1995, 67).

This note of hope, coming from a place that is hellish, is reminiscent of other war poetry during the twentieth century, and the affective register that it speaks in is strong, creating a sense in the reader that they are encountering the event. Kurihara's urgency, with her use of deliberate exclamation, is able to stir our interest but also draws the reader into the commotion and the inescapable travesty of the situation, the pity of war. If Wilfred Owen discussed the pity of war, the poetry is in the pathos in this register. As Treat puts it, "one of the ironies of this poem's immediate and continuing popularity is that its optimistic courage in the face of a nuclear explosion – a courage not uncommon in literature written immediately after the bombing before the full and lingering impact of the bomb was known – would in Kurihara's later work be supplanted by a bitter cynicism" (Treat 1995, 163). However, while at times the notes of the verse are intimately linked to reminiscence and remembrance, there is a committed intervention in the work that urges action. Her poetry operates on a temporal register of urgency or simultaneity with the mobilisation for different wars in the latter half of the twentieth century, forming a compelling opus to rouse the reader into deep commitment, not merely to bear witness, but to change the world.

This is evidenced in her poem "Question" (March 1966) as it is evidently speaking to the war context in Southeast Asia, where the poem speaks to a reader as if they are an interlocutor, witnessing the immolation of monks in Vietnam:

> Burning, flames shooting
> from eyes, mouth, nose,
> hands joined in prayer: a monk.
> the men and women encircling him
> also join their hands in prayer.
> The flames illuminate the black and tattered leaves
> of trees scorched by napalm;

the entire paddy, too, is burned black.

We have been burned,
But we've never set ourselves afire in protest;
always passive,
we've been dragged slithering along
until now there are bases all over the Japanese archipelago,
and as the death stench of Vietnam envelops us,
nuclear submarines enter port,
and Japanese crows hungry for a target greet them.

Have you burned your draft card?
We have died
for the emperor,
but we haven't died to oppose war.
'Peace,
Peace'—
launched lightly, like foam:
Japan's 'peace.'
Deep down inside:
the dead, settled heavily to the bottom,
the ghost city, burned like black sap (Sadako 1995, 223).

This poem breaks out and embraces the social context in as many ways as possible. It bridges history and life and speaks to real events, and these are locatable realities, not merely abstractions. The purpose of art here is to indict and challenge, in the sharp breaks in the verse, with the stanzas broken only to ask us, "have you burned your draft card", bringing the reader into the position of citizen: to be committed to change, to be committed to destroying a system of martial aggression. The poetry of Kurihara in *Black Eggs* offers a compelling read: one cannot break away from the page at times. Alongside the chronicling of mass human tragedy, much like the tragedy of

Auschwitz under Nazi Germany, the future exists, but as drawn by the author, in her poem "The Future Begins Here" (February 1977), it begins as a human vision, where time is shared in the potential for destruction, and yet, we see a constant degrading of the human:

> …
> On the bed, like fish on a grill,
> a row of human bodies—
> white bones only.
> Along with Auschwitz,
> Hiroshima
> is the world's darkest abyss.
> In a city of atrocity
> where those who were robbed of their humanity
> live like pale shades.
> Humans turned into shades: let's rise up
> and bring to an end the age of the mushroom cloud
> that mocks humanity (Sadako 1995, 313).

This turn towards a generalised humanistic vision makes the poetry difficult to classify within a single genre, because it spills across many literary modes, which communicate despair but also redemption in the midst of tragedy. There are hints of satire, always biting, always dark, for such satire runs against the course of the topic and is often directed at powerful institutions or individuals such as the Emperor, as in the poem "Human Emperor, Meek and Mild" from December 1951:

> Rumors are rampant of khaki-clad armies
> crossing the straits to Korea,
> and soon they'll try to turn our husbands and sons
> into human bullets once more—

does he know?
Does he not know?
Round-shouldered,
he beams at puppies:
human emperor, meek and mild (Sadako 1995, 246–48).

The satire here provokes us to think about not only the figure of the powerful but the betrayal of the people, and the imaging reminiscent of the Second World War in the presence of the Japanese khaki uniforms, bringing the country into the Korean war, contemporaneous to the writing of this poem. As the scholar Deyokhyo Choi notes, "Japan under allied occupation was never an outsider, but an integral part of the Korean War", and while Japan played a "pacifist" role, this similarly is contested (Choi 2017). While providing "practically everything the UN command needed", at the same time, the Japanese Communist Party demonstrated solidarity with leftist Koreans who opposed the US intervention, members commanded by the JCP that such solidarity "is the glorious duty mandated by proletarian internationalism" (Choi 2017, 547).

This distrust of authority and formality abounds in the poetry collection, turning against the writing of the powerful and the narratives and symbols of state, as a structuring feature of the work. Thinking about gender and the masculine writing that characterises so many state discourses within Southeast Asia, Kurihara's work turns the poetry and brushes it against the grain, if to work in a Benjamin-esque mode. The scholar Philip Holden argues that "we can thus see that tradition, nation, citizenship and state – each a central and yet contested category in the modern world – are inflected differently in a modernity that emerges from the experience of colonialism" (Holden 2008a, 31). At the same time, he shows how:

> feminist scholarship in the last decade has thus been concerned to demonstrate the fact that anticolonial nationalism, and especially in the way in which the nation was imagined, was a gendered enterprise. The gendering of the nation has many dimensions; it is both reliant on a gendered concept of space based on a 'prior naturalising of the social subordination of women and children within the public sphere' and on a temporal division, in which women are associated with the authentic but atavistic body of the national tradition. The two facets of the Janus of nationalism are thus, in the reading, gendered: the female one looks back to the past, the male one forward to a progressive future (Holden 2008a, 31).

The dynamic between past and future is rescripted in Kurihara's writing, and even when she illuminates the role of women within the domestic sphere, when lives are lost in war, this is on the terms received from the state, rather than the writer's suppositions. To think of colonial militarism as a "gendered enterprise" (Holden 2008a, 34) as well, is to see how the scripting of war is the expression of a masculine impulse, imposing dominance. In discussing the writer Ariyoshi Sawako, Barbara Hartley describes her marginalisation. While Sawako was "one of postwar Japan's most prolific writers" (Hartley 2003, 161), she was "in many ways the outcome of the manner in which literary production in Japan and elsewhere is a highly gendered activity… the construction of gender in writing is a highly masculine activity and … women must comply with a writing system defined by men". The poetry of Kurihara writes against this and against the grain of the Shōwa era, asking:

> Will the Greater East Asian war finally come to an end
> on the day the Shōwa era ends?
> Or does Japan stand already
> on the threshold of new war?

This hierarchy of production within a gendered textual economy can tie into thinking about the *bildungsroman* and the conception of the novel as an ultimately bounded form, attached to time and space, as Benedict Anderson points out. Cheah quotes him: "For Anderson, the novel is an analogue of the nation that maps its social space for readers: 'the novelty of the novel as a literary form lay in its capacity to represent synchronically this bounded, intrahistorical society-with-a-future'" (Cheah 2013, 238). This rather interesting mapping across the page of time, with a premonition built into the concept of the form, is broken by the page of poetry. It does not necessarily map the nation: instead, it can chart the broken effects of the nation's crimes, establishing through memory the documenting of a postcolonial Cold War world that does not envision a bright Asia, but one that has been turned on its head as a utopian concept. As the scholar Susan Buck-Morss notes in her work on time, "the suturing of history's narrative discourse transforms the violent rupture of the present into a continuity of meaning" (Buck-Morss 2000, 43), further arguing that "conceptions of temporality have political implications" (Buck-Morss 2000, 60). While here the author is talking about the avant-garde in the "time" of revolution, her thought does much to enunciate how time works, in a context in which "History" has failed us. No new chronology will erase that fact. History's betrayal is so profound that it cannot simply be forgiven by tacking on a "'post-' era to it…" This point is critical to our thinking about literary time and the function of what might be termed negative nostalgia, which is a concept I introduce as being one that is not necessarily celebrated but instead inverts our ideas of place making.[24] This negative nostalgia emerges through Kurihara's pages and writes against the dominant conceptions of a

[24] Here I borrow from Show the concept of "an uneasy picture of hybridity" that is "felt with the utmost distress", rather than the kind celebrated by postcolonial studies through her reading of a novel by Malaysian author Preeta Samarasan in relation to 13 May 1969 (12).

state-led history to rework time on the page. Through the poem "Door to the Future" (January 1975), we see that:

> This is the door to the future.
> Can the world pass through this door
> and bring to life
> these carbonized human ruins? (Sadako 1995, 206).

Thus, even in glimpsing the future, we see no grounds for reminiscence, echoing Theodor Adorno writing that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (Hoffman 182).

For Kurihara, the limits of the event do not remain a national issue, but spill across the world: "Hiroshima is the conscience of a world that does not allow nuclear bombs" (Kurihara 1994, 18). Importantly, as Minear posits, Kurihara "simply could not be persuaded" by Ōe Kenzaburō's *Hiroshima Notes* that "suicide is a legitimate way out" (Kurihara 1994, 17). In her poetry the relation between the writer and the reader is critically reformulated – the *Hibakusha* are at once an intervention into the world for the purpose of enlightening future generations and are also able to act as witnesses of destruction. In this way the writing transforms itself from a merely expressive act into an alternative site of documentation, which continues to work against the national narrative. This enables the poetry to reflect not merely an authorial agency but a unity of ideas that underpins the vision of the writing. Thus, we can see Kurihara distrusting language as a "plaything", and instead driving towards a more socially committed role for poetry. This is evident in the use of vivid imagery even in *tanka* form, for instance in the poem "Nightmare", where we read a controlled verse and yet there is unmistakable tragedy:

> Not even
> their own parents
> would know them:

their faces
so utterly transformed (Sadako 1995, 88).

Much like other critical political literature during the occupation period, the collection *Kuroi Tamago* or *Black Eggs* was censored in its printing when it was released. This form of silencing is corroborated especially in the treatment of a concern with exile. Though the writers in the wake of the bomb are not necessarily exiles, they have communicated experiences that resonate with the exile created by the event itself, deliberating how the event and its aftermath create otherness. As Minear posits in an article about the role of the atomic "holocaust" in relation to the Nazi Holocaust, the former is not seen as necessarily an event to merit commemoration, especially as it creates the impression that America is a perpetrator, and thus the narrative of American benevolence is unsettled if we see America as responsible for this destruction (Minear 1995, 350–51). In thinking about the parallel between the two, Kurihara's voice emerges as a distinct warning against forgetting – in her poem "Hiroshima, Auschwitz: We Must Not Forget" (December 1989), she writes that we "must not forget", as "Even as the first time was a mistake, the second time will be calculated malice" (Sadako 1995, 292), thus creating a relation between the two events. This is critical to thinking about the documentation of forgetfulness in terms of the silencing of such events from national histories. In the same way that time is fragmented in future nostalgias, the loss created by the bombings also creates another type of loss associated with the inability to reclaim innocence or a semblance of humanity – and yet the insistence on such is paramount in the poetry. Time is thus not seen as lost so much as suspended, while the embodiment of destruction is seen quite literally in decomposing bodies and forms of disease that emerge from the effects of radiation. The tragedy of the situation and the aftermath speak to Cold War realities and forgotten traumas beyond those from a Japanese perspective. This therefore

alludes to a role of time that works in parallel to modernity as a historical phenomenon through writing which also speaks to personal experience but is constantly interacting with the history of the period.

One wonders how much of the preponderance of conflict in the Asian context and the dominance of state-led narratives disfigured the shape of authentic voices, literary or otherwise, of resistance, and their relation to temporality. Writing against broader narratives of the post-war nation state is not merely a postcolonial act; it can also throw off the yoke of postcolonial oppressive structures that often operate with similar force and even perhaps the same vocabularies as colonial legislation. In thinking about the nuclear sublime, Cassandra Atherton and Alyson Miller propose that *tanka* and *haiku* – because they use fewer words and because they are framed in the medium of traditional Japanese literature, "via subtle use of allusion, fragmentation and minimalism" (Atherton & Miller 2017, 1–2) – are both usefully mobilised to express a postwar reality, effectively through the silences on the page. However, Atherton and Miller's notion of the sublime "stems from this Burkean emphasis on horror and the resulting terror that transports the audience to a place beyond description" (Atherton & Miller 2017, 4). This conceptual framing of the sublime is as a distinctively negative space, beyond words, and yet ironically words also fill the pages of the *Hibakusha,* writing against being silenced. The experience of the inexpressible, within a measured textual economy, precisely lends itself to framing the event as sublime through horror and mystification. And yet, these forms are also broken away from in the work of Kurihara Sadako. Atherton and Miller describe the traditional forms as place specific, but in the poetry of Kurihara we break away from place into "world", with these "world-scale" events informing the global legacy of atomic and potential nuclear trauma and catastrophe, becoming a

commentary on scale within the structuring of the first, second and third worlds. But this world coming-into-being or in-waiting is nothing positive, and the "prejudice against *Hibakusha* continues into the second and even third generation because people fear they may have inherited sickness and sterility, and the belief that they may still give birth to deformed children because of the radiation poisoning" (Atherton & Miller 2017, 2). Thus, it is important to note the reading prejudices that also illuminate how bodies are seen and treated as sites of decay, in relation to already existing nuclear catastrophe.

Even further, while Japanese poetic tradition lends itself to humanistic themes relating humanity to nature, these of course are broken and disrupted in *Hibakusha* poetry. "Literature, insofar as it narrates 'Man', is as morally problematic as its announced, guilty, subject" (Minear 1994, 39). These question how form and the perfection of form in ideal terms demonstrate less eagerness to "transfigure or allegorize reality than we may be to have it 'disfigured', made impossible to enjoy aesthetically or otherwise". As Minear indicates, we approach A-bomb writing "with a set of expectations more historiographic and less literary than we do others" (Minear 1994, 41). The paradox of such literature of atrocity, as the scholar points out, is that "it is our modern reality that makes the genre possible, but at the same time it is a genre that works to make that reality acceptable to the imagination" (Minear 1994, 40). This reflects a struggle or anxieties over writing and representation, in so far as writing struggled to respond to the horrors of WWII, mirroring Adorno's dictum but Lyotard as well in expressing that no poetry could be written after Auschwitz.

All types of writing from the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki encountered censorship between 1945 and 1952, but as Diehl demonstrates, this was not equally experienced. Beyond 1952, more accounts got published, but "the end of

the occupation in 1952 did not mean the end of silence for all survivors, and the effect of the forced censorship took further years to wear off entirely" (Diehl 2017, 119). As Diehl further demonstrates:

> But the poets who fully rejected the traditional, rigid, forms of Japanese poetry perhaps also recognized the fragmented nature of traumatic memory and the difficulty of herding the fragments into any sort of coherent expression. Free verse poetry gave these hibakusha poets a better means for expression than waka: they could say whatever they wanted, however they wanted, and present the fragments of their memory in whatever order they wanted. That is, they turned to free verse poetry because it reflected the nature of traumatic memory in that it, too, is often fragmented and defies the limits of conventions of narrative forms of written expression (Diehl 2017, 124).

As do the critics above, Treat also discusses the literary presentation of nuclear destruction as a question of the representational power of language, or discourse, and the adequacy of the literary language available. "[A] new reality demands the development of new literary methods in order to grasp it. 'Realism' must make a quantum leap if it is to deal fully with the immense problems posed by the hydrogen bomb and its relation to it" (Treat 1995, 67). This sense of a need to invent a critical language is indicative of a lack, and the vitality of the lack as a creative possibility.

Thinking about the relationship between detachment and representation, as well as the role of the survivor, we think about the novelist Ota Yoko and the hypothesis of Robert Jay Lifton about her work: "the survivor of a violence as complete as Hiroshima copes through a 'psychic closing off process'… a means of creating emotional distance between himself and the intolerable world immediately around him… her inability to transform Hiroshima into the symbols that language

would represent" (Treat 1995, 46) . This break between the event and the systems of our representation questions the relationship between violence, traumatic memory, and the "scars" of this violence, highlighting that "any statement on representation, in other words, *is* a representation" and we have to be aware that, "the 'truth' of a historical or artistic representation resides in its effectiveness in supporting a position we can often identify as ideological" (Treat 1995, 46).

On the evidence of the censor, for instance in the case of the Kurihara poem "War Close Up", with the subtitle "– on hearing over the radio a simulation of the sounds of battle", from which lines were removed, including "Artistic expression turned wholly into state magic!" (published August 1942, not included in the 1946 edition of *Kuroi tamago*), we can see that Kurihara was already a critic of the Japanese war effort, during and then after the war, as well as a critic under the American Occupation (Sadako 1995, 49). Similarly, in "What is War", a poem from 1942 in the middle of the war, she writes,

> …
> What is it that takes place
> When people say 'holy war', 'just war'?
> Murder. Arson. Rape. Theft.
> The women who can't flee take off their skirts
> before the enemy troops
> and beg for mercy – do they not? (Sadako 1995, 53)

In the poem "demonic intent" soldiers are described as "demons on the loose", contrasting with how "At home they are good fathers, good brothers, good sons" (October 1942). At war, they become possessed with a beastly energy. These evocative lines, thinking about what it means to be at war, take on a specifically gendered dimension, men being the perpetrators of violence, with the real hypocrisy

found in their transformation by war. This poem was censored in its entirety and disallowed from publication by the imperial censor, and we already see the beginnings of a deeply committed critique of the purpose of war. We can trace a more global critique, not merely a pessimistic tone, even in some of Kurihara's poems of the war years, such as "Letter to Peter Kropotkin" from 1941, which parallels her critiques of war outside Japan after the war.

> I have only to write letters
> And the universal postal union delivers them
> To friends in Taoist China
> To simple Black brothers in far Africa,
> ….
>
> O friends the world over:
> Let's unite across our length and breadth
> Let's talk, consult, agree, and form a free union;
> When we do,
> All the things we detest,
> All the globe's ills,
> Will disappear (April 1941) (Sadako 1995, 64).

Kurihara's point can be seen clearly: pursuing a global community of letters and working against nationalistic priorities of war. Of course, there is clear resonance with seeing the humanity of the enemy, in writing to the Chinese, since the Sino-Japanese war had been underway since 1937 (arguably since Manchukuo, or the puppet state installed in 1932). This draws out a line for thinking not just about how to frame war writing or even the writing of the *Hibakusha*, but also about critiques of these global circumstances anticipating future wars. This notion of anticipation writes not only of an Asian context, either: it spills into global visions.

This feature in the work of Kurihara demonstrates, to a large effect, the function of writing to ask questions not only within an internal dialogue but more broadly of a society's conscience itself. In a poem written in the months after the atomic bombing, "Do Not Open", from December 1945, she asks, "Who was it? Who plunged me into this chaos?/ Simple me, quick to trust people – what do I get back time after time?/ Cold betrayals. People can't live with my sincerity". This questioning and interrogating, along with this direct tone of address, carries through the poems, especially in relation to the spillage of time. In "Reconstruction" (January 1946), we see "To this city–/ has time passed so quickly?–/ those who fled that day's horrible hell", questioning the ability of time to reconstitute itself or to characterise the event of the bombing, where even the trees in the poem, mutilated by the effects of the blast, "sing a weird song of death" (Sadako 1995, 71–72) . Even in *tanka,* without the capacities of free verse, we see the poet writing in this fashion, as for instance, "Respect for Humanity":

They denounced us
for being
too materialistic;
But what of their
'Human resources'?
…..

Militarism
Is an abomination
women of the world –
until it dies,
don't have children! (Sadako 1995, 126).

Though this poem is undated, Minear suggests it was written around 1941 (in Sadako 1995, 126). Its questioning does not come across as rhetorical, but instead, as an assertion that will be answered by an exclamation. Here, the use of *tanka* to communicate not merely social concerns but to act within the world is palpable. The dialogic tone of much of Kurihara's poetry seeks to include all of us as interlocutors. And as these poems demonstrate, this is not merely a poetry of description but active intervention. In some sense, this parallels Ota Yoko's work, in that it is an "appeal to a tenuously extended humanism, and at the same time a political challenge" (Treat 1995, 100). And similarly, we see in many of the poems of Ee Tiang Hong a dialogue with the reader, while the dialogic is very much part of the novels of Pramoedya and Sionil José, as there is extensive dialogue between characters.

Kurihara's poetry does not merely articulate the natural world and the shifting environs in metaphor, but describes the actual residue of the bomb within the slums in Hiroshima itself, which are described separately by Ichitani as "the slum district, shaped by illegal and temporary housing, […] inhabited by the economically disadvantaged, those who lost their houses and land due to the atomic bomb and had been excluded from the city's housing projects" (Ichitani 368). The formation of the "Genbaku" (atom bomb) slum, as Ichitani records, is part of the exclusion of victims in the postwar state, and this exclusion is also a legacy of the Japanese empire (Ichitani 368), in that, as pointed out by Ichitani: "the majority of the residents in the slum were Korean people who moved to Hiroshima under Japan's colonial rule" (Ichitani 369). Thus, we can see here a colonial legacy: that those who were disadvantaged due to the imperial structures continued to be excluded subjects in the slum area of Hiroshima. In this regard, *Hibakusha* writing manifests a notable postcolonial dimension, to which our attention is directed by postcolonial theory, as

we read how experiences of the marginalised are brought to "speak", if that is even possible (Spivak 2003). The turn to the subaltern in postcolonial theory is also inflected by legacies of the unspoken, and critically for *Hibakusha* writing, what is not able to speak is not only the victim of the bomb, but further, the colonial subject continuing to settle in areas such as slums.

There is a certain inter-referentiality between and among *Hibakusha* subjects, as in Kurihara's reference to the poet Hara Tamiki, who suicided in 1951. "Hara Tamiki fell from the sky;/ you danced up into the sky–/ neither of you could join in this corruption" ("Life and Death", September 1989). The reflection of the poet to herself is answered nicely by Kurihara in that "I, made of coarser stuff–/ I didn't fall from the sky,/ I don't rise up into the sky/ I have to crawl along the ground./ And I have to see/ what those who could not bear to live/ could not bear to see" (Sadako 1995, 179–80). As its subtitle reveals, this poem was written to mourn the 1989 death of Nagaoka Hiroyoshi, the author of *Gembakubungakushi* [A History of Atomic Bomb Literature] from 1973. There is a voicing of guilt in this poem, just for living or surviving:

> I who survive:
> Have I come this far at the cost of my relatives?
> Have I grown old
> At the cost of those dear to me?

In this much later poem, published decades after the event, the poet remains deeply intertwined not only with *Hibakusha* lives, but also the difficulty of living without guilt.

The poetry of Kurihara stands against the Japanese nation, even Empire, and breaks away from the seeming innocence of the nationalist *Bildung* that we see in some of the other works in this thesis. And yet the parameters of nation are invoked in

the poetry, such as to demonstrate the tragedy of the invocation of the flag in the poem “The Flag, 1” (June 1952).

> Ah! Red on white flag of Japan!
> The many nightmarish atrocities carried out at your feet.
> Manila and Nanjing, where they splashed gasoline
> over women and children
> And burned them alive—
> Consummate crimes of the twentieth century.
>
> Yet today the flag flutters again, shameless,
> All those bloody memories
> Gone;
> Fluttering, fluttering in the breeze,
> It dreams once more of redrawing the map (Sadako 1995, 212–14).

This poem, deeply critical of militarist nationalism, rejects the symbolism of war. Testifying to war crimes committed by the Japanese, Kurihara is not merely attesting to the experiences of the victims of Hiroshima, but far more broadly includes the victims of Japanese invasion in Manila and Nanjing during the Second World War. Bringing her critique into the frame of a regional war zone, we see that in so far as the imperial vision of Japan translated into promises of a Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, which is witnessed to some degree in Pramoedya’s quintet, this was betrayed, becoming a vision of pure cruelty. This links back to Kurihara’s early war poetry, in which she calls Japanese actions “demonic”. Her concerns demonstrate a clear line of continuity (despite the fact that the flag was not allowed to be flown for some period under the MacArthur “administration”) about newly conceived ways of going to war. The erasure of trauma and the erasure of events from the reconstruction of the nation are linked closely to the construction of the nationalist agenda once again.

Ann Sherif demonstrates that the great postwar Japanese novelist Ōe Kenzaburō had a deep respect for the work of the *Hibakusha*, promoting them, and "elevated them to the status of morally superior beings 'who maintained their dignity amidst the most dreadful conditions ever suffered by mankind'" (Oe in Sherif 2012, 73). As Sherif shows, there are occasions where Kurihara mobilises "biting humour" to bring about the effect of ridicule, especially of larger promises and concepts evoked by politicians. The poetry is able to do this without losing sight of the larger aim of deconstructing nostalgia. Humour further facilitates the honesty of a committed poet speaking of her hometown, as inhabited by "pariahs burning with remnant radioactivity" (Sherif 2012, 84). This uncompromising imaging of the survivors, especially of the effects of the radioactivity and lasting health effects on the population, demarcates a deep pessimism as to the aims of such technologies, rather than signalling the success of modernity.

This pessimism is part of an attitude or ideology that structures the Cold War's global conflict, and its use is paralleled in certain works of postcolonial fiction, which reinforce their comparability, even as they deal with largely different national settings, as texts that imagine these realities outside the 'West'. In Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, for instance, India's emergency period is read as a certain destruction of the optimism of the Nehruvian project, as a sort of consequence to what the text calls the "disease of optimism". This disease of optimism, or "optimism disease" (Kortenaar 1995, 43), is linked intimately to questions of the national, which are often elided by the lack of grounding of magic realism as a category of fantasy. Kurihara certainly does not use language in the way Rushdie uses it, to animate Indian history in a hyper-heteroglossic form. Instead we see the powerful voice of the poet directly intervening on the page.

As the poet is proposing an outlook of devastation, there is a consistent and measured attempt to defy the silencing that the victims of the war and bombing suffered, as already noted. This can also be seen in the poem “I’ll always keep singing” (July 1952). First of all, the poem is singing in defiance of various institutional structures, especially in this case the Yasukuni Shrine, which seeks to demarcate the war dead but, to Kurihara, is a “vulgar altar” that is erected to commemorate and “nurture the spirit of the herd”. The Shrine is contrasted with the poet’s voice intervening and singing “a song of negation”, and this negation is a concept that works through poetry to reflect indignation:

> …
> amid it all, alone I’ll keep singing
> a song of negation.
> No. No. No. No.
> I’ll sing it a thousand times, ten thousand times.
>
> The night’s still dark.
> I can’t sing lovely songs
> of morning flowers,
> bright sun,
> green of the plants,
> but tomorrow will surely come.
> In the darkness that smells of the rising tide
> I’ll speak
> to you, dear friend,
> and when it has grown light
> about us,
> I’ll make sure it’s you.
>
> The night’s still dark.
> Shut up within walls of night,
> walls that do not yield at all,

I'll always keep singing (Sadako 1995, 158–59).

This poem, directed towards an unknown individual, marks the negation of common norms of commemorating the event of Hiroshima, alongside the continuing silencing of survivors. The poem uses the balance between night and day to illustrate the dynamic between speech and silence: "shut up within walls of night", for instance. The point about not being able to sing "lovely songs" voices the writer's own dilemma in the face of social expectations for the writer, in traditional Japanese writing or literature, and Kurihara's poetry is most definitely a reaction to these. The commitment to lyric is evident, but in its emphasis on pessimism and negation, the poetry in *Black Eggs* serves as an underside to a lament, the tragic dimension of song being related to nothing that can be celebrated in the face of such destruction, in between systems of signification that have broken down.

The trope of silenced night is not deployed in this poem alone. It is also used in "Late at Night" (December 1945).

The time comes,
and my eyes open
of their own accord;
how peaceful to read
with a clear mind! (Sadako 1995, 100).

This clarity of mind can be juxtaposed with the poem "Nightmare" (we do not have a date for this, but it reads in the immediacy of the bombing of Hiroshima). The nightmare in the poem is not merely a thing of night or even an experience of a break from reality: it is the reality of the consequences of the bombing. The poem tells of a girl who did not return home, for whose corpse the poet and others have been searching. It is a hellish vision, evocative of other war poems that signal a deep

banality for mass death and the disfiguration as well as the removal of identity of the bodies that emerge from war.

> We check
> rows of corpses in the halls
> one by one,
> but can't tell
> which one is she (Sadako 1995, 88).

This absolute erasure of identity in mass catastrophe is pertinent to thinking about how to reconfigure some sort of voice against the backdrop of the radiating silence of the bomb, and it returns through the poetic expression. The *Hibakusha* therefore offer us a salient opportunity to reformulate how we look at the coldness of Cold War conflicts and think about the ravages of war, unable to be disentangled from the "war gutted streets/ still hot/ from the flames". The writing spills across time and, allows suffering to be expressed. In this poem the night does not cause calmness and provides no reprieve from tragedy:

> I look back at the city:
> cremation flames
> here and there
> dye the black night red—
> what sorrow! (Sadako 1995, 90).

The choice of *tanka* for this poem determines the brevity of expression in each line, in a more traditional Japanese verse style, which expresses this nightmarish reality in a contained way. It suppresses the freer expression of clear contempt for war and substitutes this with an elegiac mood that is hardly contemplative: instead, it is sorrowful and largely descriptive. These descriptions are tied into the coming of the night. We progress in the poem into dusk and later into night with a transition, where

we and the poet have to remind ourselves that the images are not fantastic, they are the “horrific reality” to which Kurihara is testifying. This is no ghastly dream. We are perhaps to note of ourselves, as she does:

> strange
> I haven’t
> stopped breathing (Sadako 1995, 88).

This poem and the choices made in it are often reminiscent of elegy. Distorted and disfigured, much like the mutilated bodies and cityscapes of war, the poetry seems to crumble under the auspices of its horrors. *Tanka* does communicate the tone of elegy well, so it is unsurprising the poem entitled “Elegy” (1941) is in this form, rather than free verse. This poem is not as direct, but was written to mourn an individual, “For Ms. Ohara Rinko”.

In another poem “Memories” (undated in the collection), dedicated to a fellow poet who died, we see a slowness to the verse.

> The pattern of his kimono
> as we talked
> in the shade
> of the cosmos flower:
> I can see it now (Sadako 1995, 128).

There is no way to write in such a way after the shattering experience of the event, however, which is indicated in the poem “Frozen Eyes” (May 1973).

> If, unable to bear it,
> you summoned all your strength
> and spoke of love,
> instantly the words became malicious blocks of ice
> thrown back in your face.

[…]

But even the hot tears of the dying
can't thaw
the thousand year freeze (Sadako 1995, 169).

A longing for human emotion is juxtaposed against frigidity, temperatures dropping, and the coldness of people up against the tragedy of the event. This does not indicate, however, that the poet had stopped writing contemplative poetry after the event; there is rather a more cautious and difficult relationship between life and death, and the description of beauty is weighed down by the palpable effects of the bomb and the writer's commitment to justice.

The concerns of the poetry are paralleled in film, as the scholar Robert Feleppa notes of the film *Black Rain* by Shohei Imamura (1988), which mostly takes place five years after the blast, arguing that "the contours of their suffering are drawn out gradually, often subtly, through the portrayal of their daily interactions" (Feleppa 2004, 109–10). Feleppa instances the subtle tone: "the film's most chilling moment is arguably not the chaos of the bombing but one in which Yasuko's hair comes off while she brushes it" (Feleppa 2004, 110). This intimacy with the horror is pre-empted in Kurihara's poetry, especially in some of the contained *tanka* verses, such as the poem "The Surrender" (undated in volume).

The planes fly
very low overhead,
deafening,
and then
gone (Sadako 1995, 91).

This point is drawn out, and the reader is left to think about the ways in which the planes are bringing destruction, but their drawn out disappearance parallels destruction, which then spills into radiation and the disfiguring of lives across the Cold War.

In his article "Necropolitics", Achille Mbembe thinks about the territorialisation of the nation state, and the life of the colony is characterised thus, "in the eyes of the conqueror, *savage life* is just another form of *animal life,* a horrifying experience, something alien beyond imagination or comprehension" (Mbembe 2008, 29). While in a sovereign formation such as those that Mbembe discusses, "[k]illing becomes precisely targeted" (Mbembe 2008, 29), it is instructive to note that the atomic weapons do not have such precision and Cold War nuclear politics promised absolute erasure. Following the logic of Mbembe, however, we can think about the reduction of life to an alien state, resisting erasure, and one that is constantly invoked in writing, especially in the poetry of Kurihara. The figuring of pathology, or of war as a disease, we can see in the global act of performing the folding of paper cranes to remember the event. "[T]he atomic bomb, when it is discussed in Japan – in adult literature as well as lessons for children – is not isolated from educating everyone about the idea that war is the disease of society" (Yurita & Dornan 2009, 233). Even American nuclear prose reportage, such as John Hersey's crucial early text *Hiroshima* as a standalone text, drawn from survivor testimony, suggested that "physically, morally and culturally, the modern world seems to be irreparably damaged in some way" (Sharp 2000, 448), which led to a demand for more Japanese voices rather than critiques only from America. This sense of modernity being physically damaged is illustrative of the condition of a "disease", pathologically spreading into the body of modernity, and a modernity not of utopia but of death worlds. In her poem

“Indictment of Japan” (January 1973), Kurihara declares “In Japan/ there is a city where black rain falls, still invisible”, but the Japan in this poem is not merely the nation state, but an entirely damaged archipelago, crumbling under the weight of its occupations and the various tests being conducted in the Pacific by America.

And at points all along the shoreline
are places that turn the sky bloody-red night and day,
and people inhale cloudy gas
cough horribly,
turn yellow, and die.

In the sea to the south of Japan
there is an island
where poison gas and nukes lie concealed under the briers
and even the sun is American made.
The gangsters that twenty-eight years ago
starved the islanders,
gave them handgrenades,
and forced them into mass suicides
land once more,
wearing green camouflage suits,
and say they

The Japanese archipelago has grown overheated,
and the landscape is stained the colour of blood;
still night and day
a stuck record
sings over and over,
‘Everything’s just fine!’
‘Everything’s just fine!’
In 1973 the summer of the defeat has grown distant,
and things have come full circle—
Japan now the seventh largest military power,

defence budget in the billions
[…] (Sadako 1995, 228–30).

This poem is about Okinawa, as well as the broader landscape of the maritime legacies of the war, reflecting a literary imagining of Japan as not merely limited to the main islands but also very much archipelagic.

There is often quite a determined location and locating of place within Kurihara's writing, ground in Japanese national space. In the 1970s, however, we see a stronger commitment to critiquing America and American power, and this too brings to us a regional dimension that commits to thinking about the numerous conflicts in the region. This is especially brought to bear in "Vietnam, Korea, Hiroshima" (August 1975), written as the protracted war in Vietnam was coming to an end.

In the south of the peninsula
the authorities prepare for new war
by executing one after another
those who resist,
and rivers of blood flow (Sadako 1995, 276).

The poem thinks about what it means to resist American intervention in the Cold War period and draws us more directly into the space of the hot Cold War in the region. Further, the poem is direct in its condemnation of the American Secretary of Defence, declaring that the threat of nuclear weapons was used "to defend the regime of torture and blood". This critique of American imperialism extends back to other poems that are equally contemptuous, such as the poem "Don't Go to the U.S.A.!" (October 1968). The concept of this poem, as explicated in the notes given by Minear, addresses the issue of regional wars and the uncanny and disturbing consequences of the lineages of war. The poem tells the story of Shimizu Tetsuo, who was a

Hibakusha in Hiroshima as a baby, then travelled to the US and later was drafted into the Vietnam War, eventually going AWOL in Japan. In Japan, Shimizu gained "the support of Kurihara and others" (Minear in Sadako 1995, 272). Here, Kurihara is writing passionately in relation to this one case and extrapolating from it to the conditions of being a visa-holder who is drafted into an American war. This critique extends into a critique of the technological supremacy of the US and the tools that she suggests are used to denigrate the human condition, such as computers, which are linked to the tools used to instigate warfare. Kurihara is pointed here, and it reads forcefully:

> …
> But you can't comprehend Vietnam
> with computers.
> You can't pacify Black people with computers.
>
> ….
>
> Young people,
> don't go to the USA!
> They make you extend your visa every six months,
> and each time you have to pledge
> to become an American soldier.
> …
> will you be able to climb into a helicopter,
> land in a Vietnamese village,
> throw a hand grenade
> at a hut built of palm leaves,
> burn women and children?
>
> U.S.A. land of computers;
> land where humans are dehumanized;
> in return for six months washing dishes

> they notify you you're 1-A.
>
> Lands where vultures swoop down
> and carry you off into distant wilds (Sadako 1995, 271–73).

This poem is rather explicit in its critique of the war in Vietnam, posing for us the question of whether writing can actually shape various social contexts and intervene in them. As a timely document against the various ways in which force is deployed, and with a bold vision of the actual effects of the war, the poem demonstrates a commitment to defiance.

In this regard, we must note the remarkable consistency of Kurihara's literary production and the effort to write against these structures, especially as:

> at its most benign, the 'paradox' of atomic bomb literature can result in no literature at all. One Hiroshima writer, Tokuno Koichi, eventually abandoned trying to write at all, saying that 'poetry was terrifying'. What deterred him from continuing were perhaps the particular processes to which poetry subjects experience: processes that challenge memory, which is to say 'reality', and threaten to change it into something which stalks the hibakusha poet (Treat 1995, 159).

Japanese poetry has served many different roles within society and structurally it adheres to some formal conventions, however, developments in the writing tradition have seen more poets embrace free verse conventions. This then allows *Hibakusha* poetry to take its place both within and without free verse use in Japanese poetry. We can see both the embracing and rejection of various types of verse and stanza formation. For this thesis, Kurihara's work brings to bear the conventions of war poetry or atomic poetry in thinking about the role of Cold War writing in moving outside a localised and direct experience. The reader is drawn into the urgency of the

poetry's tone, especially as Kurihara is very clear about the targets addressed, and the form is used to great effect in writing about the inhuman and yet very real human consequences of the war. These ideas about how form is relevant may pose a bigger question for Southeast Asian writing. Each country identified in this thesis has a traditional literary canon, and yet, each author here defies the established views, while in some way appealing to their conventions strategically. For José, since José Rizal's publication of *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo,* the political novel has been a genre very much in line with national creation in the Philippines. However, there is a strong poetic tradition there too, and we can see that this is a celebrated form, in Tagalog and English. In Indonesia, Pramoedya was writing as a contemporary to many poets and essayists, and the verse form in the Malay world as well as the culture of orality have been discussed by both Sweeney and Maier, among others. In Malaysia, the pantun form and the "syair" are both prominent. These are compared with Japanese poetry because they offer us a way to read Asian poetic traditions against and in relation to their traditional forms and modern uses. In the case of Ee Tiang Hong, he was working with poetry as a form outside the dominant racial group's language and as a repository for the experiences of other identities, but also responding to the broader postcolonial nation's reclaiming of the imperial language of English in a new presentation.

Most accounts of Japanese writing treat the literary as deeply rooted within a cultural frame and we can see such a conception being diffused and exchanged through the East Asian cultural and intellectual sphere. Perhaps in so far as Japan was a colonial force within Asia, we should think about how this influence fits within the Southeast Asian lens. However, as Serizawa usefully points out, the Japanese occupation of the region was "a taboo topic for Japanese academics until the 1980s"

(Serizawa 2020, 5). Within the broader context of pan-Asian intellectualism, and Japanese exchanges with Russia and China, there are works which survey a broad understanding of cultural affinities. These are often implicitly divided within the framework of East Asian studies in line with linguistic and imperial traditions, as Japan was an imperial power and had borrowed from Chinese imperial traditions, as well colonising Korea for a substantial period. *Hibakusha* poetry works within these conventions, especially, as Olsen and Konaka note, in so far as the poems affective when written in traditional *tanka* verse (Olsen and Konaka 1988, 424). Sherif notes that the Hiroshima poet Narusawa Kaken, "plays on the haiku's invocation of seasonal words (*kigo*) and conventional seasonal images" (Sherif 2012, 76). The line of the poet, "Autumn at night ABCC's light dominate", for instance, shows that the autumnal night is obscured by the light of the ABCC, the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission, which dominates over the city instead of the beauty of the moon (Sherif 2012, 76).

As Sherif explains, these traditional conventions are expanded and subverted to connect with wider Cold War concerns.

> the A-bomb poets also worked in dialogue with dominant social and cultural currents in 'Free World' Japan, such as the nation's turn away from other parts of Asia and its involvements in America's proxy wars in Korea and Vietnam, as well as issues connected with youth culture, the changing tropes of gender and the conflict between capitalist values and the lure of Marxist idealism, even as that idealism faded with the news of Stalinist atrocities in Russia. Other poets such as Tomioka Taeko and Hara Tamiki, and prose writers Oda Makoto, Hayashi Kyoko and Ota Yoko, are notable exceptions of people whose writing explored such concerns and who helped to shape a Cold War discursive field in Japan. (Sherif 2012, 84).

This textual exchange cannot be limited to the page, but instead is also enjoined to contexts, as Saito notes in his book *The History Problem: The Politics of War Commemoration in East Asia*.

> But why was the anger of those outside Japan still so resonant thirty years after the Asia-Pacific war had ended? Kurihara's answer was that it was because the Japanese had failed to adequately remember and atone for atrocities they had committed in the Asia-Pacific, while dwelling on their victimhood. She pleaded 'we must first/ wash the blood/ off our own hands'. In spite of Kurihara's plea, 'echoes of blood and fire' continue to haunt Japan's relations with its neighbouring countries (Saito 2016, 1).

As we can see from Duara's work on modern China, "national history secures for the contested and contingent nation the false unity of a self-same, national subject evolving through time" (Duara 1995, 4). At the same time, "the state is never able to eliminate alternative constructions of the nation among both old and new communities" (Duara 1995, 9). The implication of this point is that there is an artificiality to the imposition of state-led histories, and the ruptures that are presented offer us forms of incongruity, especially in the relationship between modes of writing and time, by which we might understand how Cold War time spills across the second half of the twentieth century.

This opens the door for the illumination of the *Hibakusha* as a community with an alternative conception of the Japanese past and present, forever reminding us that the event "then" is always probable now, in our presents and our futures. The poetry of Kurihara Sadako rewrites the nation into a bloodied flag of conquest and a militarised entity that brings men to war and turns them into beastly and demonic creatures, and where masculine narratives of the Japanese nation state are constantly

reinforced by complex ritual commemoration. Out of this, the poet's voice emerges from the dark abyss of the underground in birthing new life – let us be midwives!

Chapter 5: Nostalgia: Ee Tiang Hong's Poetry

Writing in the English language in Malaysia and Singapore, the poetry of Ee Tiang Hong forms part of a body of regional English language poetry that, "flourished slowly but steadily, partly through individual volumes and partly through anthologies" (Patke & Holden 2010, 115). Ee Tiang Hong was a poet from Malaysia who chose to undergo self-exile to Perth in Australia, after the May 1969 racial riots. His poetry speaks of Malaysian and Malayan identity through evocative expressions of meditations on loss, which are often encapsulated in nostalgia. His work is representative of a strand of poetic writing in a Southeast Asia that grew to embrace postcolonial modernity, and his writing moves from a social evaluation to a more direct social commentary in the wake of the riots, which this thesis considers as a domestic Cold War event. May 13 features as not only a domestic event about race relations but importantly a different way to think about Cold War events in the region, as it intertwined the Cold War with racial imaginaries and the conflicts between state narratives of the period and the experiences of the people. Therefore, it is linked to the Cold War as an event 'outside' the emergency, which also tells us about the silenced pasts rendered mute by the Cold War polity in the region.

While it can be considered that *bumiputera* politics more significantly coloured the relationship between the poet and the contested events of the riots, this thesis demonstrates instead that the nostalgia generated through Ee's poetry communicates a clear sense that the event was framed by silencing realities. This allows it to be compared to other silenced events in the Cold War in Asia under the postcolonial nation state. The two are intertwined and productively generate ways to

read the Cold War in Malaya and Singapore outside the emergency, which has been the dominant framing of the conflict, but is certainly not the only frame.

The structures of the postcolonial and the Cold War must be considered alongside the poet's voice as an intervention that disrupts various temporal boundaries or continuities. It provides a disjuncture from Malaya as a British colonial construction, while allowing us to think through Malaysia as a polity and in terms of racial politics (Hack 2012, 158). The deliberate choice to work on a poet outside Malay language writing is not only to demonstrate the vitality of English language poetry in the region, but also to show how we can look beyond "national" literary categories to think about regional writing. Ee's poetry attends to literary trends across the region. Indeed, he has extensive interaction with authors in Singapore such as Edwin Thumboo, Kirpal Singh, and others in Malaysia such as Wong Phui Nam (Patke & Holden 2010). Thus, Ee's poetry can be read as a poetry of eventual nostalgia, even as this nostalgia is committed to a social critique subsequent to the 13 May 1969 race riots in Malaysia.

As Tony Day notes in surveying plays, poems and novels from the region, "elements of 'impulse, restraint and tone' as configured in literature expressed private feelings and thoughts as well as social processes through literary words and structures in order to represent the experience of the Cold War" (Day 2020, 650). This formulation is useful in thinking about poetry in Southeast Asia. Ee Tiang Hong's writing reflects the restraint that often allows him to speak of difficult topics while not directly naming authority figures. The interaction between the strong private voice and social processes, as outlined above, is indicative of a sense of the writing working against Malaysia as a "geo-body" formation (Winichakul 1994). As Jomo Sundaram notes, "the word 'Malaya' embraces the word 'Malay', which has come to mean

different things in various historical and cultural contexts" (Sundaram 2020, ix). Malaysian identity is shaped through shifting linguistic and ethnic concepts and events. The wartime imagination of an "archipelagic community", which stemmed from administration and shared visions of a region (for example, through the governance of "Malaya and Sumatra" under Japanese Occupation and in journals such as *Fajar Asia*) helps us move away from a simplistic cartographical "location" of Malaysia existing only as a colonial legacy (Manickam 2020, 371). In the brief merger with Singapore between 1963 and 1965, we can see a distinct problematic of history in which merger and separation are framed within a nationalist discourse. This nationalist discourse bolsters state dominated interpretations of the communist threat (Lau 1998), or else incorrectly frame individuals such as Lim Chin Siong as part of the threat (Thum 2020, 57). The various imaginations of Malaya make it clear that borders across the region are, by and large, a recent development. They are not only postcolonial inventions but are implicated in the Cold War through various ideological debates.

Malayan wartime resistance to the Japanese developed into a threat during the formation of the post-war nation. The CPM, for instance, began to operate as a challenge to the colonial regime that returned in 1945. The continuing presence of a (suppressed) counter-insurgency within the national narrative is reflected in the poet's struggle to easily script such opposition to the dominant discourse, but Ee brings to his poetry a sensibility that gently questions them. As Katherine McGregor explains, "the Malaysian government also used memories of the Emergency to bolster its ethnic-based politics by venerating Malay heroes" (McGregor 2016, 248). McGregor understands the *Tugu Negara* monument to be emphasising this. In contrast, Ee's poetry and the reactions around May 13, 1969, break significantly from the

Emergency, although their links to racialised political production are obvious. The Cold War is evident in numerous dimensions of politics, but what about the unstable category of nation that the Cold War and the conditions of decolonisation sought to supplant? Ee Tiang Hong's poetic vision balances a postcolonial identity that is personal, even as it evolves into a socially committed poetry. It is marked by the historical aberration of the Cold War, intervening through the racial politics of the Malaysian nation state that were challenged in the 1969 race riots.

Ee Tiang Hong's poetry evolved through his career, from an earlier contemplative tone, to a later critique of society and the authorities in Malaysia. The poetry thus links postcolonial concerns, such as hybrid identities (Ee is a Peranakan or Straits-born author, while also being considered a Malaysian Chinese writer writing in English) with Cold War concerns of a domestic state's reformulation of racial categories and policies in a time of strife in 1969.

I would extrapolate the Cold War from these distinctions to read more into the poet's position as a voice critical of the Cold War silencing of certain events, which can be expressed as "a taboo, the knowledge of which is hearts and squelches the motivation for undo not for public discussion" (Ngoi 2020, 288). The taboo nature of the event and its legacies contributed to the self-exile of Ee and some of his contemporaries. This condition of self-exile to me is not far from Pramoedya's imprisonment, as it is an effect of the state's control and management of identities. Ee's work can also be linked to other contemporaneous writers such as Han Suyin, whose novel *And the Rain my Drink* is a key work of Emergency literature, and therefore can be explored further comparatively. Further, as a contemporary and critic of poet Edwin Thumboo, further discussion between these two authors provide fertile ground for tracing identity in Malaysia and Singapore through poetry.

The context of Ee's departure from Malaysia in the wake of the May 13 racial riots has been explored, in so far as his poetry mirrors the "difficulty in remembering and finding voices to articulate the memory" (Show 2021, 2). This difficulty of remembering allows us to see how the event crosses the imagined borders of the postcolonial nation, while it highlights ethnicity as a key issue in Southeast Asia. In relation to Malay-based reservations in the independent Malaysian nation-state that existed from the merger with Singapore in 1963, Leon Comber notes:

> Malaysia from the beginning was a plural society, but there was no sign of integration among the various races living in it. In its place, as the Malays and Chinese were concerned, there was a rather precarious agreement or understanding between the UMNO and the MCA top leaders that Malay special rights should not be questioned and the political predominance of the Malays should not be challenged (Comber 1983, 53).

After separation, or Singapore's expulsion from Malaysia in 1965, and the passing of the National Language Act in 1967, which instituted Malay as the official language in Malaysia, "non-Malays were decidedly unenthusiastic about the government's stand on language" (Comber 1983, 62). This stance on language informs the politics around the aesthetic choices of Ee Tiang Hong, because with time, as Cheah elaborates, "Britain tried but failed in creating a multi-racial 'Malayan' identity and a 'Malayan' political consciousness. It gave way to the creation of a 'Malay' nation state" (Cheah 38). And yet, visions of this in Ee's poetry defy this categorisation. As C. J. Francis writes in the preface to Ee's volume *I of the Many Faces* (1960): "the recognizable Malayan experience, of politics and railway platforms, flight and film, climate and living is realised, and thought is directly involved with the feelings of the man experiencing. This is the 'Malayan consciousness'" (Francis in Ee 1960, iii). Francis alludes to a strong personal sensibility of Malayan experience in Ee's work, one that is later transformed into social commitment. Ee writes subtly, but his voice in earlier volumes reads elliptically, much like the work of Arthur Yap, a Singaporean contemporary poet, resulting in the effect of "frequent strain, obscurity, and impression of the hermetic" (Patke & Holden 2010, 118).

With regard to the riots of 1969, Kua Kia Soong assesses the declassified documents of the riots of 1969 and declares: "the records show incontrovertibly that the riots of May 1969 were carefully planned and organized and they were an excuse for the new regime to declare an emergency for regime change" (Soong 2007, 87). This revisionist challenge to the state's narrative is of historical interest and, further, in line with Ee's critique of the events unfolding in his poetry, in so far as the riots and the wake of the events allowed "an ideology based on Malay-centrism to gain support of the Malay masses" (Soong 2007, 109). This perspective challenges the

state's own framing of the events as a crisis arising through racial tension, Soong suggesting instead that it was "not so much 'the people's own emergency' as the ascendant state capitalists' own emergency" (Soong 2007, 59). Even as the riots caused writers to leave Malaysia, they were significant in inspiring a reaction from artists who felt the pressure of the new management of the state, and this to me is a defining postcolonial event, much like the actual exile of writers in other parts of the region. As Ee writes in his doctoral dissertation on race and education in the wake of May 1969, the implementation of education in the period following was enacted "with fewer attempts to accommodate the wishes of non-Malay parents, or even attend to the representations of non-Malay leaders" (Ee 1988, 181). As observed by Tey Ching Le, "Malaysian policies accentuate communal boundaries by an unequal distribution of power. Ee, sensing that this portends racial problems, takes upon himself to be the voice of the people" (Tey 1988, 4). This voicing on behalf of the people does not exclude the poet's own conflicted voice, as he writes in a poem in *Westerly* in 1972:

> Now's the time for boldness,
> to tell all
> the many faces of the world
> insist.
>
> Seeing your faces,
> their outward composure,
> I am disposed to give,
> leave as souvenir
> appropriate to the occasion
> something that will not trivialise,
> add insult to our state,
> this separation.

And yet this consequence,
the indelicacy of touching
the unspeakable matters of state
here, even now, again
the memento cowers
in a corner in my throat (Ee 1976, 81).

This poem intervenes in a moment where Ee is able to speak more directly about the events, and yet, the "unspeakable matters of state" (Ee 1976, 81) remain unsaid, leaving us to interpret the relation between the poet's departure to Australia and the national outcast that becomes the poet's voice.

There is a great deal unsaid in terms of the experience of the Emergency and May 13 1969, in Malaysia. This silencing parallels silencing across the region in relation to national governments combating communism. Apart from in states in mainland Southeast Asia such as in Indochina and Myanmar, within the national narrative, communists were the enemy of the state and part of a larger regional and global ploy to subvert the sovereignty of states in the Cold War context. Tied uneasily to this was the effect of the Vietnam War during the same period (broken into three separate phases), but most definitely calling into question allegiances of certain ethnic groups, especially the Chinese in various contexts. However, as Ngoi notes with regard to the Communist Party of Malaya, "it is not hard to find the historic imagination of CPM remains a one-dimensional one" (Ngoi 2020, 291), and similarly, Chinese language materials offer a different narrative, one that needs to be considered in tracing the history of Chinese communities in the region. As an English educated author, it is not difficult to imagine that Ee, who is a Peranakan, inhabited a different linguistic world from Chinese authors, even while "the ideals of Malayan nationalism are being introduced to the Chinese through every school" (Wang 2013,

249). And while for the "May 13 Generation" the events of 1969 were defining and made them grapple with their identity as Chinese diasporic immigrants, with all the implications this has for the dimension of Chinese communism in the region after 1949, we see the legacy of these political developments being obscured and only now slowly recuperated through contemporary scholarly interest in alternative histories (Tan et al 2011). For the purposes of this chapter, we can map onto, but not completely shape our discourse around this contestation. The poet in question is less affected by these issues, and yet, May 13 is as much an influence on him as is his status as an English language writer.

The experience of exile is an important structuring feature in this thesis, and it is furthered by Ee, with parallels with writers such as Ninotchka Rosca in the Philippines, who was exiled under Marcos and is discussed in the final chapter of this thesis. This exile, unlike Pramoedya's, still maps onto a heuristic, Southeast Asian space, as it is a different form of exile, self-exile, in the face of tumultuous events, but still signals a detachment from "home". Ee laments his exile in his poetry, but more broadly, looks to lament a particular past he left behind. And yet, Ee Tiang Hong writes against the grain of the national language of Malaysia, itself a postcolonial choice, as he writes in English, particularly his poetry. "[W]hen it comes to thinking beyond the everyday, prosaic, hum-drum activities it's always English that I use. I think in English, I feel in English …. the influence of the West in Malaysia, I think, has been more profound than most people have allowed" (Westerly 1982, 75). From self-exile, we see a subtle expression of regret about the directions of the country in his absence:

> My later poems contain bitterness, yes, but more than that I think they reveal a deep sense of regret about some changes that have come about in Malaysia. The attachment, loyalty, love of the immigrant peoples who

> have for generations made Malaysia their home ought never to have been questioned, for, when it is questioned, people begin to get worried at the direction politics is going to take… (Westerly 1982, 78)

And it is this regret that generally strikes the reader through his poetry and that resonates through the poems as a form of nostalgia for a place transformed by the political and scarred through racial riots. Chew notes, discussing the poem "Exile", published in the same volume of the journal *Westerly* as these reflections from Ee, that:

> Ee's protests went unheeded by those they were directed at (the Malaysian government did nothing to address the grievances of the displaced minorities while the non-Malay elites ignored Ee's call for concerted action) […] Ee gradually and reluctantly disengaged himself from the issue at hand. The threat of possible retribution from the local authorities also loomed (so Ee believed) over his head. This threat […] compelled the ambiguity and restraint in his poetry (Chew 1982, 40).

This contribution helps us to understand the context in which we can assess the presence of nostalgia in Ee's poetry, not only as a form of self-memory but as an inspired political position to write around authority in the postcolonial period. As Singh notes, "in the poetry of Ee Tiang Hong, as in the work of most real exiles, the exiled state and the exiled being become trenchantly fused and offer us a challenging and moving experience of dislocation, homelessness" (Singh 2009, 33). The poem titled "Exile" narrates the moment of exile:

> He finally chose
> the only way out
> for the sake of all
> he held most dear,

left one quiet evening,
ash-grey,
incognito,
dirt on tarmac.

The poem laments "the only way out" from the situation in Malaysia in 1969, and the poet's invisibility, being "incognito", falling away from those he loved. If poets, especially postcolonial poets in English, "revisit history as a zone of imaginative recovery and recuperation" (Patke 2006, 9), then Ee's move into self-exile is an example of how he still operated within "nation", while detaching from it, as his definition of nation, quite contrary to that of the authorities, looked to it being "based on the recognition that races, religions, cultures, and languages interact as part of shared histories" (Patke 2000, 224). Belonging to a "seventh generation family in Malacca", Ee's position as a Malaysian preceded the nation state. This would therefore lead to self-exile as a phenomenon not only of ambivalence, but bitterness: "while the earlier style had tended to be cerebral, these later poems are imbued with a bitterness and an intensity that is immediately personal in a new mode in Ee's poetry" (Thumboo 1976, xii). He writes with a certainty that is committed in *Tranquerah*, in "A Poem",

A poem will, for sure,
surpass the fiat
of a mean creed,
the bully's posture (Ee 1985, 24).

It can be argued that the racial riots form a postcolonial, Cold War event, most importantly as they involved the domestic suppression of unrest through inherited colonial security laws. From this we can proceed to explore the relations between race as a construct, Ee's belonging to a hybrid Peranakan

culture as an uneasy slippage between racialised categories, and his writing in English, which at once expresses a heritage of British colonial education but also participates in a trend of re-appropriating this language in the region for the purposes of expressing a unique voice in, especially, Singapore and Malaysia during the Cold War. His poem "Kuala Lumpur, May 1969" is explicitly located in "Perth, 1976", a designation which does not feature in the other poems. In this poem, he writes of explicit events, not directly in the riots but the experience of awaiting to be targeted by mobs:

We stayed indoors day after day,
Whiling away the hours playing cards,
counted ourselves lucky not to have been caught
in Jalan Pantai or some other
inflamed section of the city
where the *parang* mobs had gathered. (Ee 1985, 29)

And while in the same poem, we see the poet recall how the "bitterness, recrimination day by day subside" due to time, the memory leaves an indelible mark across time for the poet, recalled through the technology of black and white television, "spasmodic national bulletins […] reasons for the curfew" (Ee 29).

Where both Wong Phui Nam and Ee, as Patke and Holden suggest, depart from Malay writing, is that "while a Malay poet like Muhammad Haji Salleh celebrates community, the ethnic Chinese poets struggle to recuperate a sense of community in a condition of isolation aggravated by the politics of ethnicity… Wong and Ee speak bitterly of dereliction, suffocation, and repression" (Patke & Holden 2010, 43). Racial relations lead us to unpack many

categories. These categories are quite “natural” as Patke and Holden suggest, since after “the British prepared for decolonization in the 1950s, Malayan writers set about the task of defining and inventing a Malayan consciousness in English” (Patke & Holden 2010, 43). Thus, Ee’s work in English is not in isolation, but in line with poets like Wong, who “has consistently given voice to a sense of mixed feelings about writing from a Malaysia whose ethnic politics isolated and alienated the immigrant races” (Patke & Holden 2010, 116).

This expression works in tandem with what Fiona Lee terms a form of the “national racial imaginary as a site for apprehending globality”, which, she argues, “thus, brings into view the *spectral transnationality* of race” and allows for an understanding of globalisation as a “mode of racial production” (Lee 2014, 9–10). Race is a productive discourse through which not only to understand globalisation but to locate the colonial endeavour in Malaya, as it was British rule that was “coloured by assumptions regarding their place in a hierarchy of culture and civilization and by the relationship between those peoples and British colonial endeavors in Southeast Asia” (Manickam 2009, 598). Thus, the reproduction of race within globalisation is a seeming continuation of colonial racial production and inequalities, and Ee’s poetry navigates and works against the boundaries of racial definitions in the postcolonial situation.

Ee Tiang Hong as a poet can be read through a meditative lens, on what it means to be displaced and to be nostalgic for home, however, it is the character of such nostalgia that is called into question and further, dislocated and framed as an act of resistance to history, told from the “top” down or led by the state. That home is actually a hybrid culture, where Ee writing in English contributes to writing in the

region, or the archipelagic, via the useful concept of "tanah air" – giving voice to the legacy of the colonial experience, which created mapping across the archipelago. This meditative tone or register in which the poetry operates is quite apparent. It is evident in the communication of a poetic sensibility that is at once engaged and distant, especially in the earlier volumes, such as *I of the Many Faces*. He writes in the poem "Railway Platform", for example, that "the clock becomes a trifle" (Ee 1960, 9). This reflection on time reflects the cadence of the reality that we see being expressed, where "the inertia of the platform" meets the sound of the whistle of a station master, and "the train will make a film strip/ Of faces sitting at the windows" (Ee 1960, 9), where Ee himself takes time to be both in motion and captured through nostalgia.[25]

Of himself and his contemporaries, including Edwin Thumboo, the prominent Singaporean poet, Robert Yeo, Kirpal Singh and others, Ee connects together writers working in English, which underscores the commonalities of English language writing in both countries and allows us to see postcolonial regional connections. Ee shares features with other writers in the region and even beyond, in other postcolonial contexts such as Africa and the Caribbean "in frequently accommodating words, phrases and idioms from indigenous languages into the author's English" (Patke & Holden 2010, 37). Ee's poems reflect a mixing of languages, such as Malay into English, and yet he is a predominantly English language poet, making him typical of a genre of writing in the region but also more broadly in postcolonial contexts. In the late 1960s, however, English poetry also depended on state patronage to thrive, and language policies did not favour this in Malaysia, in contrast to those supported in Singapore (Patke & Holden 2010, 124). Where the language policies of the

[25] An interesting sidenote is that a similar image is used in the Australian poet Kenneth Slessor's "Last Trams" (1939).

independent Malaysian state favoured Malay, this therefore marginalised English as a language which could be used to communicate poetically.

The poetic features of a nostalgic approach that is also socially aware prompt an understanding of Malaysia's Cold War as not only confined to the Malayan Emergency but reflecting the racial politics as a domestic Cold War phenomenon that parallels the communist struggle in the jungles of Malay(si)a, and decomposes the categories of the Cold War even further. The nostalgic voice of the English language poet is parallel to a postcolonial identity, which is tied intimately to the politics of the colony through the emergency, which is "depicted as an embattled space between the colonial forces who represent the ideological light of democracy, and their enemy, the 'Red' and predominantly Malayan Chinese insurgents in the jungle, who embody the darkness of communism" (Chin 2021, 269). The parallel, however, is an uneasy one, as Ee does not write in Chinese, but the politics of race in postcolonial, independent Malaysia clearly stem from the colonial period, which justifies not only an explicit Cold War reading, but a reading that engages the "post" in postcolonial as a conversation with the colonial. Alan Chong clarifies this when he suggests that "for Malaysian and Singaporean protagonists [he mainly means political leaders, but also some activists here] the Cold War was a long interlude in decolonization and the rediscovery of a future…" (Chong 2020, 204).

The economic and structural changes brought about in independent Malaysia followed developments such as the New Economic Policy and the "preferential treatment of the *bumiputera*" (Boey 2010, 93), the local Malay population, after the events of May 13, 1969, which aimed at "eradicating poverty regardless of race, and restructuring society to eliminate the identification of race with economic function" (Sundaram 2014, 45). Ee's journey as a poet was inflected by this broader change in

the political landscape, which would culminate in racial tensions and cause bitterness and frustration. (Ee would also write a doctoral thesis on racial issues at the University of Western Australia.) Where Boey Kim Cheng reads both Ee Tiang Hong and Shirley Lim Geok-lin as writing hybrid, Peranakan identities, he places emphasis on the fact that "Chinese elements pervade their work; they are bound, like their mainland Chinese counterparts, by a tight-knit kinship system and the Confucian values of filial piety and ancestor worship that demand a return to their ancestral hearth and homeland" (Boey 2010, 92). This relation between homeland and kinship within a Chinese identity do feature in Ee's work, but he is certainly not explicit about these links structuring his writing. In most of his oeuvre we see an emphasis on Peranakan identity that is not incompatible with his Chinese heritage. As does the work of Shirley Lim, Ee's poetry forms part of a different diasporic culture: that of the international migrant from a Malayan background.

Ee's poetry also seems to negate the simplistic divide of the nation state or separation between Malaysia and Singapore in 1965. It reads against broader structures of power that appeal to conversations through poetry across Southeast Asia in most languages, and while his voice is often encased in a form other than fiction, poetry aids our view of a retelling of regional pasts outside the bigger narratives of history, rescuing the literary from state appropriation.

Ee writes of the Tembusu tree affectingly, using its image to give an epistemology to Southeast Asian writing expressing itself through its own voice, "upright and stately" as it stands (Ee 1976, 16), which is thus quite like José's balete tree, standing for a location of the writing in the Southeast Asian imaginary.

Ee's work changes the scale and scope of the timescape of the nation, and poetic experience morphs into a broader shape of time through his verses, as seen in the poem "Stars":

> The supersonic flight
> of shooting stars ends
> in a sudden streak of sight –
> a matter of seconds (Ee 1960, 11).

This compression of time is often negotiated within the poetry, which is not always this abstract and later directly engaged with events within the nation. Questions of scale and purpose are tied to a voice that is both capacious in its scope and also trenchant and conflicted. These conflicts are represented and then modified against the backdrop that he at once admires and critiques unreservedly.

In a public environment, the poet caricatures government ministries and the attitudes of a materialistic society. On a personal level, he laments exile, and ponders the past, but engages with the environments that have been eventually displaced from his life, in Malacca, Malaysia, and Singapore. Ee's social critique is expressed directly to the reader, in different registers of meaning, but never in a way that reads as pedantic or politically expedient. However, the nostalgia that continued to run in his work was shaped differently and follows the lines of longing for a vision of Malaysia that did not exist anymore. As Boey notes:

> the alternative [to leaving] was to work in a kind of internal exile. […] Ee speaks of others like his contemporary Wong Phui Nam, 'who have chosen to remain in the country, but their being ostracised by those responsible for the dissemination of knowledge and culture makes them exiles all the same'. The literary disenfranchisement of Malaysian writers in English persisted (Chin in Boey 2010, 94).

This disenfranchisement perhaps is also an expression of the character of Malaysian writing in English and the preponderance and dominance of Malay writing. English itself is a form of linguistic exile within the dominance of the state.

Using English as a negotiating tool, outside the vernacular languages, Ee's writing is able to communicate to different audiences and react against the dominant hegemony of unspoken attitudes. As noted, this also supplants a "national narrative" of the events of the time, as history too is being circumscribed due to the censorship of materials associated with the Communist Party of Malaya. The legacy of national insurgency and the ideology associated with it, as is the case in many Southeast Asian contexts (perhaps with notable exceptions in Indochina), is a sort of *national silence* in the regional context, where communism was silenced and made pejorative, and often linked to ethnicity. While Ee's poetry deals with the riots of 1969 and these riots were tied to a national narrative of racial strife, the vision of the poet is more capacious and refuses these racialised categories. This too runs against the national narrative.

Much less attention is given to a diaspora – instead to rootedness – in Malacca. This perhaps is also why the poet is more concerned with a vision of Malaysian-ness that links to a place: the contradiction being that the idea of place is not stable and his vision crosses many contexts. It is interesting also to note his fixation on the dynamic between various places and the meditative ambiences evoked by them, such as in his poem "Heeren Street, Malacca", "Meditating in every wilderness/ Of this golden peninsula" (Ee 1976, 1). This ambience can lean towards an affective economy, where the "movement between signs converts into affect" (Ahmed 2004, 120). In this sense, the signs within the poetry surpass the poet's intent

and instead work into an imaginary of a nation that exists beyond the state's narratives, in the realm of nostalgia.

Further, a place is not only shaped by location but also by the memory of events, for instance protests against the Vietnam War, as in the poem "On the Boat People".

> Picture the streets,
> the noisy campuses
> of the late sixties,
> when they protested
> the fire and brimstone
> on Vietnam.
>
> Was it to demonstrate
> what commitment in the gut?
> to Freedom? to self determination?
>
> When will the still surviving
> give a damn
> at what's happening (Ee 1976, 42–43).

More political than others, this poem seeks to call those responsible to account, to maintain their consideration of the situation. It highlights for this study the key role of the Vietnam conflict in Southeast Asia. The poetry may usually appear more measured in tone, but this poem is one example of a pronounced and direct critique, perhaps because its events occurred outside Malaysia. In contrast, locating Chinese political life in Malaysia has been, as scholars demonstrate, somewhat harder outside explicit racial politics and communist involvement (though this is not to suggest Chinese exclusivity in the movement): "two contradictory views of them have long prevailed: that the Chinese are non-political and that the Chinese are political in a

secretive and inscrutable way" (Gungwu 2003, 112–13). While Wang Gungwu clearly demonstrates this is untrue in his article, the views and evaluations seem to evoke a sense of ambiguity, much like the poetry.

Ee's critique does at times hint at the interruption of narratives by historical events. For instance, in "Bukit Batok, Singapore", Ee writes of an "Alien shrine… Warm are the shores of the Kuroshiho steep" (Ee 1960, 12), which refers to a Japanese shrine that possibly relates to the period of Syonan-to on the island of Singapore, or the Japanese Occupation during the Second World War, when the island was violently occupied by the Japanese. This is the Syonan Chureito Memorial, which is in Bukit Batok, the area which is the poem's subject. Ee's poem evokes a sense of loss of place on behalf of the Japanese soldiers that died, "Here who cares to lament us/ in this sort of a tomb", and "Kuroshiho" (referring to the tide) alludes to a lack of belonging in an alien environment. Ee often places his speaker in a shroud of distance from the environment and the conditions around him, so the reader is exposed to the environment but is never engaged fully with it. Thus, the distance that is created is a form of a lack of place, one that exists only in the nostalgia or longing for a place.

In his collection *I of the Many Faces* (1960), Ee notes with displeasure the common attitude towards art of his writer compatriots. In "Song of a Young Malayan", his speaker declares: "But you speak of poetry which have no rhyme… But I must admit/ I don't like poetry very much./ I like music." This is followed in a later stanza with "In school/ I hated art like anything" (Ee 1960, 13). This lamentation expresses an ironic critique of the emphasis on technical skills and industry in postcolonial Malaya, but through the choice to use vernacular idioms and local expressions it also insists on critiquing poetry that does not rhyme, alluding to modern, free verse poetry and its techniques – such as that employed by the poet.

Rather, the subject prefers, “O Ross Hamilton is my favourite/ His words so full of meaning/ ‘I’ll go out into the night/ Buy you a dream’”. The poet ironically voices an Americanised taste that is derivative; that suspects institutional art and embraces instead popular culture, making the poet in some sense lament this in society. However, Ee himself makes reference to various thinkers in his poems: “(But work is happiness,/ According to Voltaire!)” (Ee 1960, 6), he writes, in relation to his reflections on life in “Pengkalan Chepa, Kelantan”.

Importantly, history for Ee, as Edwin Thumboo notes, is to be shaped by those who should not stay silent and times are written about “with the knowledge that, paradoxically, suffering steadies the tragedy enabling the poet to recognize for himself that a terrible agony is born” (Thumboo 1976, xv). There seems to be a suspension of time even in the labelling of the poems, which seem undated as a deliberate choice by the poet, to play with the idea of the stability of a historical time.

While Ee’s work has had some attention within the region and in Commonwealth writing circles, this has been because it is written in English and discussed in the context of Southeast Asian writing. Curiously, the poetry seems to be displaced on numerous fronts: at a local level from the vernacular languages and on a broader level against writings from metropolitan authors. This is evocative of how, as a form, English language poetry in the region is seen as a preserve of institutions and not a broader societal project. The project on the local level would seem to relate more to vernacular language (Malay, Mandarin, Tamil) and politics and the concept of English poetry as a source of social criticism is displaced from the local conception of the function of verse. As Chakrabarty puts it in relation to the politics of language and academic publishing, “not all global issues were equally global” (Chakrabarty 2017, 35). Chakrabarty had discovered that his publication of an essay in Bengali in

Bengal on the concept of climate change and history had less currency than when it was published in English in a theory journal and received in India subsequently. This point is not merely a question of the hierarchy of globalisation, but also of the material conditions that privilege the production of certain texts and ideas.

Ee Tiang Hong is often seen as committed to expressing identity and finding a Malaysian voice, but his reception as such is perhaps mitigated by the not-so-simple ethnic politics and the dominance of Malay writing, as well as the status of diasporic writing written in and translated from Chinese. In terms of identity, for instance, there is merit in comparing Ee to the Singapore novelist Goh Poh Seng and his work *If We Dream Too Long* (1972). Goh himself migrated out of Singapore to Canada, though it seems clear that this was not due to the political climate. However, the writing there of the world of his coming-of-age protagonist, Kwang Meng, against the rapidly urbanising backdrop of Singapore, constructs an image of youthful aimlessness amidst political change. This type of questioning of the national project – in the English language and that seems to follow the characters, be it Ee's poems or Kwang Meng, and provide an idiom of questioning – allows for subtle subversions against the broader postcolonial context as well as against the policing of ethnolinguistic identities that are often associated with Southeast Asian writing. While Singapore's lingua franca broadly became English, the elite status of the language in Malaysia corresponds to a shared colonial experience under the British. Therefore, the circumstances of Ee's and Goh's displacement also mirror a sense of nostalgia, but this is scripted outside the nation, reinforcing a removal from both place and time.

The "time" of exile is perhaps the most pronounced topic in the work of Ee, and it can be argued that verse lends itself to the manipulation of time, within stanza structures or the free flow of poetic association. The time that features in the poetry is

broken, notably, and in that regard can be seen to be paradigmatic of the condition of the subject speaking against such big displacements and postcolonial developments, while speaking back to and against the dominant structures of urbanism that create a fracture between the past and new "time". Of course, the time of exile can be traced from colonial modernity.

Ee's work in this regard can relate to Malay world writing, in so far as it creates a new category of "straits" Peranakan writing that intervenes into the time of the nation, and this unravels a hybridity that exposes deeper links across the Malay world. This hybridity also shows in the ways in which English is written postcolonially, against the colonial master:

> sudden the crooked irony:
> 'So you write your poems – in English?
> You must teach us the language, you know,
> It's rather a reproach
> On our incompetence at learning
> French'.

This poem is rather cleverly entitled "O to be in England" and plays against the assumptions that Ee is writing a new form of unconventional poetry, rejecting formal colonial conventions. Ee questions his own process in this poem, where advice is given:

> 'But why do you choose
> To use English, why not Chinese?
> Then you'd be famous'.

The subject's only response is to be "confounded", as English is a natural medium for his writing (Ee 1976, 13). Such detachment from the vernacular, from which a Peranakan is so far removed, in addition to the foreignness ascribed to the

postcolonial subject who writes in the colonial vernacular, or perhaps lacks the ability to do otherwise, is reminiscent of Derek Walcott's phrase in *The Schooner Flight*, "I had a sound colonial education…/ and either I'm nobody, or I'm a nation" (Walcott 1986, 346). This particular poetic fragment, expressing the process of displacement within hybrid identities, resonates with a linguistic "exile" for Ee, which works in parallel to the process of actual exile from Malaysia.

Time that operates in the channel of memory is glimpsed at various stages in Ee's poetry as well, such as in his observation "Wraith after wraith/ Of incoherent smoke/ Flowering like memories", where the poet shows how reminiscence is often constructed through an image of the past not corresponding to the present. This is sometimes related to birds as well, where a nightjar is seen to remind the poet of "…the insistence/ On being/ Something, somewhere" in "The Nightjar" (Ee 1976, 18). The birds function in some sense to remind the poet to locate his voice in an oeuvre, within a tradition, and in this poem, the nightjar could sound like music or a lyric, but instead just finds echoes within his own poetry. This figuring of mimicry in a bird is not unique to Ee but plays into Bhabha's concept: finding a voice but at the same time incorporating and playing within the tradition of the coloniser (Bhabha 1994). There is often a lack of finality to the verse. Ee in his own life conspicuously relocated to Perth in Australia, and so there is the question of:

> Are we really arrived, have we
> Really reached as the smooth guide says
> The great and beautiful city (Ee 1976, 27).

This particular questioning of a notion of "arrival" relates to the postcolonial quest for identity as well – how does the postcolonial subject really arrive? And to which destination? In his poem "Memory", Ee recounts how "a touch of winter/ chills the

summer air", and while he is writing of the Thames, this coldness separating the action of walking away into the present of summer suggests a feeling of nostalgia that is much like the pathetic fallacy: the air laden with the coldness of displacement and the elements coalesce around the poet's own feelings. In the poem "Bus Stop" he writes, "Time peels my husk" (Ee 1960, 19), suggesting a shedding of the skin and the closeness of seasonal time to his own approach towards writing, realising a broader concept in both manipulating time as well as being manipulated by the forces beyond, and these not necessarily pointing to a fixed destiny.

This tension between fixity and flux, appears in the poet's changing of the names of places from their original vernacular into Malay, most explicitly in *Tranquerah* in the poem "New Order": "they have succeeded/ in changing the names/ of things and places/ as they pleased–". The poem features an epigraph about change by Munshi Abdullah, in Malay: "yang tidak di-adakan berubah-ubah ada nya" (Ee 1985, 4). This points to a politics of lamenting what is lost or changed in the naming process that at once seems like indigenisation but is more about erasing other identities and replacing them with a majoritarian conception.

In so far as Ee wrote about others of his contemporaries, such as Edwin Thumboo and Kirpal Singh, there are clear links to their work, especially with images that elicit a vocabulary tied to the indigenous landscape. In Thumboo's work, we see at times a more explicit commitment to anticolonialism, yet a deep link to the British imperial tradition and colonial education. In "May 1954", this commitment is made clear: "Restore this place, this sun/ To us… and the waiting generations/ *Depart white man*" (Poetry Singapore 2020). As anticolonial sentiment in a postwar moment, this also could deal explicitly with the Cold War in the region, as evidenced in Ee's foreword for the Singaporean poet Robert Yeo's volume *and napalm does not help*

(Yeo 1977), where he writes, of his fellow English language poet, that Yeo "avoids the clichés" that could be present in writing of the Vietnam War. At the same time the collection aspires to a Southeast Asian unity, something which most of his contemporaries did not do (Ee 1977, xii–xiv). This reflection on Yeo's poetry is enjoined to a commentary on nationhood, and while writing of Singaporean nationhood, Ee notes that Yeo "saw well enough that there was some leeway for alternative viewpoints and methods within a broad consensus of norms and values" (Ee 1977, xii).

Racial riots are not necessarily only a feature of Cold War societies and the racial politics that emerged in Malaysia are tempered by ideological divides between "races". This was perhaps prefaced by the Malayan emergency, nevertheless. The race riots are the least explicit point of how the Cold War functions in Malaya, and addresses how the colonial and postcolonial situation in Malaysia is very different to others discussed in the thesis. The Cold War features as an anticolonial struggle and is not able to be separates from this recent Malaysian history, and the current debates over the emergency. One could say that the racial riots of 1969 had some discussion but not extensively in Malaysian literature until long after the Cold War. It was an issue that became politically divisive and was silenced by the internal security regime. This relates to ethnic politics and the location of "Chineseness" as a minority group within Southeast Asia, occupying the strange (perhaps even paradoxical) space of at once being seen as extraordinarily successful in business and yet also being aligned with communism and social justice, through the Malayan emergency and beyond.

The framing of the riots as racial and divisive is the general state narrative in both Malaysia and Singapore, but its contours seem to take a different form in Ee's poetry. His poems often relate to these events in a cautious and perhaps even allusive,

strategic way. He references the issue in the poem “The Farce” by asking “Didn’t Nero fiddle while his city burned?” and he chastises the “Fourth Estate” as being “slack, off duty/ Managing part-time their privy estates”. Such rendering of the role of Malaysian leadership during the riots is at once a mark of Ee’s subtlety but also a way in which to discuss events that did not render his poetry censored in Malaysia. Thumboo describes censorship and repression of the Chinese in the region: “they have had a hard time. In Indonesia at one point, after 1965, you couldn’t even have a Chinese script, or import medicines with labels that had Chinese characters. And look what happened in Thailand: they’re being absorbed, they’ve changed their names” (Webb & Thumboo 2018).

This point about elusiveness is important, as Ee’s style of allusiveness and references to Roman characters such as Nero hides his real target, which is dominant Malay politics and the failure of Malaysian journalism at the time. This is reiterated in his poem “Letter to a Friend”, where Ee writes:

> How the many-tongued newspapers
> Celebrate the half truths
> Pressman and scholar, covering the farce,
> Gloss over, all the noises the recorders
> Blare, will become history our children
> Will glorify in their innocence

Evocative of war poetry, these few lines critique the misrepresentation of the riots and have a prophetic resonance with how the state management of the riots had been critical in ensuring social stability in Malaysia. Ee is clear that state-driven interests and profiteering succeeded in replacing any contested vision of Malaysia after 1969. His poetry turns to point fingers, yet again in a calculated manner, “to a conspiracy of frogs/ And snakes/ And crocodiles”. And the new order is seen to be something to

oppose “Hold our tongues, seal our lips/ Be grateful that we have got/ (The fruits of our toil)”.

Allusion and reference outside the Malaysian context foreground his political critiques as a subtle strategy to navigate the state. Similarly, the food and the language that is understood across communities is referenced to intervene against this political backdrop of racial difference and separation. Words such as *pondok* or *jaga* (the former meaning a hut of some sort and the latter meaning a watchman), are interspersed within the English verse, but they do no violence and do not interrupt the flow of the poems, as they enjoin the landscape into the verse. The real aberration is the political betrayal, which serves to rupture the mood of longing into a more socially committed poetry.

The poem “Ministry of Information” in *Tranquerah* is perhaps one of the poems where Ee gets closest to a fully-fledged critique of bureaucracy and power, and yet it does not name any real officials. In it, he satirises and turns the logic of the official on its head:

> The third bulletin said
> that a deeper analysis of the historical,
> social, political and economic
> forces, local and international
> pointed irrefutably to the hidden tentacles
> of the communists at work.
>
> Other statements followed,
> and more considered
> green paper,
> blue paper,
> white paper,
> and a final paper that banned
> any public discussion of the subject (Ee 1985, 9).

These verses are interesting because while writing about the characterisation of the riots in retrospect, Ee is making a bigger point about the Cold War, following his earlier stanzas' characterisation of reports that the events were caused by Triads or "political opportunists". The clear critique here is not merely of the production of archival knowledge, or the broad reach of the state, but in fact the censorial regime and the production of power that translates into knowledge. As Ee's concerns show, local events often translated into Cold War struggles. Ee not only believes that art can challenge power structures, to whatever end, but as his poem "A Poem" demonstrates, a poem will itself:

> […] say
> what it must
> notwithstanding the threat
> to silence its throat (Ee 1985, 24).

In the defiance of these poems written from exile, we can see how exile strengthened Ee's commitment to art speaking back to structures of power. In his poem about "Exile", Ee notes quite clearly that "even mimicry/ grew idle, pointless/ and demeaning" (Ee 1985, 26–27). This point about mimicry is a constant concern and is shared with much postcolonial writing in English outside a metropolitan structure as noted above. The tone of exhaustion and disillusion is indicative of the toll of having to work within certain structures of meaning and aesthetics in Malaysia that did not allow for freer expression on the part of the poet.

Ee Tiang Hong evades clear distinctions and this hybridity lends itself to archipelagic writing theories in Southeast Asia. Such hybridity is arguably created by colonialism and its categories and forms of knowledge. As Daniel P.S. Goh mentions:

> There is no doubt that the colonial pioneers sincerely believed in their civilizing mission. But this belief was a retroactive construction of the meaning of what [Slavoj] Zizek (1989, 101) calls 'some mythical, pre-symbolic intention'. The imputation of significance to any becoming of a subject is retroactive because the individual is interpellated by the Other, in this case 'Civilization', which organizes the field of meaning for the emergence of the subject. Rather than a stated fact to be ascertained as truth, intention is remembered by the subject after the event of its formation in the very terms of the formative symbolic discourse (Goh 2008, 112).

If, within the colonial project the civilisational category is creating conditions for the emergence of the subject, then the postcolonial subject is also constructed by a post-civilisational knowledge broken away from, yet reinforcing, the colonial categories of race. The colonial civilisational discourse fits into taxonomies and racial science that survive past even the disassemblage of empire. As Goh puts it "for the subject to come into being, multiple possibilities must be reduced to the certainty of singular meanings" (Goh 2008, 112). These certainties, with the uncertainties of hybridity that are introduced into the structures of meaning, are interventions into the postcolonial knowledge formation of racial subjects. This is particularly important in thinking about the intervention of literature into the realm of the knowledge of the state, as it exposes a certain dynamic or dialogue between literature, or in this case poetry, and state policies.

As a Southeast Asian writer, it is evident that Ee engages with the postcolonial as a category of writing, as his lexicon often engages in the type of creolisation that we see in other postcolonial writers. The glossaries of terms within the volumes of his poetry are illustrative of this. We can see how José's writing reads in some sense similarly, with words such as *barrio* eased into the narrative, which offers a new way

of understanding English and its numerous appropriations. This can then call for a broader transnational appreciation of the way English has been "chutnified" (Khanna 2011, 398)[26] or appropriated into local contexts and then of course written back against empire. In his poem about the Philippines "Santa Cruz, Manila", however, Ee speaks of the cacophony of the modern urban Southeast Asian city, not merely lamenting the loss of a pure identity but finding a broken music in the streets:

> Discordant
> In the fluent traffic
> The broken notes of a violin
> Stumbling along a pavement (Ee 1976, 8).

This reflection of both fragmentation and the fluency of traffic contributes to a search for a new epistemology for describing the postcolonial city. In some ways this poem also reflects the gaze of a somewhat heightened middle-class idealisation of the poverty on the sidewalk:

> On matted hemp
> A vagrant, cross legged,
> And quiet, like Buddha
> Scraping a pathos
> In the endless din.

This reads as a reflection of the condition of the poor, but also of the poet's own condition, finding a melancholy within the sadness of things. This is also perhaps a broader reflection of the conditions of the Southeast Asian region in post-imperial times, with conflicting images of the exotic and oriental (the Buddha slightly misplaced in a largely Roman Catholic context), and in that sense constructs a register

[26] The author here discusses Salman Rushdie and the postcolonial city.

of permanence and impermanence, and stillness and noise amidst a landscape of the new city.

Ee's own identity as a Peranakan writer and the mixing of Malay and Chinese ancestry is important to understanding his writing against dominant frames or racial politics that shaped such frames during the postcolonial Cold War. This idea of Peranakan identity remains a critical lens for the poetry to engage the big structures of simplified ethnic identity. As noted, Ee is not simply a Chinese Malaysian poet, nor does he fit into the diasporic community of writers who largely write in Mandarin. Instead, Ee's work speaks to a broader history of exchange across the straits of Malacca, which often can seem to connect to vaster colonial legacies, such as that of the Portuguese.

> Of the conquistadores–
> these last few acres of sand … that quiet old man
> hunched by the sea wall,
> barnacle riddled,
> is Mr. de Sequeira
> a well known figure in these parts
> same name as the one
> who came before Albuquerque "Portuguese Hamlet, Malacca" (Ee, 1976, 2).

These currents of history "below" the precarious nation state and its interruptions to the tides of the past are often charted by Ee, although the charting remains partial because of the eclectic nature of his poems. Nevertheless, the imagery alludes to an understanding of the archipelagic and to the instability of the "land" as a conceptual category for island Southeast Asia, and through this we can also see that the sea is constantly working against the "time" of the present. And yet, as for the Singaporean poet Lee Tzu Pheng, we need to caution our readings of poetry against "sentimental nostalgia", as their works are deliberately sceptical of developments that "drive

nations towards chimeras of development, while transforming topographies, souls and values that keep us human" (Patke & Holden 2010, 123).

The writing of English language poetry in the region relates to and can be juxtaposed against imaginaries of region that function not only linguistically but also geopolitically. The framework is co-extensive with other regional geopolitical structures such as SEATO, ASA, MAPHILINDO and others, which straddled political and military visions, but also importantly, created regional visions that formulated notions of culture and enabled these through institutions. Even further, Ee being recognised as one of the foremost writers in English in the ASEAN nations, perhaps reflects how this institution was sited in the regional context, relative to the locations of other English-language writers.

This project is not necessarily untied to the project of decolonisation or to the appropriation of culture from the coloniser. As Chakrabarty notes, "our political and justice-related thinking remains very human-focused. We still do not know how to think conceptually – politically or in accordance with theories of justice – about justice towards non-human forms of life, not to speak of the inanimate world" (Chakrabarty 2017, 32). This concern seems on the surface divorced from the Cold War but should not to be underplayed in engaging with the global competition for resources of the superpowers and development as a policy of empire. Ee's poems can be read against a broader national encroachment upon the natural, and as expressing a longing for indigenous place and referents in the face of continuous displacements in modern society. His poem "Sunday" reflects on the rearrangement of time into the system of the working week, far from the idyll his poems seem to approximate at some points. This idyll is always inflected with broader social meaning and renames numerous developments within the natural world via new vernaculars, at once

demonstrating the colonial/Anglophone lineage and breaking away from this. This structure of time is rebelled against, alongside a capitalist modernity.

The relation between appearance and disappearance is quite intimately tied to knowledge and power, as well as the absences on the page. At the same time, this disappearance is also a strength, as it adds a mystery to the tone of the poems: one imagines landscapes that are desolate, with Ee somehow encountering the final bus of the day or a "midnight road" where "*pontianak* perch", in "Tranquerah Road" (Ee 1985, 60). This poem illuminates a barren space with the ghosts of mythical lore perching, in some sense locating culture in absence. Thus, the barrenness is an empty space that haunts the poetry much like English appears as a language outside the national discourse.

Satire is also a function of the poetry that at some level distances Ee's own experience of loss alongside his critique of society, especially the materialistic desires of the new middle class. This type of class-based critique is unaware of its own privilege as a middle-class form of writing. The satire is perhaps a way to navigate changes in society, to ease the tensions that would manifest in the loss of identities previously valued and to herald a new social and political majoritarian racial politics, against a more multiracial environment. However, this is not to say that all critique in the poems is fixed in the satirical. Especially in the poem "Mr Tan, Recounting a Friend's Conversation", he shows how the speaker mentions "If you can't beat them/ join them, *lah*, he thought,/ what to do?", which then turns into a critique of the racial policies of the state: "it dawned on him,/ maybe they didn't want him,/ anyhow" (Ee 1985, 17).

The work communicates a double marginality (through language and place) that is reinforced by the poet's choice to write in English and an exile that, in yoking

off colonial domination, sits uneasily with the Malaysian state's embrace of the "official and Malay definition of the Malaysian nation and culture", as Ee puts it.

> I left the country when I was finally convinced that the terms by which the nation was founded had been tampered with, that the nationalism in whose name independence was secured, had taken a narrow turn…(*Westerly* 1982*)*

Made also in relation to the lack of attention to English medium writing in the Malaysian context, this point is at once a singular local appearance but also part of the broader regional postcolonial politics that offered in some form categorisations and conceptualisations for the operation of state power, but also disempowered certain vernaculars. This form of linguistic distinction, perhaps, is lamented by Ee in his poem "Tranquerah Road",[27] where he observes the road as a "poor adjunct", and yet, through the poem, he traces how a place such as the road is transformed by Japanese Occupation, "The Japanese came,/ and we sang *Kimigayo*/ learnt some *Nihon Seishin* [Japanese Soul]", and later by the collapse of the Co-Prosperity Sphere and independence, showing us how language evolves in this street.

He is cognisant of his "trespass" on the English language, as Chew suggests, but necessarily, this trespass itself is not a violent infringement but demonstrates restraint. Such restraint is also expressed in the sombre tone with which the poet's departure for Australia is conveyed, and as Chew suggests in Ee's poem "O To Be in England":

> I should have read
> The smiles which said: Private
> Trespassers will be prosecuted.

[27] Both roads are in Malacca [Melaka]: Heeren Street is an extension of this street.

Ee's work challenges the dichotomies of the Cold War, national writing frames, and the framing of nostalgia and social critique against and within postcolonial thinking. The poetry of Ee Tiang Hong evolves into a robust social critique that negotiates the censorial regime of the postcolonial Southeast Asian state. The poetry, however, cannot only be seen through this context, in that it seems to refer to the broader concept of a prismatic memory of a time that crosses many boundaries. Ee's own exile is representative of the bridging of a few boundaries in itself, especially through the traversing of linguistic conventions and his relocation to Australia, and attempting to grasp a past, but never quite doing so. This perhaps is a comment on time flowing in ways that are unpredictable, even escaping the mould of the contemporary nation state – that ebb and flow much like the straits of Malacca. His writing in English deserves to be considered within a broader canon of writers globally, even though this comment is determined within the questions of value that haunt world literary markets founded upon a world of letters in the West.

The sparse nature of the verse is accompanied by a filling of the page with a dialogic intent: it is as if the reader is constantly invited to ponder and respond to Ee, to take part in discussions about how they remembered the satay "in those days". These reflections about the nature of political and postcolonial thought are never forced, even though Ee's registers are always working to disrupt particular conventions. Whether it be in his distancing from his own colonial education, or the ill fit of the poetry into the broader model, or the construction of new identities through verses about in-between identities, or even the writing in English that seems to indicate a non-conformity to vernacular education, the poems seem to revel in a displacement within a displacement. The continuously displaced poet thus longs for the pastoral of the Malaya of yore, thinking of landscapes and birds that aspire to new

languages that escape mere scientific classification – perhaps much as how the vibrancy of ethnic identity escapes the matrix of meaning produced in the hierarchy of civilisation that is made expedient through colonial difference. In these ways, Ee Tiang Hong's work is relevant to broader thinking about the production of literature in the region and in the Cold War, and works alongside the other authors in this thesis to symbolise how at once what is solid can be also mixed.

Chapter 6: Retrospective Writing on the Postcolonial Cold War in the Region

This chapter places into conversation three texts that while produced after the period generally designated as the Cold War in Southeast Asia nevertheless address it. Using the term "generally designated", I signal the complicated dating of this period. I am inclined to accept characterisations that the Cold War ended in the Asia-Pacific after the Second Indochina War or the Vietnam War, which would be until 1977. Conscious that the effects of the Cold War are complicated by Kwon and others such as Kuan- Hsing Chen, we should be aware of the temporal "uneasiness" created by nominating the end of the conflict. This chapter shifts towards the present in order to think about how the writing of the four authors in the preceding chapters of the thesis speak to literary works produced after the period, seeking to understand the Cold War as an active site in the present that dialogues with the past. The idea of retrospectivity is rooted in a sense that some foundation was created by the powerful works of the post-war period.

Numerous conversations are occurring in terms of influence, around how certain discourses produced in the former period "speak" to themes present in contemporary writing. It is possible to map the concerns of the novels in this chapter to the historical trajectories that have been dominant structuring influences in various parts of the region. The novel, the primary literary form chosen for this chapter, continues to work as a device with and against a national narrative. For this thesis, the critical thinking point is how, necessarily, "domestic" concerns and issues of postcolonial identity are often mediated, challenged, and discursively reframed in literature through the lens of Cold War and post-Cold War structures.

Arguably, retrospectivity allows for a recalibration of thinking through what the Cold War was outside the bipolar structures. The three novels selected for this chapter, one each from Indonesia, Singapore and the Philippines, represent a fragment of contemporary writing from the region. However, they offer insights into how the concerns of postcolonialism continue to be present in the selected works, and offer comparative lenses.

These concerns are mirrored by public discussion on the nature of the events of the past, which establish silences in the present. This chapter examines the novels *State of War* by Ninotchka Rosca (1988), *State of Emergency* by Jeremy Tiang (2017), and *Beauty is a Wound* by Eka Kurniawan (*Cantik itu Luka* 2002; English translation 2015), drawing upon each of the authors' works singularly and then in conversation with one another as examples of contemporary regional writing. I chose these novels because they communicate with some urgency the themes of the postcolonial Cold War in Southeast Asia, but also because they take a shape that mirrors the concerns of the previous chapters. This is not to suggest that *all* regional writing mirrors these concerns; these texts are chosen deliberately to "play" with time. These three novels are especially productive, given that they address various literary, and historical concerns even as they represent contemporary reformulations of the Cold War in the region in relation to silences of the past.

Platforms for regional writing have expanded in the contemporary period, and authors have come to embrace various strands of thought around writing, inviting more scholarship on issues such as using postcolonial methods. These help us to situate our discussion because they invite a concept of region in the present, something which is palpable and present in discussions of "Southeast Asian literature". Contemporary journals such as *Mekong Review* and *LONTAR*, a journal of

“Southeast Asian Speculative Fiction”, include forums for discussions on “arts, literature, culture, politics…” (Mekong Review 2020) and feature articles from regional writers that span a variety of concerns, and in so doing, trace a lineage of letters within the region to periodicals such as *Solidarity*. These discussions around the arts serve as a form of continuity in a shared space of Southeast Asian writing. A more comprehensive study would look into vernacular presses and their links but this is outside the scope of the present thesis. Highlighting this as a development allows us to see that our discussions are limited by language choices, and the slice of writing chosen for this thesis cannot substitute for a more far reaching, multi-authored study of various language publications in relation to the Cold War in various Southeast Asian contexts. Also, as Patke and Holden suggest, the number of authors who are migrants from “Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines published by North American, British, and Australian presses has increased greatly” (Patke & Holden 2010, 151). This development has been paralleled by avenues for poets, though they suggest that “most contemporary poets treat urban life as a mixed blessing … very little of their writing is directly political in its commitment, although much of it is ethically self-aware” (Patke & Holden 2010, 165). In Malaysia and the Philippines, poetry takes second place to fiction, and this is contrasted to Singapore only (Patke & Holden 2010, 165).

From this reading, it is more difficult to discern a political commitment in poetry, but in fiction of the immediate contemporary world, the subject of this chapter, we see direct political commentary, alongside a critique of political institutions and pasts. Thus, with its Cold War focus, this chapter tells a story of committed political writing. But we have to acknowledge the breadth of the concerns of literary writing in the region, which work outside the political too. One could

reasonably suggest, if not assert, that concerns of identity, however personal, are characteristic of contemporary literature from the region as postcolonial writing, and therefore follow from earlier periods of literature. While fiction produced in the region often lends itself to the political, making comment on domestic and broader concerns, we also see a search for identity that continues in other mediums such as poetry. Dennis Haskell's evaluation of Shirley Geok-lin Lim's work, relative to the use of English by Southeast Asian poets and other writers, acknowledged "language's role in cultural imperialism, Lim readily recalls the liberating role that English and its literature carried for her in her formative years" (Haskell 2019, 38). Thus, this conversation between the colonial and the language of searching for an identity as well as a transnational audience implies a role for language as an institution that perseveres in the region, either imparted by the coloniser or in translation from various languages, and that continues to play a part after nationhood in dialogue with the past. Especially in fiction or the novel, it is helpful to excavate the structure of histories, and the novels chosen in this chapter emphasise this.

A missing ingredient may be Japanese writing in the present as it is outside the scope of this chapter's analysis, but contemporary Japanese literature arguably sits differently within the region and has a more direct address during the Cold War, as an immediate event in the region, in the wake both of Japan's colonial role and of the atom bomb.

The tendency to operate in the public domain is not particularly unique in a broader literary realm, which is to say authors speak to their contemporary societies and the Southeast Asian writer is by no means alone in this regard. However, a focus on these interventions is a useful and likely powerful tool for us to think about our analysis of broader developments in the world of letters alongside the "public space".

Further, the relation between writing and politics is not always the most dominant concern in the works, as literary trends seek to address various developments outside this too. To say that the colonial is simply a dominant issue in regional fiction would be too broad a claim, however, its traces are in the textual registers of the novel – we read symbolism, language, and characters as well as the influences on plots and narratives tracing the lineage of certain events all featuring the colonial. The colonial thus haunts the narrative space of the Southeast Asian novel, while this haunting is doubled against an ideological landscape and a search for identity that are distinctively linked to the contemporaneous state. The colonial is a presence that bridges temporalities.

As this thesis has explored, authoritarianism or the experience of authoritarian rule, in some form or another, is a commonality discernible in Southeast Asia and links writing engaged with it. In terms of the Philippines "the period following the end of martial law, and especially after the fall of Marcos in 1986, was a fertile one for the Philippine novel in English" (Patke & Holden 2010, 86). Arguably, the growing space outside restrictive rule in various Southeast Asian contexts allowed for more fiction to speak back against the national conception of history. This then has allowed the Cold War to be discussed in gradually more explicit ways, as a domestic phenomenon.

This chapter focuses on works from writers in archipelagic nations in Southeast Asia, to draw its points. These can be read as a foundation for the beginning of a critique of regional writing, on the basis of the postcolonial Cold War, which in terms of the novels and their representation engage the Cold War to varying degrees, tied to concerns about representations of national and regional pasts. This chapter seeks to tie its analysis of strategies within novels to a broader awareness of the role

of social critique undertaken by the authors as a commentator in the "present". This is necessarily inseparable from the role of the authors focused on in previous chapters, insofar as they were either distinctively intervening in the public space, or attempting to and being mediated by censorship. Whether or not they were explicitly ideological or took a Cold War position is far more contested, however in rescripting the past, some reimagining challenges established national historical framings. Thinking about questions of method is particularly useful in this chapter, if we are commenting on archipelagic literary Southeast Asia, and the discourse that emerges in relation to this. The novels suggest a bounded reality of nation that must incorporate the structures of nation as much as it challenges them. This bounded reality is more in tandem with a local conception, rather than a shared one, but it is precisely the character of regional writing that in emphasising nation it speaks to the region.

In recent years, the growth of a shared regional literary space through institutional support and institutional challenges has reframed the discourse of a public audience and shaped a network of canonical and counter-canonical forms through various regional fora, that ironically are also part of authoritarian systems networks of patronage. The irony here is that this contemporary space is funded by authoritarian regimes to sustain an ecology of writing and networks of culture to legitimise their own authority. Elmo Gonzaga uses a comparativist approach towards what he describes as an "amorphous archipelago of localities". For him, the public spaces in major Southeast Asian cities have served as "infrastructural nodes for negotiating the transversal of dynamic urban flows at important moments of uncertainty and transition, when the established order became threatened with collapse" (Gonzaga 2019, 62). Gonzaga's point is perhaps critical, and although he focuses more on built architecture than the present study, I agree that disparities in

experiences of cityscapes and the split between urban financial centres and the peripheries is significant. This chapter will focus on the rural or the jungle as one such peripheral space. The meaning of the jungle or the rural as an external space extends from our prior discussion of dislocation, either of authors or their subjects, from the modern postcolonial city space. The imagining of urbanity in the present is central to the texts at issue, which also demonstrate a space for the rebellion of the Cold War in certain rural contexts, including in Malaysia and the Philippines, as spaces of uncertainty, but at the same time, more solidified ideological struggle and guerrilla warfare.

This chapter too is concerned with censorship, noting how contemporary publication is also influenced by censorial regimes, in situations both inherited from and separate to the Cold War regimes, while the impulse to publish outside the country is quite literally a concern for many authors. The practice of censorship is a legacy of the formation of the independent nation state, targeting what is deemed anti-national. Thus, contemporary publication mirrors nation building as a continuing regional development. The strategic question of location has meant a growth of authors living in "exile" and or choosing, as is more common these days, to reside outside their home nations in order to access funding and institutional resources, and often means a different sense of readership. Casper records the case of Bienvenido N. Santos's novel *The Praying Man*, from the Philippines in the 1970s, which was published originally (in serialised form) between 1971 and 1972 in F. Sionil José's *Solidarity*, and yet, "could not be published after the imposition of martial law, and Santos decided to remain in the United States, becoming a US citizen in 1976" (Casper 1987, 83). In such cases, the dynamic is between writing as a local to a local market, and publishing abroad and living in self-imposed exile.

The selected novels by Rosca, Tiang and Kurniawan are not exhaustive examples of the form and yet they demonstrate a continuing impetus to write erased narratives. Erasure works in these novels in a variety of ways, and resistance to this erasure by the state is always present, as put well in Rosca's novel *State of War* by an official who is speaking as a functionary of the system:

> If there's anything at all I've learnt in my years as – well, as an expert on conspiracies – it is the living nature of resistance. It exists in a constant flux, changing, breeding, metastasizing. All information about its internal processes is rendered obsolete by revelation […] The glass is to make sure these men do not harm the files. We have traitors' confessions in there twenty, thirty years old – and if we could find others older, we would be ecstatic (Rosca 2013, 43).

Notably, these narratives of resistance are returning in various forms, not least in theatre, film, and various literary genres, but they remain circumscribed by the state. In Rosca's vision the nightmare of torture is obscured by a seeming politeness in this scene, and yet it demonstrates well the dynamic between erasure and reconstruction, within the secret police files, actually representative of the Cold War, and the growth of the security state. The concept of erasure obviously helps us recall the now aphoristic enunciation by Milan Kundera that "the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting" (Kundera 1982, 2–3). In this struggle the novel operates as a form of space for political possibility. Such attention to erasure and the shared networks of activism in the region is helpful in letting us think of the novel as a counter-canonical site, or a site to rework history into new shapes.

Writing within contexts of orality, especially if we think of the oral transmission of works such as stories and discourses in the Southeast Asian region, is especially important in thinking about writing and re-reading the past. Writing is one

mode in the region, no doubt of much import and spread, but as a regional phenomenon we see orality as a precolonial legacy. This is mediated by print culture and the written word is useful as a form to transpose the oral into a bounded form. As we see, "the reverence of the written word felt by the orally oriented is therefore perhaps surprising, until we realize that the reasons for this awe are to be sought in the oral tradition itself: writing is evaluated by the criteria of the oral tradition" (Sweeney 1987, 269). What is implied here is the importance of thinking about how we translate a Southeast Asian experience still being evaluated through speech terms onto the page. This is what makes some of the authors so preoccupied with capturing "real dialogue" and the sounds of the languages spoken in the works. In Eka Kurniawan's work, we see a distinct commitment to bringing to us a new way of reading traditional forms of writing, and with Ninotchka Rosca, we are deep into a traditional festival that is at once strange and familiar and yet so deeply rooted in long-established cultural practices across the Philippines. Orality need not only express itself in translating concepts or culture onto the page, but the oral returns often in the guise of humour, and often darkly: "'But laughter, dear, is *subversive*,' Amor had said" (Rosca 2013, 87). The evil spirits in *Beauty is a Wound* voice this too: "Ha. Ha. Ha. I'm not as strong as before, but I'm back, kid" (Kurniawan 2015, 677). Such laughter helps us to think of human life portrayed in the novels as justice, haunted by the past, and yet it functions across the Southeast Asian contexts as a form of playing against the certainty of reliable narration of the past. In that regard, the laughter also betrays an anxiety or uneasiness in speaking against the dominance of the nation state.

Imagining the nation from the margins but also the centre, these novels try to figure the excluded as well as those that participate in the exclusion. These exclusionary spaces are figured into the place of the Cold War as a site for rejecting

ideologies outside the comfort of the state. Jeremy Tiang's *State of Emergency* expresses this rather well, in speaking of Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew as "the Cambridge educated lawyer who'd claimed to be fighting for them in detention [and] was now leading the main party, and disposed to detaining people himself" (Tiang 2017, 81). These versions of national history are not merely re-imaginings but acts of turning against the national narrative. Tiang locates his characters in the main moments of subversion or the detention of subversives in Singapore's history, sometimes spilling into Malaysia due to the links between both countries, in key moments of the national narrative – the actions of Konfrontasi and the MacDonald House bombings, operation Coldstore and operation Spectrum. However, the author recreates these events around his characters, thus recreating the conditions for thinking about the security state in Singapore. Thus, the writing of history in the novels is an explicit textual strategy to reimagine the possibilities of what the novel is able to do in the present context, as an active force in shaping discourse. The novel therefore must be enjoined in these instances to the various contexts. This is to explicitly read the text in history, not merely as a product of the historical time, but even as a post-event intervention on the formation of experience in the novel. Thus, we can trace some ideas through the novels as a counter-discourse to that of the state.[28]

In Rosca's, Kurniwan's and Tiang's novels there are shared echoes expressing the contested nature of time in the region, and as noted each book is critically concerned with scripting and erasure, especially what is erased in national narratives

[28] Some of this counter discourse occurs in naming, especially through local vernacular expressions. Chin Peng in *State of Emergency* as well as the resistance fighters or communists are referred to as 'Ma Gong' through the text, for instance, "look at Chin Peng, the Ma Gong leader, walking away from the Baling talks and returning to the jungle because he didn't like the terms the British were offering" (*SE* 73).

produced by dominant elites. The elite driven discourse is notably prevalent in Southeast Asian Cold War scholarship, which continues to script those that fall outside the role of influence into a position of insignificance. Thus, the alternative to this is to think about not simply the time of production and the socio-political circumstances of the post-Cold War that enable such works to emerge with far less censorious regimes or scrutiny, but more emphatically about how the Cold War is rescripted and postcoloniality rethought through the production of literature. As they intervene and speak to very contemporary dialogues in the national consciousness, it is fair to argue that the novels are writing alongside and against the grain of the national imaginary, and the authors are consciously writing history, whether or not this is the primary intention. We can rethink the role of the novel as an elite form in constructing a nationalist community. Partha Chatterjee describes the Bengali novel as "that celebrated artifice of the nationalist imagination in which the community is made to live and love in 'homogenous time'", and notes that "[t]he novel was a principal form through which the bilingual elite in Bengal fashioned a new narrative prose" (Chatterjee 1993, 8). The later, postcolonial form moves more towards the fragmentary, as is not lost on Chatterjee, yet while his project attempts to find "new forms of the modern state" it is clear that postcolonial regional fiction in Southeast Asia similarly offers a cultural conception of imagining the polity that at once reinforces nation while challenging it. Therefore, it is important to think about how, postcolonially, the novel in the region is important in shaping a national consciousness, but at the same time, contemporary fiction in the region breaks previous silences to help us rethink what was the Cold War.

This dynamic then places against the backdrop of the past the reality of various reimaginations of the past. Therefore, what is past is not a prologue but

actually prologues deconstructed, replaced, and reinvented in the light of the haunted present. This textual palimpsest then introduces us to three related questions, but first a note on form. As the thesis has explored in regard to the work of Pramoedya and José, the novel continues to be a form which, as discussed by Benedict Anderson, maps out against the structure of the nation. Even as this is contested, that structure seems to work in the region. This mapping, to again echo scholars such as Pheng Cheah, is a chart from which we can read the region, especially if thinking about constructions that allow for diverse communities to exist within not just a political but also a cultural space, shared and contested. This then lets us think about the formation of a counter-canon, however solidified regional language writing is, in which the texts in comparison can construct a shared cultural space. The possibility of fluid exchange, alongside a shared experience of colonisation and the subsequent challenge to colonial rule, is a pertinent point, which is to say that writing by contemporary authors imagines new possibilities of reading. In witnessing postcolonialism juxtaposed against contemporary trends in regional fiction, we see that "the legacy of colonization has created a syncretic, not Manichean, cultural space, in which colonizer and colonized have blurred in terms of cultural identities in ways that are profoundly important, particularly in post-colonial model of a nation state is less the reality than a multiethnic and multilingual polity [….] this reality is in itself not univocal or simple" (Dasenbrock 2010/11, 18).

As John Marx notes about Rosca's writing: "like many politically astute writers, Rosca often assumes the ideological role of the historian, imagining and recording her nation's past in an effort to interpret its present conditions" (Marx 2017, 357). This ideology shows us the political role of the novels examined in this chapter: they reimagine the past and reframe the present. Notably, this is made possible and

mediated through translation and funding networks that stem from the West. Thus, the networks of funding do extend beyond the regional, and influence aesthetic choices.

While both Rosca and Kurniawan have been compared to Gabriel Garcia Márquez, it is important to note the difference between a postmodern play with narrative and a supposed magical realism: "it is doubtful, of course, that 'magical realism' has become 'the literary language for the emergent post-colonial world', any more than 'national allegory' is the unitary form for all Third World narratives as [Frederic] Jameson would contend" (Ahmad 1992, 69). The genre designation of magical realism is often substituted for a form of exoticism that communicates against modernism or postmodernism and that is also contentious politically, because these frames are directed at very nuanced historical realities existing in Indonesia and the Philippines and we should read them against that historical backdrop. This politics is important to keep in mind when thinking about the reception of the works in English, or within Western readerships. Even as Anderson's and Cheng's frames are persuasive, to structure them too concretely elides their subversive potential and reifies practices that are far from exotic. A play on narrative of the way pasts are shaped is a literary strategy that escapes from the certainties of bipolar Cold War histories, and demonstrates a shape that also challenges the *bildungsroman*, alongside the notion that the novel is supposed to map onto the shared national space.

Eka Kurniawan*'s Beauty is a Wound* in its original Indonesian title *Cantik itu Luka*, and written by the "young" and seen as emerging novelist Eka Kurniawan, did not receive serious critical attention in Indonesia when it was first published in 2002. Broadly speaking, that did not occur until it was translated into English in 2015. The novel revolves around the narrative of Dewi Ayu, a dead prostitute, who comes back to life and, in telling her story, explores the history of Halimunda, a fictional town, as

a reference point for all of Indonesia across the twentieth century that reframes the possibilities for thinking about the scope of Indonesian history. This is explained in the reality of the corporeality of death and dying, and often we see the national framing of glory and suffering in a sophisticated narrative that weaves together returning from death and the returning of the ghosts of the past. Being turned upside down in terms of ideological associations, nationalist aspirations and subversive ideologies, especially when read against human deceptions through a rich array of characters, the novel looks at one town but can be read as a national parable. Mainly thinking about sexual politics and through it, the novel's focus on the constant violation of women's bodies is a strategy to search for a broader vision; instead, only finding the banality of male desire counterpoised against the nation. The moments of supposed "fantastical" events often lay a balm over a far more detestable reality, especially of events such as colonialism, the Japanese Occupation, the mass killings of 1965–66, and beyond. The continuous expectation of possibility is betrayed with emptiness and despair, as illustrated below:

> But Alamanda never gave birth to Nurul Aini because the baby vanished, just like that, from inside her stomach just a few days before her predicted date of birth [….] The midwife, experienced in all manner of strange things, rearranged Alamanda into a more comfortable position, and said: 'Sometimes this does happen, Shodancho – there's no baby inside, just air and wind' (Kurniawan 2015, 281).

The novel also exhibits the flattening of or desire for a compressed history of revolution, seen in terms of the continuation of "struggle" in Indonesian history in pre-war, wartime, and postwar periods. The novel explores experiences within the communist party after the war as well as the reality of wartime resistance and the pre-war Dutch occupation, as well as the mixed lineages around Dutch ancestry that Dewi

Ayu is part of, while she is unable to locate her parents. We are, in this novel, told to suspect beauty, for this is a curse, especially Dewi Ayu's beauty, which is part of why she is forced to become a "comfort woman" under the Japanese Occupation. Thus, the theme of beauty is constantly sustained by its opposite. And Dewi's granddaughter, named Rengganis the Beautiful, is known in the novel at points to have "married a dog instead of a man" (Kurniawan 2015, 167) and to have been "raped by a dog in the toilet stall" in middle school (Kurniawan 2015, 41). Men in the novel, or male desire, are often depicted in rather corporeal and brutal terms, which elicits the comment from Dewi Ayu that "There's no curse more terrible than to give birth to a pretty female in a world of men as nasty as dogs in heat" (Kurniawan 2015, 5). This critique of male brutality and male violation of the bodies of women, runs through the novel, even through death. It returns as a tortured legacy of history, one that is unable to be extricated from the present. That such a history is so difficult removes it from the hopeful circumstances of nationalism chronicled by Pramoedya in his *Buru Quartet*, even as Kurniawan's novel is a reformulation, in dialogue with Pramoedya, to aesthetically imagine the Indonesian past as Kurniawan is an established critic of Pramoedya's work.

The book often portrays the "fantastical" as phenomena outside the consciousness of the characters, which relates a lot to Southeast Asian thinking about the mystical or syncretic elements around death and fable, and yet operates as a reality that is as believable as everything else. This fantasy is far from positive and, instead, fable is appropriated to remind us of the truly frightening notion of history as a nightmare one may be trying to awake from, to appropriate a line from James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Since the reader is immersed in the world of Halimunda, we see a very clear relation between the manifestation of the fantastical and the case of "the outsider"

appearing in the novel and intervening in the lives of the characters. Outsiders continue to return throughout the novel in various episodes. The outsider in Kurniawan's novel is far from a benevolent force; instead, a nightmarish vision. For instance, the elderly character Shodancho, before we read of his younger life as a soldier, is described early in the novel as making love with the daughter of Dewi Ayu. While Dewi Ayu suspects it as a case of haunting, Rosinah, her house servant, describes it otherwise as a man, whom she eventually finds sitting in the house:

> He looked like a guerrilla, with hair that was going in every which way, matted and tied back with a yellow leaf… He was wearing clothes the Gurkha forces wore during the war, way too big for his feet…. maybe he really had led a *shodan*, maybe he had been in a battalion in Halimunda and rebelled against the Japanese before running away into the forest. Maybe he had been trapped there for years, not knowing what Holland and Japan were already long gone and we now had a republic with our own flag and our own national anthem (Kurniawan 2015, 28–29).

This not quite spectral yet outside force forms the bulk of the novel, in terms of voices that interrupt the commonplace. We see Dewi Ayu both as a corpse and then alive; a character moves from being simply Kliwon to the newly minted Comrade Kliwon of the communist party and the Fishermen's Union "Comrade Kliwon (as he was now called)" (Kurniawan 2015, 239). The spectral and real manifestations of various outsiders slipping into new identities form a new way of thinking about how we perform the nation, through these characters playing various parts. This novel is really a reflection of working against the broader historical constellation of the past century. Gillian Terzis in the *New Yorker* examines well some of the features here in summary:

> one of the men is terrorized by the ghosts of slaughtered Communists, who make him 'think that he was making love to his wife' when, in fact, 'he was fucking the toilet hole'. Scenes of brutality—of rape, incest, bestiality—are undercut by macabre humor […] Alamanda buys an impenetrable 'anti terror garment' that transforms her underwear into a literal iron fortress (Terzis 2015).

These scenes then animate a broader reading of the macabre as farcical and as a layer of fiction. As is rightly pointed out by Terzis, the characters are "pathetic creatures, imprisoned by sexual desire". This notion of humans being imprisoned in a particular narrative then rethinks how we can chart the nation, moving away from utopian ideologies to the body as a space where we mediate between the construct of nation and the experience of violation. This experience is counterposed against the reality of death and haunting: Halimunda is quite literally haunted by Dewi Ayu and other characters, and this haunting serves as a form of politics outside the explicitly national. While Pramoedya's novels explicitly deal with racial politics, the body in *Beauty is a Wound* is seen as male violation through power wielded, regardless of the various political players at that particular time in Indonesian history. The characters are unable to escape their pasts along with that of the nation.

The character of Ma Gedik is a prime example evidencing both lost love and its impossibility in Indonesia. Early in the novel Ma Gedik goes into a state of bestiality and community exclusion as his lover becomes a concubine to a Dutch man. Though he eventually reunites with her briefly and their union is celebrated, this is followed by his lover jumping off a hill notionally to her death, which he later does too.[29] This is understood by characters in the novels differently; in one instance as her jumping off and flying away, and another as him lying at the bottom of the hill and dying, as Dewi Ayu expresses, in her scepticism:

[29] Incidentally in Pramoedya's *Footsteps* there is a character, "Diwan, a permanent patient at our hospital. He lived in a cage. He was considered a threat to the community. He was suffering from satyriasis, gonorrhea, and syphilis. He had carried out one hundred and nineteen rapes, fifty-one against humans and the rest to animals" (*Footsteps* 112-113).

> ‘He’s definitely going to jump, just like his beloved,’ continued Mr Willie. ‘And he’ll fly up into the sky and disappear behind the fog.’ ‘No,’ said Dewi Ayu, ‘He will crash on the rocks and be banged up like a pile of chopped beef.’ And that was what happened: right as he finished his song, Ma Gedik jumped into the open air. He appeared to fly, overjoyed, as no one had seen him be for many years … even though he knew what was waiting at the end, he still smiled and whooped, full of excitement. He crashed onto the rocks, and his body was hacked to abysmal bits, exactly as Dewi Ayu had predicted (Kurniawan 2015, 54–55).

This fragment is telling and, while the two hills where the lovers each jumped off are eventually named after them, these fates share of the features of those of other characters in the novel, ending up in some form of death or tragedy, with love only recovered in its potential for eventual loss. This tragic vision allows us to think of the types of reality constructed through postcolonial fiction. If there is any vision for the past it is not a positive one.

Since the novel *Man Tiger* reached the longlist of the Booker Prize in 2016, Kurniawan’s work has received more international attention, and yet his novels were published long before this in Bahasa Indonesia. Similar to the endorsement by Benedict Anderson, this positions his work as a form of World Literature, as it was then received or consumed as a form of the global novel, though originally not quite noticed by Indonesian critics or simply dismissed. As Meghan Downes explains, *Beauty is a Wound* or *Cantik itu Luka* had been “initially rejected by four different Indonesian publishers […] although not widely acclaimed, the novel made sufficient

impact in the Indonesian literary scene to be picked up by publishing house Gramedia […], [but] his work continued to receive relatively scant attention in Indonesia" (Downes 2019, 180). The contrast between Kurniawan's local reception and his reception abroad definitely applies to questions of postcolonial literary value. With regard to the translation of *Cantik itu Luka*, however, something is to be said about the use of the language and its effects on various audiences, as Downes demonstrates:

> the two versions of Eka Kurniawan's work take on quite different connotations and almost appear to shift in genre in the translation process. The style of vocabulary used in the Indonesian-language version is frequently lurid, graphic, and lower class, which upon first reading can situate his work firmly in the genre of horror, pornography, and pulp fiction. Meanwhile, in English the language comes across as edgy and creative, full of 'local colour' and so-called 'magical realism' (Downes 2019, 183).

Similarly, with the international press's lofty characterisations of the origins of Eka Kurniawan as a writer, what is lost in the translation is the "image of the young Eka clandestinely buying pornographic pulp fiction from traveling vendors, and then swapping it amongst his friends" (Downes 2019).

It is also important to explore the influence of Pramoedya on Kurniawan's work, noting Eka's study on Pramoedya Ananta Toer and Socialist Realism among other topics (Kurniawan 2004). Though Pramoedya is far less explicit in his language, a similar conversation between history and place making happens in the construction of the *Buru Quartet*. Similarly, as Minke and Nyai Osontoroh come from Javanese roots and yet move in complicated ways across racial lines, these trajectories are maintained through the postwar period but retrospectively by Kurniawan in his novel. Dewi Ayu is of mixed descent and, similarly, we have characters that move in and out of racial categories, and even across boundaries of life and death.

This is mirrored in Pheng Cheah's reading and, in my view, ultimately very welcome intervention into the reception of Kurniawan's works: that if we read his novels as magic/magical realism, "this reductive approach enables Western critics to remain in their comfort zone and sanctions ignorance about local languages, social life, culture and context, that is, the knowledge produced by area studies" (Cheah 2017, 100). Cheah moves *Man Tiger* as a novel further towards its author's intent, which is generally debatable, yet the author is certainly not dead in this point of view. And Cheah reminds us of the unmistakable presence of the supernatural. In the novels, and in his critique, we are not really engaging with the spirit (pun intended) of the work if we do not consider that,

> Because the supernatural shapes social interaction, it plays an important [sic] in the material organization of Indonesian society. Focusing only on the global interaction of literary forms will only produce an inadequate reading of *Man Tiger*. Kurniawan describes his novel as a 'hodge-podge novel (*novel campur aduk*), a psychological novel, but at the same time with aspects of the mythology of tiger people (*manusia harimau*), with metaphors about politics' (Cheah 2017, 101).

This awareness of intention is important in shaping a more culturally aware reading of the work, not simply to resist exoticising regional writing after its reception in Western markets, but instead to think through the author's intentions and references to the same degree as those of authors from the West. The prose is strikingly and deliberately fantastical, but it speaks against optimism or a utopian vision in the construction of a postcolonial vision. If we see resistance in the figure of Dewi Ayu, it is a resistance against further tragedy that may destroy her family; and yet much of the "family" is destroyed already, as a result of a curse from an evil spirit: "it's as if his revenge had been conducted perfectly, without a hitch, and his curse continued to

destroy whatever was left of her family" (Kurniawan 2015, 450). These returns and curses play out against solely human "hopes" within the fictional landscape, eventuating in perpetual tragedy. This tragedy can be seen as the failure of the *bildungsroman* while actually reinforcing it.

Beauty is a Wound also echoes some of Pramoedya's work in relation to deprivation under detention, especially under the Japanese Occupation period during the Second World War. This is evocatively brought out in *The Mute's Soliloquy* where Toer, writing in his memoirs, allows us a glimpse into the period's conditions of deprivation in the Indies, and this sees echoes in Kurniawan's novel to demonstrate the realities of deprivation and eventual mismanagement of the East Indies economy under the Japanese "'We won't starve,' said Dewi Ayu. 'In addition to leeches, there are geckos, lizards and mice'" (Kurniawan 2015, 65). Such instances evocatively present to us a generalised description of wartime shortages during this period. However, more importantly, we are brought into the reality of wartime forced prostitution, in Mama Kalong's brothel, which also exists as a space of permanence, as "during the last years of colonial power, it is fair to say that she was the richest woman in Halimunda" (Kurniawan 2015, 85). It is during the time of the war that we experience another much more compressed and traumatic time of violation, in the experiences of women being brought into the sexual encounter, as part of Japanese sexual slavery as a war crime itself between occupying forces which is a noted historical fact, with a "highly tacit cooperative relationship between the Japanese military and government that was involved in its planning" (Hongxi 29). This is not only represented through Dewi Ayu, but the scenes of rape and devastation in the fiction is, in one instance, conveyed in the image of Dewi Ayu peering at a clock in one of the brothel rooms:

> Her chilly demeanor had an extraordinary effect: the man didn't even take three minutes. Two minutes and twenty-three seconds, according to Dewi Ayu's count as she peered into the grandfather clock in the corner of the room (Kurniawan 2015, 89).[30]

But the critique from the perspective of the brothel accentuates the subaltern voices, without exoticising them at all, and this is some of what is lost when reading this novel only as a form of magic realism. There is the reality of bodies and the violation of bodies transposed into a critique of occupation: "'There's no difference between low level officers and the Emperor of Japan,' said Dewi Ayu. 'They all target female genitalia'" (Kurniawan 2015, 91). This perhaps allows us a critique of the postcolonial and Cold War relation between power and rape and sexual slavery as a legacy in the region, along with human trafficking and Dewi Ayu's comments are reminiscent of Kurihara Sadako's expressed contempt towards the emperor, too, expressed in the different language of poetry and with another sensibility or register that works more silently due to censorship. Also, these allusions to violation are a Second World War reality, but the violence continues from colonial to postcolonial forms, dressed in various outfits including those of guerrillas and so on, without really being removed from conflict. In an act of supreme resistance (or perhaps resignation) against the destruction by the forces of the occupation to the existence of the occupied during the Japanese Occupation in World War Two, Mama Kalong in Kurniawan's novel renames her brothel "with a new title to represent the very essence of her soul. She'd already used 'Make Love or Die,' and then 'Make Love Once, Make Love Forever,' but finally decided on 'Make Love to the Death'" (Kurniawan 2015). No

[30] There is also in the brothel a mention of Scheherazade, which occurs also in the experiences of characters under state detention in Tiang's *State of Emergency*, as one of the suggestions to tire the soldiers would be to "tell them tales like Scheherezade. Not one of them were good in telling stories" (Kurniawan 2015, 91).

doubt, the translation here captures what would be as darkly comical and perhaps even blunter in the original Indonesian in *Cantik itu Luka*.

This is not to say that the only resistance portrayed in the novel is told through the narrative of Dewi Ayu. We see a link to Shodancho, as a figure of resistance in the jungles, who makes love to her daughter. The transition to independence is read in a local setting, one that is known and declared only on 23 September, not 17 August, 1945, the day of the proclamation of independence by Sukarno, establishing that time is always in constant dialogue and spills over. The circumstances around the event of 17 August were expressed nicely by Pramoedya in an oration for Indonesian Independence Day in 2002: "the various peoples of Nusantara merged themselves into the Indonesian nation" (Inside Indonesia). As he observed, it was not exactly synchronic how various parts of the archipelago would experience the news, and in his piece Pramoedya acknowledged the continuation of revolution for the five years after 1945 – making the fictional scene here all the more ironic. The reactions to the proclamation on the radio are telling: "a barber almost snipped off his customer's ear, and a Chinese *bakpao* seller lost control of his bike and went rolling along with his steamed buns" (Kurniawan 2015, 145). These events play out in daily permutations and demonstrate the political order of decolonisation that exists in the everyday, in the spaces of resistance and change that are away from lofty ideology.

The questions of ideology and continued struggle within the independent republic in Indonesia position the central conflicts of the characters alongside and against dominant renderings of nation, which makes the novel a commentary on the scripting of history and memory, in a negative sense, that overlays this. This then facilitates or allows for a broader critique of the structures of Indonesian society. As much as the novel reads as "pulp fiction" in its original language, it is doing so very

explicitly to read against an elite culture of textuality and to connect the everyday to the expression of fiction. As Rudolf Mrázek poetically notes in his history *A Certain Age: Colonial Jakarta through the Memories of its Intellectuals*, when he met various individuals for conversations and oral histories, he brushed against the architecture of the inside of houses, speaking of the walls and the bathroom: "The bathroom, actually, never seemed absent from our talk. In that unfocused and frail way – in the back – it often worked as the memories' center" (Mrázek 2010, 29). Such a focus on the everyday, to illuminate these spaces, is not lost on other scholars of Indonesian literature, especially Tony Day in discussing some early tales of Pramoedya Ananta Toer (Day 2002, 213). In Day's account, we see Pramoedya expressing that "how simple life is. It's as simple as this: you're hungry and you eat, you're full, and you shit. Between eating and shitting, that's where human life is found" (Day 2002, 213). Similarly, in Eka's novel, Dewi Ayu hides some jewellery by swallowing it, in a time of deprivation, and then searches for it in her own excrement (Kurniawan 2015, 58), before repeatedly swallowing it again, and there are numerous scatological references that illustrate the ultimate banality of human life, humorous in crude ways. There are also references to the way in which certain characters such as Shodancho would sleep with a character (this is retold by another character) "as if she was just a hunk of flesh, as if that man had been fucking a toilet hole for a few short minutes, as if the whole city wasn't in awe of her" (Kurniawan 2015, 132). The dialogue between the corporeal and the spirit world is found in the bodily functions that trap characters in a cycle of a lack of redemption, which is a comment on the body politic.

"Time passes". So ends Ninotchka Rosca's 1988 novel *State of War*, which attempts to chronicle a country, the Philippines, over extended periods of time,

through an entry point of three friends attending a popular folk festival on an island that spells allegory from the beginning of the novel.

> As it rose with each sea wave, the boat gave the passengers a glimpse of K----- its single drab pier thrusting into the sea from a low, gray cement building and the crescent spread of white sand that horned an abrupt pile of rocks at one end of the island and thinned into a white line at the other, directly below a sudden crag which bore the weight of a grass bearded tower which seemed to tremble with the groan of a two-hundred-year-old warning bell (Rosca 2013, 6–7).

This almost Kafkaesque description of a place, which becomes a preface for introducing us to a deep span of Filipino history in a single novel, is characteristic of our unease created by Rosca's novel, as it collapses the distinctions between history and the present, participating in a three-day festival. M. Mendible rightly terms the novel a "text-as-festival", a device that explains how through this local festival creates ties within the local vernacular, as it "merges subjectivities, suggesting that enemies and friends in the present are distant cousins or half-brothers and sisters" (Mendible 2014, 359–60). As Jini Kim Watson also notes, "the whole four hundred years of Philippine history appear here as one extended, interminable 'state of war'" (Watson 2017, 265). This point about conflict is critical and helps the reader to rethink the all too easy distinctions between colonial and postcolonial, and the formation of a national narrative. Here the author turns us to the stories of three characters, and along with them, we attempt to navigate amidst the cacophony of unending sounds and periods of time, mediated by violence and festivity. This whirl of an experience is conjured well: "the mathematics of history [alluding to corpses and years] passed like wind through Hans's ears" (Rosca 2013, 159). The fantastical is not quite detached from the corporeal, as we navigate the smells of bodies in the wake of the Japanese

Occupation, amidst the "pungence of ripening corpses" (Rosca 2013, 287). The novel alludes to a constant state of war in the Philippines, where redemption is hardly to be found, and instead, the characters are led to ask when four hundred years of war would end (Rosca 2013, 344). This evocation of the death world only goes to further our use of the concept, while it is a pointed critique of the Filipino past. Thus, the Cold War passes as a guise in the novel, like a mask at a festival that replaces another mask: that of another struggle. And yet, as the novel shows, Anna, one of the characters "escapes the island […] committed to armed resistance to the regime" (Patke & Holden 2010, 87).

In examining the novel Watson applies the concept of heterotemporality, in that "the inextricability of historical and contemporary struggles is formally staged by the structure of the novel: it is a bifurcated and hybrid novel that simultaneously wants to be a tale of revolutionary immediacy and plodding family saga, a book of political urgency and historical allegory of the repressive nation state" (Watson 2017, 265). This idea of disjuncture in terms of narrative temporality manifests in how the actual immediacy and simultaneity of the events are often mediated. The characters themselves experience the festival as a blur. Often, they are whisked away to dance or drink, interrupted by a babel of shouting in the gathering: "*Surrender now*, they shrieked in a half a dozen languages, *we are the people*!" (Rosca 2013, 15). In this particular instance, we see the writer grappling with and working against the languages that frame daily reality in the Philippines, with a similar anxiety over the representation of such a diverse ethnic and linguistic nation, and yet rewriting the nation from this vantage point.

That rewriting seems to occur between the reader and the author, also in the same way as it can between the texts in this chapter. For instance, we have a clear

insight into Philippine resistance against the Japanese invasion in the novel, where Chinese and "native" fighters have telling conversations: "this country – it has no continuity. It is only a country of beginnings. No one remembers. Not the burial jars at least". This contrast between the time of the country and personal memory after the war is well summed up when Luis Carlos attempts to find Mayang's grave, and the narrative dwells on the loss of the physical markers of the war's history:

> perhaps the peasants, at war's end, had dismantled their lean-to; perhaps, a Japanese straggler had killed them and erased all signs of their existence to hide his crime; or them again, perhaps the forest had swallowed everything, lean-to, crucifix, and all, the way time nibbled on memory, rendering imperfect what had been precise.

This erasure or supposed erasure of place making is much like how the time of the forest within the novels also seems to consume memory, making time grow over wounds of violation and yet, leaving us with the traumatic traces that haunt the memory of the characters.

Rosca's work is written from the perspective of a self-imposed exile and this contributes to some immersion for her in the broader literary tradition of Asian-American writing. As Patke and Holden observe, "Rosca's novel also raises the question of the growing distinction between Philippine literature and Philippine American literature …. Yet there were now two new factors: growth in interest in Asian-American writing in the United States, and a body of works by writers of Filipino heritage who had been born in the United States, or migrated to the country as children" (2010, 87). This migration as well as the new body of work into which it is placed allows Rosca's work to be seen as a form of intervention from the margins,

while affording her a kaleidoscopic vision of the nation, away from the local place-making so prominent in authors such as José, who write from the Philippines.

As Mendible explains, "Rosca emigrated to the United States in 1977 to avoid arrest and currently resides in New York … much of her literary work draws on the turbulent political history of her homeland where, as she puts it, the 'only thing we have to retain a measure of dignity is to keep struggling, resisting, and opposing'" (Mendible 2014, 355). This assertion leads us to read her as a writer committed to social change, and yet, her writing does play upon the corporeal, much like Kurniawan's, at some points.

> And the joke had become a reality—a spectacular cracking asunder of the rotting timbers of the warehouse, an eruption of a lava of dead flesh: limbs, heads, torsos zooming like torpedos through the air to land on sidewalks, rooftops, patios. They had punched through windows to skid along tables, demolishing the dinners of the unwary; to settle on sofas among the living who were watching television; to snuggle on the bed sheets, disturbing lovers … a necrophiliac visitation that had driven the neighbourhood hysterical.
>
> Thinking of it, of how it must have been, she had laughed quietly, the laughter painful in the pit of her belly (Rosca 2013, 101–102).

This sequence, darkly comical, interrupts into the everyday much like the strangeness of the festival. Murder along with revolutionary conflict and death are transposed into fantasies that can only exist as fantasies if the reality is too difficult to confront. This is explained to us in terms of slum life, and this is in turn a metaphor for the existence of the subaltern within a global south but often invisible there: "a packed humanity eked out the impossible lives of rats, feeding one another with dreams and hallucination" (Rosca 2013, 224).

The fluidity of the festival poses it as an event where time is in infinite play, while the novel is structured around biblical allusions and occurs over three distinct days. The almost unending festival is described as the Ati Atihan festival, "held annually in the town of Kalibo in Aklan province, Panay", which somewhat resembles Mardi Gras today. Watson suggests that "the Ati Atihan festival is best understood as a palimpsest in which conflicting ideological traces overlay each other and converge" (Watson 2017, 56–57). In this fluidity, we see an uneasy dance around music and language, with the uneasiness expressed by Anna in the novel: "'I don't like it when people monkey around with language,' Anna said, raising her voice above the chanting. Step-step-step. Halt. Step-step-step. Halt. 'Mess up language, mess up memory. People forget. Even what they are'" (Rosca 2013, 129). As a novel that attempts to bring together the heteroglossia of experience in recuperating a national story, *State of War* subverts the possibilities for any single story or national narrative to subsume all others within it. Thus, in this novel we are confronted by the lack of any finality for conflict, and the Cold War is both relative to the other novels studied, and subsumed under many other layers of meaning.

Jeremy Tiang, in his 2017 debut novel *State of Emergency*, which won the Singapore Literature Prize in 2018, approaches the history, or more accurately, histories of Singapore and Malaysia through stories of political detention. The characters in the novel speak back against the occluded histories of the time, as they have been silenced, in so far as the national narratives in both countries have excluded these experiences and they have been "written out" of the story. Tiang's work serves as a form of rejoinder to Chinese language fiction around these events, which is quite a rich tradition, and is able to negotiate various characters and happenings in a present moment while looking back, switching between characters past and present. As we

move between the two countries, we confront the reality of the difficulty of separation and the entangled legacies of Singapore and Malaysia after the ill-fated merger of 1963. Tiang's work frames itself against the nation state, showing how that all-encompassing postcolonial structure silences alternative narratives in seeking legitimacy over its challengers (primarily the leftist movements).

Tiang's work is always aware of the politics at play in challenging the dominant discourse. This concern is reflected in his acknowledgements, which make clear this novel was written within the present context in which narratives of detainees during the Cold War are emerging. In one particular example from 1988 or so, when characters learn of Operation Spectrum in Singapore and Operation Lalang in Malaysia through the broadsheet *The Straits Times*, one Singaporean character remarks, rather tellingly, "Copying us, as usual", remarking on how that one event spills over the causeway.

This lends itself to the comment that "then you can say sorry, you've learned from your mistake. And the government will say you've been rehabilitated. Then at least some people will think you deserve a second chance. Why are you making a stand like this? Who do you think you're helping? You shouldn't have gone against the government if you don't want to pay the price". These characters navigate the silences imposed upon their narratives by bringing us into their lives and experiences, which form a counter archive that is very much a fictional intervention into a public space that has seen a growth in narratives from former political detainees and opponents in the Lee Kuan Yew period. These include Teo Soh Lung's memoir *Beyond the Blue Gate: Recollections of a Political Prisoner* (Teo 2011) and similar memoirs by Poh Soo Kai, as well as the collection edited by Tan Jing Kwee and K. S. Jomo, *Comet in our Sky: Lim Chin Siong in History*, about Singapore's most

prominent left-wing leader detained under operation Coldstore. The 2015 film *To Singapore, With Love* (Dir. Tan Pin Pin) also figures prominently among other narratives. The telling questioning and replotting of Singapore's history in these accounts, thinking about the Coldstore events in particular, leads us in a number of directions in the novel. Tiang's images of detention serve to illuminate the spaces of state histories that are in irretrievable, and that at once respond to the state and its authority but also are mischaracterised as threats. This then illuminates the tension between memory and history, for state history is often benignly in conversation with the colonial and decolonial. Singapore is always interested in demonstrating it had a peaceful transfer of independence from Britain, and that it has, since independence, allowed for and embraced its colonial past, while thinking negatively about the Cold War: communists were subversives seeking an alternative vision of nation and region.

Deeply local understandings expressed through a variety of colloquialisms allow the book to be intimate with a domestic audience and perhaps conjure the "aura" of representing an authentic cultural product. The author is conscious of Walter Benjamin's intervention, which frames the title of the book, and the novel uses as its epigraph the oft-quoted lines from his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*: "the tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule". When we approach emergency as a framing device, we not only see how the novel follows Benjamin's path in thinking about the emergency and its legacies, but also about how the novel chooses to deal with the "local" and vernacular experiences of Cold War conflicts.

This framing also allows for a similar comment, in that language has a politics too, and the original language of the writing in English is both mediated by the fact that Tiang himself is a translator, from Mandarin to English, but also that minor

Chinese dialects and English's elite status within the nation have their place within a Singapore hierarchy.

> …where everyone spoke one dialect or another, and the doings of the English elite seemed to come from a great distance away. One or two people they knew were trying to cram their children full of the foreign language, so they could go to the schools with the fancy ang moh names and maybe get into the civil service, but that seemed incomprehensible to most right thinking people – not just because the British surely couldn't be around much longer, but who would want to raise kids unable to speak to their parents? (Tiang 2017, 47–48).

This relation between the reality and the politics around language illuminates a sensibility outside the English elite, allowing Tiang to explore the consciousness of predominantly Chinese speaking, working-class communities (although not solely: his characters do come from different backgrounds).

The stories primarily emerge from what is contemporarily regarded as the counter-narrative: for instance, that of the deposed leader of the Barisan Socialis, Lim Chin Siong, who was excluded from the national narrative by and large to emphasise the story of the People's Action Party in creating a prosperous postcolonial nation, against the backdrop of subversion and incitement to communal linked politics. The characterisation of these leftists as hard-line communists and their detention as political detainees is a question of emergency, especially as these events were also deeply linked to events of the Malayan Emergency that lasted from 1948 until 1960. In the novel, Siew Li is a key character from this time who is later detained, and she is introduced to us at an event listening to Lim. Consequently, "she started writing pamphlets. So much of what she read was from China, and society here was different. Using local examples would surely do more to convince the Malayan people of these

ideas. The things she said seemed obvious to her, and it was always startling how her comrades responded" (Tiang 2017, 56). The account of her subsequent detention mirrors real detainees' accounts, as does the disjuncture between her letters and the reality of the lived experience that confronts her at the Central Police Station, where, she realises, "this wasn't going to play out like any of the stories in her books, the ones they told each other or acted out on stage. There was nothing to fight here, no brave stand to be taken. They would simply hold her here, and so many other comrades, until they'd all be forgotten" (Tiang 2017, 63). This vision of oblivion mirrors the national narrative, in its inability to express danger and the reality of detention within the postcolonial nation state.

Siew Li's experience of detention in the novel is an extended commentary on the exclusion of youth of a different political persuasion during the Cold War and helps us think about the relations between Chinese communities in the Southeast Asian region in the conflict and their links or presumed links to China. This of course leads us to questions of language and translation, but Tiang allows his novel to speak to the Singaporean, mainstream English contemporary national literature sensibility, while still illuminating these voices, writing alongside many Chinese accounts. Siew Li is reminded that "Chinese speakers like them [her comrades] would never be employed under the colonial system". Her voice and her interior moments of thought render for us a more human face for those termed communist or socialist resistance within Singapore at this time: *"the world keeps spinning without me*" (Tiang 2017, 68). We see glimpses into memoirs by authors such as Teo Soh Lung or even Said Zahari, but through the Chinese community as they were detained during the period of emergency and after. As the detainee Tan Kok Fang reflects in a piece written for a commemorative volume, "fifty years after Coldstore we have not evaporated into thin

air. We have withstood the test of time. Many of our friends … do not buy what the propaganda machine said about us" (Tan 2013, 349).

As much as the historical narrative is contested in contemporary memory, the Cold War circumstances around it are proscribed to a more national discussion, which deals more with implicating various points of view in framings that are within decolonisation but also political manoeuvring. As this lends to the contemporary, it is in line with what Day expresses about how the current generation of Southeast Asians, who "have not experienced the wars, political upheavals, and cultural debates are now re-examining the Cold War in search of new ways of thinking about national identity, cultural expression, and the future of the nation" (Day & Liem 2010, 17). The novel places past, present and future in dialogue, with temporalities shifting as they are reformulated in prose, where the Cold War plays out not only as a historical mirage but an actual reality to reformulate a public space in contemporary regional settings.

When engaging the Malaysian context, the emergency is very much alive, through the architecture and reality of the New Villages, and through Tiang's character of Nam Teck, who, much like Ee Tiang Hong, encounters the city as a sort of alien interruption to the Malaysian imaginary. But in Nam Teck's case, the city manifests the growth of his desire for "girls": "He'd always expected he would, but only in a theoretical way, until he arrived in Kuala Lumpur. The city teemed with alluring bodies, spilling from scoop-neck blouses, lengthened by high heeled shoes. His feelings, sweaty and consuming, became unknown to him" (Tiang 2017, 106–107). This confused sensibility is juxtaposed against the new entity of Malaysia after 1962: "the Chinese newspapers were a fervid mixture of nationalism and speculation about this new thing, this Malaysia. What did it mean, to carve a new thing out of

chunks of land like this? Who would be in it? Would Brunei, Sarawak, Singapore?" (Tiang 2017, 111). This sensibility of new imaginations is posed against his origins, since he grew up in a village created literally by the military erasure of resistance. He is asked by Siew Li:

> 'The new village? Is it true there was barbed wire all around you?'
> He shrugged. 'Sure.'
> 'You sound like you don't care.'
> 'No, it was terrible, but it's over. I left.'
> […]
> She didn't seem bothered. 'I'll be around a bit longer. I'm going inside soon.'
> 'Inside?' He knew what she meant, he just couldn't picture her in the jungle, in uniform.
> 'The ang moh rounded up your people and put you behind a fence. Don't you want to fight back? This whole emergency. It's an excuse to keep us down.' (Tiang 2017, 121–22).

These discussions show resistance as an act that is also personal in its implications, as Nam Teck and Siew Li are representing perspectives on the emergency that embody the ideological choices about the prerogative to expel the "ang moh" or white colonisers. Therefore, this should shape our understanding of the Cold War in the region, especially in terms of local resistance movements and their implications for people.

From here, Nam Teck becomes Xiongmin, which in Mandarin means "a hero of the people", in a trajectory similar to that of Kliwon in *Beauty is a Wound*, in which he becomes Comrade Kliwon, though in this case, Teck gets a new name altogether. In the resistance, he is taught Mandarin, and "learnt about the geography of Russia and China, the countries they sought to emulate. There were propaganda talks to make sure they understood the ideology correctly. Weak points in their

thinking were ferreted out and eliminated" (Tiang 2017, 133). And here Teck, or Xiongmin, asks the important question that characterises the urban rural divide: "Had he been damaged by his years in the city?" (Tiang 2017, 133). These concerns represent fear of the encroachment of the modern but also reflect how the Cold War is constructed and reinvented through people, or even through thinking about the effect or extent of British colonialism and its institutions, and about resistance as a postcolonial dialogue.

> In this novel too we move between times and questions of time excavate the difficult and traumatic memories of the past. Here, Tiang usefully deploys a journalist, Revathi, who travels and asks questions, at times conveying a textbook image of an investigative journalist. She has to 'consider going out for a cigarette', and speaks with a British accent, quite comically understood by the locals as 'speaking with a potato in her mouth' (Tiang 2017, 157), but investigating the events of the emergency leads her to ask difficult questions that take us back to questions of language, about what is lost between Chinese dialects and English, in her conversation. These then break down to other concerns about the Ma Gong or communists as they are known. Within Revathi as well, we hear internal dialogues:
> '*Not all right*', she wanted to cry, '*there's nothing alright about this. I'm six thousand miles from home in a climate that makes no sense to me any more, right in the middle of a war, that's stretching on even though it ended ten years ago*' (Tiang 2017, 171).

While the realities of the emergency and insurgency are covered in detail, we see a conversation between that period and continuing persecution of dissident elements in the present in the novel, as reflected in the account provided by Siew Li's niece, Stella. She is asked by interrogators "'Stella, I'll ask you again. Do you know why you're here?' A sudden paranoid spasm. She voted for the Workers' Party three years ago, in 1984 – her very first election…letting in the Iion. Did they know that? The

ballot papers had serial numbers that could not be traced, but what if – she shook her head, snapping the thread…" (Tiang 2017, 200) Instead, their queries are about her Church outreach work, about which she explains to the questioner, "God tells us to help the poor. We're just trying to do that". She is then rebutted with "Why don't you help your own countrymen? Where is your patriotism? Do you think there are no poor people in Singapore?" (Tiang 2017, 201). Stella is implicated, detained, and interrogated by the authorities in relation to the conspiracy that would be dealt with in Operation Spectrum, where authorities detained church workers for participating in activities that promoted liberation theology. This then leads to questions, once again about Marxist subversion, and the suppositions of the authorities are revealed as threadbare, as in this exchange: "But you always say, society treats these people badly, society neglects these people. That's how Marxists talk. If you're talking like this, then it must be because someone has infected you with left wing sentiments" (Tiang 2017, 227). This pathological questioning and linking to various sentimentalities expose the control of thought in the authoritarian postcolonial nation state. Her dissidence is then posed against Stella's relatively well-to-do, Catholic and upper-middle-class upbringing, especially as her relatives, including a Winston, may not be elected/electable (presumably as a member of the ruling party) "if they know his relative is mixed up in all kinds of trouble? They may even drop him…" (Tiang 2017, 231). The context here in independent Singapore reveals the state's concern with the moral character of politicians, often thought to mirror their own personal affiliations and choices. This therefore is a reflection on the role of elites within the Singapore context as being benevolent rulers.

In telling Stella's tale, Tiang invokes the sensibility of a Western and English educated character, invoking in her head resistance not from the vantage point of

Chinese language discourse, but that of various "canonical works" in translation or received in the West, "and she kept spinning, like Scheherazade, telling stories to save herself" (Tiang 2017, 233). And yet these stories are fictions to abet the authorities in a search for allusions to subversion, to subversively breaking down the national authority. The author himself is inspired by works from former detainees and interviewed inhabitants of the New Villages, and thus the narrative comes across not merely as a reimagination so much as a retelling of these historical events through a counter-narrative in fiction. Stella ties together narrative threads between persecution in the 1960s and 1980s. In this translation between various experiences that we see the novel coming forward as an ideal form, in this case to bridge the uneasy narratives dividing Singapore and Malaysia after independence from Britain and into separation, within a postcolonial context, while the nation state continues to suppress and silence critical voices. The story of Stella is distinct from the character of Siew Li, and yet they are intertwined, along with those Nam Teck and Revathi, to compose a patchwork of individuals living within the nation and also displaced from it in different times, only to play subtle and minor roles that are at the margins.

Among the three texts, we see an interest in working around access to suppressed voices, and these are those which have been silenced within the national framing of Cold War events and stories, especially around contentious moments of national history. The authors are actively trying to bring in subaltern and diverse voices to communicate these issues. This is an especially critical intervention into the public space and continues to inspire a broader question about firstly, representativeness, and secondly, a sense that literary discourses can work against the established boundaries of the national imagination. As Chua Beng Huat notes for Southeast Asia, "the contemporary non-communist nations have all conceded to some

form of electoral politics as the means of selecting political office holders but they are far from being liberal democracies" (Chua 2017, 18). This scepticism towards liberalism, as is elucidated in the case of Singapore in Chua's book, is perhaps not entirely lost on these authors, which reimagine critiques towards the state from the margins. The alternative political ideologies or forms of resistances in the novels enact contemporary gazing backwards to dialogue with the silences of the facets of ideology that have been suppressed.

When speaking of margins, we think about how to locate histories of the colonial and postcolonial nation state with voices from the experience of those who would not ordinarily have a voice. In discussing Wong Yoon Wah, a Singaporean poet who was also an academic who promoted regional literature and won the Southeast Asia Write Award (NLB) for poetry collections, Zhou Hau Liew discusses the "tropical rainforest as a protagonist" of his work and "the subsequent settler ecology that developed in the tropical jungles in Malaya" (Zhou 2020, 295). He includes in his discussion some of Jeremy Tiang's work as well as some by other writers, noting that there is a "small corpus of works available in English which deal with the legacy of the British resettlement policies from the perspectives of Chinese in Malaysia" (Zhou 2020, 295). This critical point about English as an external language signals to a whole ecology of alienness for the experiences and print culture in Chinese in Malaysia. Another question would be the variety of dialects that are dealt with both in Rosca's and in Tiang's novels, while this variety is transposed into broader political ideologies that often alienate these alternative voices. The real issue for Tiang is, as Zhou points out, the "legacies of British counter-insurgency, which haunts those who lived through resettlement" (Zhou 2020, 301).

However, Tiang's novel shows how this haunting is a form of return and revisitation, especially to the counter-insurgency discourse of the nation state. Similar to Rosca's vision of a festival comprising within it a chilling vision of repression under martial law, the contemporary imagination in the Singaporean context is almost seen to have "a pervasive amnesia about the political past that has shaped Singapore's modernity" (Zhou 2018). Form in this case matters and reframes our experience of amnesia, and Tiang demonstrates with clarity that he is being counter-canonical to re-enliven an alternative past for Singapore and Malaysia. This is not always the case, however, with powerful contemporary poetry in the Philippines and Indonesia speaking to and for these national structures, and yet, the novel continues to be a bounded form for an alternative national past.

The three novels allow us to look more explicitly at the form of the contemporary novel as instances reworking the nation that also reflect a certain desire to be counter-canonical, while being influenced by writers from the previous generation. They are therefore seeking both to complicate nation, but also work within its parameters. These novels are acutely aware of their function within a national and, I would argue, regional frame. When Stella is asked in *State of Emergency* "Can't you understand Singapore is a small country, we can't allow counter establishment forces like this to proliferate?" (Tiang 2017, 222) the question is indicative of a national desire to suppress alternative voices for the sake of national unity that is nevertheless common in Southeast Asia, through authoritarian legacies. While Eka Kurniawan is a dedicated scholar of Pramoedya Ananta Toer and we see Pramoedya's influence in his writing, it would be too simplistic to say this is the primary influence, especially as Kurniawan and other authors are very clearly attempting to demonstrate violation as a collapse of the limits of time ("it seemed to

be going on endlessly, for an additional eight whole centuries", as when Alamanda's body is violated by Shodancho) (Kurniawan 2015, 215) . In *Beauty is a Wound* the local communist party begins to "generously support folk art, providing the usual snacks and some Party propaganda too, so that all the folk art that had been subversive in feudal and colonial times now began to jazz up the Halimunda scene … The *kuda lemping* trance dancers didn't just eat glass and coconut shells, but now also swallowed the American flag" (Kurniawan 2015, 435). Further, in Kurniawan's study of Pramoedya, which expounds his theories of social realism and was published by Gramedia Pustaka Utama in 2006, we see the epigraph that frames the book by Maxim Gorky in Indonesian, "*rakyat mesti tahu sejarahnya*", is loosely translated as, the "people must know their history" (my translation). This desire to know is perhaps also a desire to speak against what is erased and against the removal of personhood from the subaltern, and such an ability was not similarly granted to the writers of the Cold War period, especially in Pramoedya's case. Kurniawan voices his condemnation of Pramoedya's continued detention and exclusion from Indonesian letters:

> Demikianlah Pramoedya, sebagai satu sosok pengarang Indonesia. Selama ini ia hidup bagai seorang paria yang kehilangan hak asasinya sebagai manusia dan warga negara Indonesia (Kurnawan 1999, 46).[31]

This exclusion, as Kurniawan notes, consisted in being treated as a pariah in his own country, living without human rights, and this exclusion perhaps can be seen in the fates of the characters of Kurniawan's novels, but these marginal voices speak back.

[31] Here we can deduce Pramoedya's role as an Indonesian author who was treated as a pariah, who lost his human rights, and who lost his status as an Indonesian (My translation).

While they have been erased by the state and have almost no trace in the archives, their absence from the archives enables the author to use death as a way to return his subjects, but also to enliven the dead voices that for so long have not been heard.

Within the context of the fictional town of Halimunda in *Beauty is a Wound* moments prior to the persecution of the communists at around the time of the mass killings in Indonesia speak well to the influence of the communist party on Indonesian politics before 1965. And yet, Kurniawan is always careful to link their practices with local mythology, so Comrade Kliwon is seen through rumours to have "had mystical powers, that he could disguise himself as someone else, or split and multiply himself so that he could appear at many places at once" (Kurniawan 2015, 309). This is prior to the massacre of the communists, who later become ghosts and haunt Shodancho: "communist ghosts were out to get him all the time, even sabotaging him at the trump table and making him lose again and again and again" (Kurniawan 2015, 345). These explorations of a tortured history and its various syncretic visions combine against the backdrop of historical change and transition, and the large-scale violence of the period is rewritten into a reality that is a continued vision of colonial and then postcolonial torment.

The haunting in *Beauty is a Wound* brings a certain sense of justice and voice to those massacred in the mass killings in Indonesia, which remains a difficult subject to the present. The writing is still very much grappling with silences in the nation, and yet, the commonalities it shares with other cultural forms representing shared exclusions of dissident ideologies almost allow us to imagine these novels speaking across a Global South world. Along with the anthropologist Heonik Kwon in his work *Ghosts of War in Vietnam*, drawing on the work of historians Schmitt and Appy, it seems apposite to quote here the notion of the Vietnam War as a phantasmic event:

> Jean Claude Schmitt, concluding his investigation of ghost beliefs in medieval Europe, states that the Vietnam War is one of the collective phantoms of modern times, 'ready to surge forth each time in history and, in particular, political reason[s] attempt to push them from the memory of the people.' According to [Christian] Appy, 'For three decades American leaders have tried to bury memories of the Vietnam war only to have them pop up again like indestructible poltergeists'. […] (Kwon 2008, 12-13).

Kwon asks, "If it is true that the 'collective phantom' of the Vietnam War is still troubling American culture, what about the ghost of the American War in Vietnamese culture?" (Kwon 2008, 12–13). Along Kwon's line of reasoning, it is fair to say that the novels attempt to redraw these parameters within the boundaries of Southeast Asian experience. Through the novel, we have an aperture to rethink the emergence of these various events and their relationship to the contemporary. And in using local narratives, we can see a focus on what is erased often coming back to haunt the present day.

The novels are possible because of political realities in the present or due to writing in exile and now, arguably, there is the opportunity to "play" with serious topics. Many artists do not really address these silences: they are still preoccupied with the past, but the effect of the past is mitigated by its lived reality, and the spaces that contest these ideas are not just geographical, but are lived in people's family lives. Siew Li in *State of Emergency* appears in the newspaper as helping Lay Kuan rally for a Legislative Assembly seat on the Barisan [Socialis] ticket, and her husband Jason complains that "she was making him look bad—as a civil servant, how could he have a wife trying to bring down the government? She reminded him that he worked for the people, not just one party, and he backed down" (Tiang 2017, 83). The point of these fictional lived experiences is to relate them to the contemporary moment,

where a similar conversation between two characters is far from unimaginable. As the translator of works of fiction written about similar topics, such as Yeng Pway Ngon's *Unrest*, Tiang brings the experience of those who are from the Chinese-speaking community to an English medium.

The form of the contemporary "archipelagic" Southeast Asian novel is working within the confines of the imaginary of the social map of the nation, and yet it grounds the nation in the ordinary, the corporeal, and the "dirty". There is hardly any reprieve from the bodily in *Beauty is a Wound*, and the betrayals of the human and non-human in the novel spell out a fate not worth much redemption, a world of infinite suffering where justice is only served by a female *ajak* dog who, with her pack, kills Shodancho, who has already been killed by a ghost (Kurniawan 2015, 444). This seemingly incongruous chain of logic appears to work without problems in Halimunda, a universe of death and, even the power of a redemptive force like love is shattered by the bitter reality. "'But love showed its true strength,' said Dewi Ayu. 'Alamanda intervened right at the moment he was to die.' The evil spirit laughed mockingly, 'And then she fucked him more than ten years later, right before he killed himself. Killed himself. Killed himself!!! He died! Ha. Ha. Ha'" (Kurniawan 2015, 446). Similarly, *State of War* highlights the bodily as an explicit site of war and the body is taken to be a site of detention in *State of Emergency*, where political prisoners present the detention and interrogation of the body as a challenge to the national body politic.

The Cold War lingers as a key platform for subversion that remains present in other forms in the region. If laughter is subversive, then this comical spirit, either implied or darkly present, appears though narrating the ultimate tragedy of the characters in search of forms of utopia. Ultimately, conversations about the past in

these novels are dissolved by the present to anticipate more violation in the future, while they also fragment the concept of nation into a set of pieces that immediately and seemingly always cannot be reconciled. As Mendible suggests about Rosca:

> she admits it is problematical to formulate any coherent sense of national identity in the Philippines, where there is always a 'conflict between the social orientation of the bedrock culture and the fragmenting effect of colonialism'. […] The collective self that is conceived under such historical conditions, Rosca insists, is often gracefully balanced 'between the acceptance of the metamorphic essence of reality demanded by one culture and the rigid classification of essence demanded by the other[s]' (Mendible 2014, 356–57).

Rosca's point is worth repeating: the fragmentation of form is essentially another fragmentation against the narrative of the nation state in telling its own history. I speak of history deliberately, reading it with Benjamin in Tiang's reinterpretation: "for Benjamin, history happens at the exact moment when continuity is arrested and such an arrest only occurs in a dialectical juxtaposition of past and present" (Tiang 16). This necessarily brings us to another point about the concept of a work of art.

This continuous remaking brushes against the grain of the national narrative in Southeast Asia, as texts enjoin their visions of the nation to voices lost in eliciting a haunted national space, one that is always reframed in time and along anticipatory potentials. The constant remaking and re-reading of the national narrative arguably demolishes a claim towards a postcolonial Cold War literature as a singularity and, further, can shatter the distinction of the work of art as a Cold War product. When we open a novel, we can relate to historian Rudolf Mrázek's experience when he looked through forms of "unseemly technology trivia" in researching the late colonial Dutch East Indies. In his breakthrough interdisciplinary study, *Engineers of Happy Land: Technology and Nationalism in a Colony*, he describes "tickling the sources," or using

such an approach to “contentedly dry” technical texts such as urban planning reports to extract their poetry (Mrázek 2002, xvi). If I have sought to tickle the novels in this chapter, they are far less dry and certainly not content in their historical reach. But here too I invoke Mrázek’s comment that “Cultures always giggle, when one looks hard enough” (Mrázek 2002, 84). The giggling of the archive is as subversive as reading emerging from the contemporary novel, where the laughter of dead corpses comes back to kill once again.

Conclusion

This thesis has argued that selected texts from Southeast Asia, in the form of novels and poetry, form an important bridge between the postcolonial and the Cold War as an experience outside the West. Through examining the work of writers from Malaysia, Indonesia, Japan and the Philippines, primarily, the thesis has established that such writing during the Cold War engages critically in a dialogue with the colonial period, and the role of imperialism is translated into numerous facets in the poems and novels. This begins in terms of language and aesthetic choices, such as constructing a *bildungsroman*, or indeed writing against literary conventions, as a postcolonial choice looking to revise and challenge but not always decolonise, even as decolonisation is a parallel political phenomenon. The thesis establishes that the past is always present in the texts, and not just in the way the past informs the choices around representation and style, as well as forming critical inspiration to continue to write about similar themes, such as silences in the contemporary. Reading this poetry and these novels against their historical circumstances, the Cold War both is and is not directly discernible in the texts, and this is the result of the writing being mediated through a more nuanced appraisal of the Cold War as a phenomenon in Southeast Asia that has to be enjoined to the postcolonial. The bridge between the novels and the poetry is their relationship to representing particular themes, and both function quite differently.

The attempt to link across thinking across Southeast Asia is challenged by a few considerations. Firstly, a conceptual discussion about the region highlights linguistic diversity and the difficulty of encompassing both mainland and maritime polities and situations. The thesis has chosen to emphasise the maritime Southeast Asian dimension, but expanding the discussion to Japan has allowed for a more

capacious understanding of exactly what is understood by the region. The common Asian experience of the Atomic Bomb and its effects, especially as this spilled over into thinking around global warfare, centralises for this thesis how atomic poetry from Japan spills into the reality of the substantial deaths from the Cold War and decolonising contexts in the region. Thus, the death world is far from a metaphor: it is a situation of ultimate tragedy, enunciated through the poetry, but never fully expressed. If the news media began to capture the reality of war through Vietnam for the eyes of the West, then the writing of the time, either through poetry or fiction, as the thesis argues, can similarly represent another form of imagery and bearing witness.

The concerns and aesthetic frames discerned in the work of the authors chosen are by no means limited to those authors, nor to the national contexts from which they write in Southeast Asia, but they can be considered differentially representative, presenting a variety of tones and voices, as I have explored, and not merely the simple representation of a conflict. Parallels and connections with other writers beyond the parameters of the thesis are easily discerned – if we take for example the prominence of Pramoedya Ananta Toer in relation to Indonesian literature at the time, one could easily study F.R. Mangunwijaya's *Durga Umayi* as a sort of counter-narrative that does not centre the national, which is an "'anti epic'[…] this is not official history but rather its counter, the way history works at ground level" (Keeler 352). Similarly, Patke and Holden emphasise the locating of Filipino writer Nick Joaquin's *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* in Hong Kong as an interesting parable, and one could easily expand comment to include this location and imaginary as part of the Cold War in the region. The *Hibakusha* are seen only as one strand of postwar Japanese literature, though the status of Kurihara Sadako as an activist and a poet with formal

training has allowed her work to speak more prominently than other writers such as Ota Yoko, inviting commentary on Hiroshima from writers such as Ōe Kenzaburō. Placing the poems of *Kuroi Tamago* into a regional perspective, however, brings to the combined account of a Cold War imaginary extraordinary power in so far as they are witness to its initiating nadir. A comparative literary study thus bridges themes that are often jarring to area studies because it places texts into circulation, and yet the strangeness allows for the communication of a more sustained imaginary.

The Cold War period is not merely chronologised or even decomposed (as the important analysis by Heonik Kwon suggests), but its conventional conception has also been challenged through the de-Cold War analysis of Kuan- Hsing Chen in his work *Asia as Method*, as the thesis posits:

> To de-cold war at this point in history does not mean to simply rid ourselves of a cold-war consciousness or to try to forget that period in history and naively look toward the future (the approach most state leaders and other politicians have called for). It means to mark out a space in which unspoken stories and histories may be told, and to recognize and map the historically constituted cultural and political effects of the cold war. (Kuan 120)

The thesis has established that such a de-cold war reading is productive, especially in the attempt to Eenunciate untold histories around the experiences in Southeast Asia through the lens of writers is important. Such a task is not exclusively the foci of Southeast Asian writing in the period, but these selected texts have allowed us to read the ramifications of a set of key Cold War events in the region. This is even as poetry remains personal and subjective and the novels contain various historical developments that escape the Cold War. However, to read the past for instances of

purely ideological writing is to miss the depth that a close reading can provide. The novels and poems play at the margins of our established historical understandings, and seek to influence a richer understanding of the limits of experience that merges the postcolonial with situations of decolonisation and Cold War.

At various points the strands of thought around region are limited to archipelagic or maritime Southeast Asia, but placed into conversation with an external entity, Japan, they can reformulate how we think about the region. This deliberate play throughout the thesis is to enjoin the experience of Japan decidedly as an imperial actor in the region to our epistemic ideas of "what is Southeast Asia?" As Asian studies proceeds to include more discussions of notions of inter-regional exchange, we should look to critique a simplistic understanding of what binds the region together. I would suggest that the atomic dimension does inform a parallel and important development in Asian Cold War experience, not merely the Vietnam War. This thesis establishes that to read into the developments at issue in the texts shared concerns and commonalities is useful in terms of thinking about the regional conflict.

The preponderance of more specialised writing on Cold War lived experiences often reflects histories produced by acts of documentation. In this thesis a whole alternative past of documentation is opened through the possibilities of literary language in the realm of the imagination, which is also deeply concerned and never disengaged from space and place and being. I offer in this thesis an exposition that seeks to compel us to recalibrate our thinking around temporal structures but also, through works of fiction, to reimagine place and the identification of being in what is an eventual geographical construct – the regions in Asia.

The construction of region is in tandem with thinking about sub-regions. This notion of the sub-regional posits a specificity to ethnic particularity that merits further

consideration to the readings of regional literature. Further, the importance of printing and print centres to the functional role of literature in making a reading is critical. Because of the location of print centres in urban settings in modern Indonesia, as Henk Maier points out, "like Medan, Yogyakarta, Padang, and Surabaya too, people were trying their hand with such recently developed genres as short stories, novels, and free verse and they managed to have their work published" (Maier, "Heritage" 2). While Maier does point out that these works could not compete with works published in Jakarta, the divide between the urban and rural continues to inform not only the production and distribution of writing, and thus its audience, but also the setting and mood in contemporary writing, especially poetry in the region (Patke & Holden).

Similarly, this de-centring of perspectives does not always mean a de-centring of thought on the place of literature in the world. In Tony Day's account of Cold War writing in Indonesia and Vietnam, he recounts how, in the words of Indonesian writer HB Jassin, "'the art of 45' is universal art, because however diverse the sources of inspiration, taken as a whole the final artistic product [of the 'Generation 45' school] is meant to achieve universality" (Day, "Stuck" 140).[32] This reflects nicely the positionality of various writers at the time, locating the intention of the Cold War with social commitment but also battling the simplistic labelling of work in terms of "-isms", as Jassin might express (Ibid 141). Universality would be quite an agreeable notion to Francisco Sionil José, whose novels seek to unpack humanity's conflicting aims in the face of a search for a "Filipino" identity, as the chapter about his quintet explores. And *Solidarity*'s publication in Manila deserves a richer treatment as a literary centre in the region, if not just as a means to shift our gaze from the West to think about the platform as a vehicle for ideas. To think about the world as

reformulated from the "margins" is an inviting notion, especially as it tickles notions of the temporal and the extension of time from the West into the rest of the world.

Temporal disruption is nicely expressed in a Soebagio Sastrowardoyo poem, translated and presented by the critic and translator Harry Aveling in a 1971 edition of *Solidarity.*

Time is the important thing in
acting.
Time controls the rhythm of the
movements, the meetings and
the conversations.
Time divides the story into acts
which balance each other;
when to open the curtain
and when to close it at the end.
("Petundjuk Suteradera" or The Producer's Directions,
Aveling 72)

This reflection on time, as it appears to me, is perhaps conducive for us when thinking about a bounded era such as the Cold War in Southeast Asia. My tickling of the temporal through the sources appears in the poems and novels that feature in this thesis and then moves into retrospectivity. They write against their backdrops, but the rhythms of the past also exist without them. Any study that tickles the sources needs to also be careful to appreciate the sources' contexts, dark and disinviting, and the end of the era of the Cold War does require a re-evaluation that should be sensitive to the "death world". This is not merely an intellectual fantasy, but a reality of trauma and bodies. This sensitivity, I hope, is reflected in this thesis. A tickling of the sources,

much like Mrázek undertakes, is perhaps able to show us the types of narratives produced after 1989 in the region. As Gaik Cheng Khoo reflects in her study of Malaysian films, focusing on the moment of the treaty with the CPM or MCP to end the struggle in Malaysia: "since the signing of this 1989 treaty, and the end of the Cold War, numerous leftist and communist narratives … have appeared" (Khoo 249). Silences do not necessarily mean that these voices did not exist, but they indicate gaps in the state-led historiography, and further, these silences have been challenged by the very writers who have been muted.

In Eka Kurniawan's *Beauty is a Wound*, historical inheritance of the nation is uneasily expressed through the tragedy of exploitation, and there is no seeming escape from the experience of the Asian interactions. Far from benign, the inheritance of both bodily beauty and bodily violation is malevolent: for Alamanda, the daughter of Dewi Ayu, "it cannot be denied that she inherited her mother's almost perfect beauty as well as the piercing eyes of the Japanese man who fucked her mother" (*BW* 192).

These characters are stuck in the dance between time and history, or the unalterable trauma of the Japanese Occupation, in the fictional (but not quite unimaginable) town of Halimunda, where the question of print media such as newspapers comes up to link together the lack of news with the killings of communist leaders in Jakarta: "reports were coming in from a number of cities, but most importantly from Jakarta: it was being said that all the central leaders of the Communist Party had been captured, that a number of killings had taken place, and in some cases were already dead" (*BW* 293). This leads to the occupation of newsrooms by army personnel, which means that Comrade Kliwon, the leader of the local Communist Party branch, wonders with Adinda, "Maybe there won't be newspapers ever again," which is met with "forget the fucking newspapers, Comrade! Your Party

is in crisis, and they need a clearheaded leader" (*BW* 295). This sense of history brushes against the national sense, but echoes Benedict Anderson's reading of Marco Kartodikromo's serialised text *Semarang Hitam* or *Black Semarang* from 1924, in which the hero, or "our young man" is not only a young man:

> who belongs to a community of readers in *Indonesian*… and thus, implicitly, an embryonic Indonesian 'imagined community'. [….] He does not find the corpse of the destitute vagrant by the side of a sticky Semarang road, but imagines it from the print in the newspaper […] it is fitting that *Semarang Hitam* a newspaper appears embodied in fiction, for, if we now turn to the newspaper as cultural product, we will be struck by its profound fictiveness. (Anderson 1983, 30-33).

Needless to say, in constructing a fictiveness, much like regionalism, this is a fiction, that brushes against our tickling.

The postcolonial realities of writing in Southeast Asian contexts evoke key concerns of postcolonial scholars, and provide fertile ground for an exploration of themes such as hybridity, subalternity, the concept of language incorporation and rejection from the coloniser, as well as other concerns. Inter-referentiality exists, not least in English language writing, evoking more serious critical discussion. As Christopher Lee demonstrates, for instance, the cosmopolitan figure of Han Suyin is recovered in Malaysian writer Tan Twan Eng's Booker-shortlisted, retrospective Cold War novel *The Garden of Evening Mists*, where, in one scene at a dinner party, a character asks if anyone has read "that new book by Han Suyin" as "guests broach the topic of the Malayan Emergency" (Lee, "Error" 171). This reflection, however, is tempered by the author pointing out an incomplete knowledge about the circumstances at the time, and Han Suyin's privileged status, as an English-speaking

writer with a Western readership, moving from the "problem of error into a broader exploration of cognitive ambiguity and emotion" (Lee, "Error" 179). In this thesis, the fragmentary highlights a similar ambiguity that elicits not just fictional licence or poetic subjectivity but helps us to contrast the experiences while still marking them as part of regional writing.

As this thesis has shown, one cannot always frame mid-century writing through an explicitly "Cold War" lens. Enjoining it to the postcolonial opens up more space for an appreciation of key issues, and one of them is race. The legacy of racial hierarchies, as the Ee Tiang Hong chapter alludes to, was affected by state discourses and laws such as the Sedition Laws in Malaysia, similar to those in Singapore and in other parts of the region, which, in revisions enacted in 1969, prohibited the promotion of "feelings of ill will and hostility between different races or classes of population of Malaysia" (*Sedition Act* 1948, Revised 1969). Racialised identity was highly sensitive in relation to the domestic Cold War in Malaysia, and it is clear that postcolonial realities interacted uneasily with the dynamics of race as a colonial construction. Pramoedya's fiction insists on foregrounding the unifying national, deliberately eliding much else. But Tiffany Tsao's reading of the *Buru Quartet* looks to point to an ambivalence about and not quite outright disdain for his Javanese heritage (Tsao 105), in this context, suggesting that the quartet "draws on all three expressions of this model – Javanese, Marxist, and biological (or more specifically Darwinian)" (Ibid 111). As a French-Tunisian Jewish writer associated with postcolonial theory or colonial studies (Rangan & Chow 398), Albert Memmi considers racism "a pathological condition that entraps both the colonized *and* the colonizer within a vicious circle as debilitating to both parties" (398).

The relationship is then "normalized and internalized within social institutions and apparatuses…" in the contemporary world (Rangan & Chow, 408). There has been a continued struggle with racial discourses in the task to frame plural societies in Southeast Asia. Challenges to Orientalist discourses have been offered by even earlier writers and nationalists in the region such as Jose Rizal, as noted in this thesis's discussion of Filipino writing. As identified by Alatas, "Rizal had concrete views about the problems of what we call Orientalist portrayals of Filipino scholars [….] to rectify what he understood to be erroneous and derogatory statements that could be found in most Spanish works on the Philippines" (Alatas 149). Rectification is not the only purpose, but Minke's journey across the *Buru Quartet* reads very much as a condemnation of the racist legacy of Dutch colonialism, especially in his name itself, as we are told early on in his education in *Bumi Manusia*, which resembles the word "monkey". To detach from these racial systems is to fail to read the texts as fully as possible.

The dialogue between differing times that is present in the thesis calls into question the era of the Cold War and postcolonialism, but this does not look to demolish the import of concrete experience. For instance, if we are to question periodisation, it would be callous to misrepresent the events of 1945 in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and between 1965 and 1966 in Indonesia as in any way outside the Cold War. This sensitivity is demonstrated by Vickers, as he discusses the public debate over the events in Indonesia, where "a reaction to sympathetic accounts of the post-1965 period has been a recent set of books that go back to blaming the PKI, both for the killings of the generals and other actions […] these accounts make explicit the New Order implication that the killings were 'natural' reactions" (Vickers "Bodies" 51). The situations that are documented facts are not what is in contest in this thesis,

but the analysis has tried to show how fictional voices actually rewrite the histories more powerfully, with imaginative licence.

In the novels and poems a complex relationship emerges between their use of language, traditional literary forms (such as the case of Kurihara's use of *Tanka*), and their embrace of other forms of language and representational styles, such as social(ist?) realism, while placing this complexity in relation to the world that they are looking to both represent but also comment on. For the experience of the traumatic events of the Cold War and nation-making does not diminish but reinforces the commitment of writers, such as that of Ee Tiang Hong, in the wake of the riots, to chronicle the increase in a more socially committed poetry. As Ee writes in his poem "Requiem":

> Date from this day onwards
> Whatever you will,
> As the momentous day
> As it suits you, but with reverence,
> As benefits the great divide.
>
> Tell your children to remember
> The lessons of May 13,
> Or tell them to forget
> The friends or relatives who died,
> It makes no difference,
>
> Sun and moon will rise tomorrow
> Sun and moon will set

For all our sorrow.

(*MFW* 55)

This poem writes against the "great divide", of time before and after the events of 13 May 1969, referring also to artificial racial divisions, but the dating of the event is unmistakable. The sorrow through the poem is palpable and communicates the irrevocable loss experienced not just by the poet – "for all our sorrow". The sun and moon will eventually mark a continuation of time, but no matter how time is negotiated, 13 May is always a key marker for the break from the past for Ee.

Technically Ee is using a requiem as a form of expression, writing in English, to mourn collective loss, and linking this to a racial vision that exists outside the boundaries of the state imagination that highlights racial taxonomy. Instead, the poem nominates "friends and relatives who died", not using race, demonstrating that collective Malaysian identity exists outside this. In this instance, Ee uses the tradition of English language poetry as a prosthesis to communicate his own distinctive voice, which is not diluted, and continues to incorporate local Malay and other language words. Writing against the backdrop of Filipino history, both José and Rosca attempt to communicate on an epic scale, using that literary genre with Pramoedya, José through his five-volume saga and Rosca in a single novel that combines various conflicts to construct a constant state of war. José's books are inseparable from his humanistic views, but his role as editor and publisher of *Solidarity* places him in the Cold War network of CCF-funded institutions, even as he platforms many heterodox views and has always maintained he was unaware of the association of the journal's funding with the aims of US Cold War policies. Thus, the presence of Cold War

priorities is not always explicit, but this is not reason to think that Cold War readings are impossible and need not obfuscate the literary address to serious historical trauma.

Thinking about region cannot be solely linked to efforts towards regionalism, although they highlight similar cultural concerns. And yet, much like the process of colonialism in the region, such regionalism seems "with hindsight a logical, almost inevitable process" (Osborne et al. 77). Cold War political efforts at regionalism, such as the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization for example, formed a process driven mostly from without rather than within the region. In Southeast Asia, efforts such as the proposed conjoining of Malaya, Indonesia and the Philippines to form the Greater Malay Confederation of Maphilindo in the early 1960s, and the 1961 formation of the Association of Southeast Asia, the predecessor to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, are also worth noting, as geopolitical attempts to realise a regional imaginary, while ASEAN has continued to admit members. While the premodern links between polities in the region are well documented and studied, it can be asserted that literary affinities in the postwar period after 1945 provide for a regional vision even if they do not have the same genealogies. This is especially so when we think of shared concerns and dialogues, not least the postcolonial as a dialogue with the colonial and Cold War formations. Shaping analysis across the affinities of the literary and the historical, one recalls Legge's influential 1993 article tracing approaches to the history of the region, where he asks, invoking the self-referentiality of texts in a "postmodern moment", "no longer would they [historians of Southeast Asia] speak, with quite the same confidence, of the possibility of a 'real' history, whether of Southeast Asia or anywhere else, or of an attempt to 'arrive at a real world-history sense of values'" (Legge 49-50). This is particularly pertinent to a set of historical documents or analyses which allow for a broader set of methods to

influence the writing of history. This critical observation is probably still significant as we look to write more specific truths. A literary inquiry into the shape of the region certainly invites intellectual inquiry not only into the region as a shared space of letters but as an epistemological category as well.

However, to read Japanese involvement in the region as persuasive and far reaching can be contested, as Ricardo Jose argues tellingly in his study of the Japanese Occupation in the Philippines: "Japan's usual strategies – equating Japan with modernization and with liberation from imperialism – had little appeal in the Philippines" (Jose 266). This evidence of a limit to Japanese influence asks us to be cautious in attributing broad historical links to the pervasiveness or even influence of culture. However, if we shift the gaze towards how texts can construct a shared space, then we are able to see that region is a useful fiction (itself constantly being reproduced in fiction) that hardly exists within the boundaries proposed by area studies. This status means it can expand to a world literary scale of representation and shared meanings, but still create a reading from Southeast Asia.

Reading against and outside the nation allows us to work against the sanctions of the state for the purposes of the literary. About the dissemination of the works of George Orwell during the Cold War, Andrew Rubin explains that "while the possibility of misreading was an occasion to produce other adaptations of other works that conformed and adhered more closely to the semiotics of local and indigenous cultures, the United States deployed Orwell's work as a means of controlling and extending its political, economic, and, to a lesser extent, cultural authority" (Rubin, *Empire* 39). In postwar Japan, Rubin notes, "American authorities adapted *Animal Farm* in the popular form of the *kamishibai*, hanging scrolls," looking to "contain […] the sentiment of the working-class movement" (Ibid). Thus, there can be political and

even Cold War choices behind the promotion and dissemination of works, and to read against or across these is to look to make new choices in relating texts and authors to one another, despite their extensive coverage in extant scholarship on their own.

This thesis therefore places together the work of four authors from various contexts to trace structuring features that signal the Cold War in Southeast Asia, with a glance at contemporary retrospective works from the region that also play with categories of region making, form, and the certainty of a particular ideological representation. The thesis deliberately plays along these lines to illustrate that four key or dominant themes structure this Cold War writing, if we are to let ourselves tickle novels and poems for unexpected answers. The themes expressed – exile, continuities, death world and nostalgia – are four ways of reimagining the region.

Postcolonial and Cold War studies are overlapping fields and should be understood as such, to inform a more thorough appreciation. The Cold War in Southeast Asia invites more epistemological inquiry as a category of analysis, as it currently stands as a field of study with "traditional" approaches that need more exploration of how to categorise experience. Experience historically is not only expressed along an archival trail but constituted and created by literary texts, as expressions of the relations between various structuring factors, the authors, and the world(s) they inhabited. The past continues to dialogue with the present in all the works surveyed, carrying into the contemporary, but this dialogue does not reinforce simplistic narrations of time. Instead, it evokes a more complicated relationship between silence, reading and rereading, which helps us to constantly reimagine with a view to the reality.

Nancy Florida's characterisation of her detailed translation of the Javanese text *Babad Jaka Tingkir* alludes to some sense of prophecy: "the point is not to master the

Javanese past or a text of that past, but to reinscribe, through dialogue, a particular text's future intentions. […] my own reading and translation appear drawn up into this particular text's afterlife, extending its future intentions into a world that was, perhaps, not completely unforeseen by its prophetic Javanese author" (Florida 6). In a similar spirit, I create these registers of the postcolonial Cold War, which can be read backwards and through the period, between silence and speaking.

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