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Women, War and Conflicts in Indonesian Fiction:
Muslim Women's Struggles for Religious Identity in Indonesia

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Healing belief system bucha.

In the literary era today, where identity is manifested in narratives, looking at written narratives in literary works, one can see through the formation and construction of identity in the making and religion is one of many contributing factors of identity. Thus, this paper attempts to look at how women, in particular Muslim women are represented in the narratives written by one of prominent Muslim women writers in contemporary Indonesian literature, Helvy Tiana Rosa or simply called Helvy¹ in order to see the making of religious identity in Indonesia. Helvy's stories often express how Muslim women are targeted and affected by religious conflicts that recently were and, in some cases, still are taking place in some regions in Indonesia. Helvy claims that her narratives are her ways to act in response against any injustice and discrimination experienced by the oppressed men and women: her narratives are her ways of portraying women's struggles for equality in times of wars and conflicts. As a result, she explores much of these war stories in conflict areas where Muslims are repressed victims. Her short stories are fictional in its nature but her pen is a powerful means to react against these injustices since in writing her war stories she always equips herself with researches in providing vivid illustrations and accurate local colours. Her portrayals of those who are victimized by and those who resist any discrimination, oppression or domination are her ways of communicating the injustices that Muslim communities in those regions have suffered. Using feminist lenses, particularly Islamic feminism, it can be inferred that through her writings, Helvy creates a counter discourse by providing different endings. Helvy offers different insights and analyses of the circumstances of repression and domination by erecting her own symbolical foundation. Her foundation is irrefutably her single most important consideration: the construction of Islam as a liberating agent, which is powerfully embraced by her and her fictional characters.

Key words: women, fiction, Islam, identity, wars, conflicts

Unicef wrote that in Indonesia the number of IDPs (internally displaced persons) reached around 1.4 millions with the majority of women and children. This substantial number was mostly driven by "conflict and violence across the archipelago [that] harmed and traumatised and displaced children and women on a massive scale."² The massiveness of such problems does not automatically mean that in day-to-day reality it receives much attention leading to urgent remedy. Due to the complexity of problems to face, for many Indonesians today, IDPs and their causes, by and large, undergo negligence which in most cases runs the risk to be undocumented within the nation historiography.

Most portrayed violence against women is the May 1998 rapes of ethnic-Chinese women. In this political turmoil, at least 138 rape cases occurred in Jakarta (13 and 14 May).³ The disclosure of this tragedy by human rights activist was a shock despite the denial of many others who believed that such violence was an impossibility in

¹ Helvy's official site: www.helvytianarosa.net. Most of her writings (short stories, poems and essays) are also published online. See also http://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helvy_Tiana_Rosa, a wikipedia entry.

² <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/indonesia.html>

³ Ariel Heryanto, 'Setengah Tiang,' *Kompas Cyber Media*, Minggu, 15 Mei 2005, <http://www.kompas.com/kompas-cetak/0505/15/naper/1748927.htm>

Indonesian settings.⁴ Violent acts against women, in accordance to Unesco's data, indeed become a primary crisis particularly in conflict areas.⁵ The complicated problems in those areas are often taken for granted as the portrayal of the life of the people residing on those conflict areas receives minuscule attention. This might occur as previous government under Soeharto's rezim (1967 – 1998), *SARA* (*suku, agama, rasa dan antar golongan*: ethnic, religion, race and groups) was a slogan applied as a state apparatus to severely restrict public discussions on problems of differences: racial, ethnical or theological. As conflicts in these areas are not urgent-based conflicts, meaning they have taken place in considerable long time, public attention tends to diminish gradually. This might function as another perspective to the dismissed portrayal of the conflict areas. Although, immediately after the collapse of Soeharto's authority in 1998, conflicts areas received much attention but it was like what Indonesians always say "jamur di musim hujan" (mushroom in rainy season). It only existed for very short time. In the mind of Indonesian public today, such conflicts only take shape in its generality: writings on detailed experiences of the people victimised by those conflicts-driven violence are hardly recognized. Perhaps, people have begun to be sceptical as many efforts have been done to find remedies for such atrocities yet attainments are far from reaching just ends. Or in Melani Budianta's argument, she writes, "In the immediate aftermath of the rows of violence in Indonesia in the last decade of the 20th century, many poets, artis and writers felt they have been stunned to silence. No words or image can give form to the shock, sorrow, anger, confusion, or disbelief at the scale of atrocity that human being can affect to one another."⁶ Melani Budianta believes that it is the massive scale of violence that has taken shape noticeably silencing its portraits. She arguably poses rightfulness in a sense that the very act of representation of violence is few but not automatically inexistent. Certainly there are some writers who consistently picture those turmoils, and one of them is Helvy Tiana Rosa who dares to break up such silence.

Helvy Tiana Rosa and Her Works

Helvy can be regarded as a prolific short story writer and essayist whose works are laddened with the portrayals of violence against women in conflict areas. She has produced more than 200 short stories and numerous essays: some of them have been translated into English. She is now the chair of Forum Lingkar Pena (FLP, pen circle forum), a literary organization founded in 1997 whose current members accounts for more than 5000 individuals spreading around 120 cities in Indonesia and overseas such as Hong Kong and Cairo. Possibly the only one in Indonesia, this organization means to support, guide and train its members to be writers. To date FLP through its own publishing house Lingkar Pena Publishing House has published at least 300 books written by its members.

⁴ Melani Budianta, Ph.D., 'Beyond Tears and Anger: Representations of Violence Against Women (a Reflección)', *Kultur The Indonesian Journal for Muslim Cultures*, Volume 2, Number 2, 2002, p. 56.

⁵ 'Conflict areas' (daerah konflik) is the term referring to regions across Indonesia laddened with numerous conflicts ranging from inter-ethnic, interfaith, inter-ideology conflicts etc. Regions such as Sampit, Poso, Ambon, Aceh, Papua are most notable conflict areas. It is indeed problematic to typify which of certain conflicts experienced by people in those regions. In many cases those conflicts are overlapped and their *causa prima* must be looked from various perspectives.

⁶ Melani Budianta, 'Beyond Tears and Anger,' p. 47.

Helvy is now a lecturer at Jakarta State University teaching Indonesian literature. Very recently she was enlisted as one of 500 influential Muslims in the world according to Royal Islamic Studies Centre, Jordan (2009, 2010, 2011). Often regarded as the pioneer to the emergence of contemporary Islamic literature in Indonesia, Helvy is also noted famously for problematizing human rights issues that victimizing women and children in conflict areas throughout Indonesia and many parts of the world. Her recent publication includes *Bukavu* (LPPH, 2008), *Tanah Perempuan* (Lapena, 2009) *Ketika Mas Gagah Pergi... dan Kembali* (ANPH, 2011), *Mata Ketiga Cinta* (ANPH, 2012). She is also recipient of numerous awards including nominee of Khatulistiwa Literary Award (2008), Nova Award (2004), Ummi Award (2004), IBF Award from IKAPI (2006), Sastra Era Muslim Award (2006), Kartini Award as one of *The Most Inspiring Women in Indonesia* (2009), SheCAN! Award (2009). She was also a member of Jakarta Art Council (2003-2006), Majelis Sastra Asia Tenggara (since 2006), Vice President of World Islamic Literature League for Indonesia (since 2009), a member of Arts and Cultural Development Commission of Indonesia Ulama Council (since 2011).⁷

Claimed to promote Indonesian Islamic literature, Helvy believes that her writings aim to enlighten its readers on the discourse of truth and love: love to God and all humans. Admitting that her definition is too wide, she then adds that the morals of such writings must be justifiable within the parameters of Islamic faith. Helvy assures that her writings carry a mission, which is to “enlighten” her readers. Islam and aesthetics are two entwined ingredients embodied in her narratives. Aesthetics is the medium through which “truth” is presented. Her narratives are not limited to only serving Islamic ideals but also universal ideals as Islamic values carry universality in their practices. Helvy also claims that her narratives are her ways to act in response against any injustice and discrimination experienced by the oppressed men and women. Helvy’s short stories are fictional in its nature but her pen is a powerful means to react against these injustices since writing her war stories she always equips herself with researches in providing vivid illustrations and accurate local colours.⁸ She creates what often called as “resistance literature.” Her portrayals of those resisting of any discrimination, oppression or domination are her ways of communicating the injustices that these Muslim communities have suffered. Through her writings, she creates a counter discourse since this distorted information from the media often providing biases in the portrayals of these people’s struggles. In so doing, she seeks different endings than that of distorted portrayals, as her endings are “already implicit, contained within the narrative analysis and construction of the conditions and the problematic of the historical situation itself.”⁹ Helvy offers different insights and analysis of the circumstances of repression and domination by erecting symbolical foundations of her own. Her foundation is irrefutably her single most important consideration: the construction of Islam as a liberating agent which is powerfully embraced by her and her fictional characters.

⁷ ‘Tentang Helvy Tiana Rosa, www.helvytianarosa.net. Access date, 10 May 2013.

⁸ ‘Helvy Tiana Rosa,’ in *Profil Perempuan Pengarang Peneliti Penerbit di Indonesia* (profile of female writers and researchers), Korrie Layun Rampan, Titiek WS., Matheus Elanda Rosi Ds. (eds), Jakarta : Kelompok Cinta Baca, 2000. p. 156 – 157.

⁹ Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, Methuen, New York and London, 1987, p. 79.

The significance of Islam is continually reverberated in Helvy's stories. Believing that Islamic ideals constantly attempt to build justice and equality, so do her narratives. Nevertheless, saying that she wants to bring a social change is too idealistic, her missionary ideal is that through her writings, at least one individual is enlightened, meaning that after reading her works a reader will endeavour to have a better condition, or at least desires a better state. The maxim of her writings is implied in her website addressed at www.helvytianarosa.net stating that she wants to reach a better state in every breath she takes, in every communication she makes, in every work she produces for writing is the channel communicating her ideas.

Women and War in Helvy's stories

To borrow the conception by *Jurnal Perempuan*, which exclusively covers its edition for women in conflict areas entitled *Perempuan di wilayah Konflik*¹⁰ (women in conflict areas) and *Perempuan dan Pemulihan Konflik*¹¹ (women and conflict recovery), war is the ultimate result of conflicts.¹² Helvy and her war stories may well function as representations of the unsilenced aspirations and local struggles. Through her war stories she raises several lines of questions central to the construction of self-reflexivity viewed from the female own experiences about the forms of status and power which victimise female eroded subjectivity. How women perceive violence and how they challenge violence and their victimisation are some of powerful points that Helvy addresses in her stories. Though her stories might be classified as fictional they represent how women may capture their resistance to violence and most importantly how her female characters demonstrate their configurations of potency to challenge power and violence – as violence is the most common mean to power.

Armed Conflicts, State Violence and Women

Through her short story *Jaring Jaring Merah*¹³ (the red net), the author scrupulously depicts atrocities occurred in Aceh, the northern part of Sumatra. Aceh, whose inhabitants are predominantly Muslims is perhaps the most known conflicted region in Indonesia. This area in post-independent Indonesia - currently called Nangroe Aceh Darussalam (NAD, Aceh the state of peace/ Islam) as the Islamic *sharia* is implemented as the provincial law – has long history of conflicts socially and politically. As early as 1945 conflicts of class had divided the Acehnese between the monarch and other social-political groups, which many believed had altered the social structures of the Acehnese, followed by 1950s DI/TII's rebellion, Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia, a separatist group that rebelled against the government of Indonesia in its attempt to establish a separate state implementing only Islamic law. In 1966, like most parts of Indonesia, this region was also swept by G30S/PKI rebellion where

¹⁰ *Perempuan di Wilayah Konflik, Jurnal Perempuan*, No. 24, 2002

¹¹ *Perempuan Dan Pemulihan Konflik, Jurnal Perempuan* No. 33, 2004.

¹² Rosnani Sahardin, 'Sudahkan Status Perempuan Itu Berubah? (has the women's status changed), *Jurnal Perempuan*, No. 24, p. 7.

¹³ Helvy Tiana Rosa, 'Jaring-Jaring Merah,' *Lelaki Kabut dan Boneka (Dolls and the Man of Mist) Kumpulan Cerpen Pilihan Dwi-bahasa, Asy Syamil, Bandung, 2002*. This short story collection was written in Indonesian and its English translation. Except for the titles, the quotes taken from this collection are from its English translation.

civilian forces backed up the army and military apparatuses were in conflict with those accused to be communists. In 1976 Hasan Tiro was to announce the establishment of a new state, independent out of Indonesia, called Negara Aceh Merdeka or popularly known to be GAM (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*, Free Aceh Movement) with its military backing. The latter rebellion was dealt with the Soeharto's government repressively. Stigmatised as subversive crime against the authority of Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia (NKRI, the united nation of the republic of Indonesia), the government applied DOM (Daerah Operasi Militer, military operation zone) in Aceh in 1989 until 1998.¹⁴ As DOM, Aceh became the killing ground for government military operation. Oppressive military rule was operated, and armed forces were the only authority justified by the government. The worst was that the implementation of DOM was closed from public eye, only its dismissal was declared publicly. Soon after the fall of Soeharto's rezim, public were made aware of the atrocities in Aceh during the DOM implementation. Helvy's *Jaring-jaring Merah*, acclaimed by the literary magazine *Horison* as one of the best stories in a decade, is a written portraiture of brutality during the DOM implementation in Aceh.

The story is centralised in the character of Inong, a girl turned into insanity after witnessing her whole family brutalised and murdered by the army. Inong's father, Zakaria was accused to be a member of GAM. His defense that he was just a *muadzin* (one who calls for prayers) was useless, the army simply murdered him and his family (his wife and her two sons) and raped Inong under his eyes before finally shot him. His house and some others were burnt and neighbours who attempted to help Zakaria and his family were either beaten to death or silenced. The traumatic violation that Inong experienced led her to her mental illness. Despite of her own claim to insanity, Inong was still capable of recognising her mental state:

A long time ago, after my family were slaughtered and I was violated by several men, I felt like I had succumbed into a deep muddy pit. I tried with all I might to pull myself bit, reaching to the surface. But the pit had no boundaries. I couldn't lift myself up, nor even touch anything, except all things that were bitter. I ate and drank anguish each day. Until I met Cut Dini and became a bird. Everything seemed lighter.¹⁵

As a casualty of war, Inong's ability to cope with violence done against her is her self-identification that she was a bird. Bird metaphorically signifies freedom as with its wings it could go free from any imprisonment. Inong labelled her situation as a *jaring* (net) which she terribly dreamt of escaping. By becoming a bird she soon would be set free. Inong's resistance of violence is clearly defined. Her lunatic pretence is her way to escape from the traumatic violence. Having only Cut Dini who was her caretaker as her friend, every one else in her neighbourhood abandoned her for the fear of more abuse by the army if found in helping her.

Rape is perhaps a common violence against women in war times. Woman's body becomes site of oppression and signifier of male possession and power over woman. Furthermore, with the conception of *aurat* (body parts need covering) for Muslims, rape is considered not only a violation against material body it is also an attack to a religious belief. The uncovering of female *aurat* by force signifies a violation against

¹⁴ Rosnani Sahardin, 'Sudahkan Status Perempuan Itu Berubah?', p. 10 - 11.

¹⁵ Helvy, 'The Red Net,' p. 100.

religious identity. The body politics in the rape of Inong dramatically exposes the intimate relationship between female personal body to the body politics of women's writings. Through this story, Helvy writes the history of subjected and violated body. Inong's body functions simultaneously as a personal and political, psychological and ideological boundary of meaning, a contested border of self-possession and of transgression through which her subjectivity is subdued yet able to challenge her oppressors through psychological pretension. The problematic of body-possession is central in this story. Violence and brutality that Inong experiences, particularly in relation to her body implicates the metaphorisation of social meanings over the material body. While she finds that her body is subjected and violated, she can find ways to resist the kind of body pressed upon her through the body politic: by becoming a bird, a bodyless female. Bird, besides its ability to fly, to escape, it also signs of no social identification to the human society. It is not one culturally charged and classified body, not it can it be identified to certain kind of sexed human body. Being a bird, leaving her body behind, Inong manages to survive and this experience of homelessness of her body becomes her potential resistance to violence. Homelessness of the body, however, may become a backlash for female resistance as having no material body, a woman is left out of her self-agency, of woman's body woman's right. In Inong's case, her body is marginalised with her rape, yet with her bodyless self-identification she is able to engage in a process of critical self-consciousness through which she comes to her awareness of the relationship between her personal material body to the cultural meanings assigned to her gendered body in the body politics.

Through the voice of Cut Dini, an NGO activist who looks after Inong, the author calls upon institutionalised violence, the state violence that is the primary cause of brutality which Inong and others like her have experienced. Although the angelic illustration of Cut Dini is larger than life: she is too good to be true, her voicing up the atrocities in Aceh during DOM period is based on historical truth. When she was approached by post-Soeharto's military officers to sign an agreement preventing her to speak to strangers about the brutality Inong had to suffer, she refused and said:

No! How about the rapes and tortures all this time, the slaughters at *rumoh geudong*, the scattered corpses at *Buket Tangkurak*, *Jembatan Kuning*, *Sungai Tamiang*, *Cot Panglima*, *Hutan Krueng Campli* . . . and other places!" Cut Dini raised her voice. "And the village of three thousand widows, the neglected orphans . . . that heartless! No!"¹⁶

Dini's refusal to the silencing of the cruelty of the government military oppression signifies female's struggle to recapture female story and become an agent of provocateur infiltrating her voice inside the documented nation's history. She assassinates the authoritative repression to silence stories of violence and violation. She also calls upon the extreme state violence against its citizens, particularly against women and children when she brought about the existence of 3000 widows and the neglected orphans. Women and children are generally those paying the expenses of war. As many men accused in support of GAM were mass murdered, only women and children left with no care and social security. The state simply abandoned them, leaving behind its responsibilities. Many of these victims took refugee in more secured places yet these IDPs found another victimisation in refugee camps, as many

¹⁶ Helvy, 'The Red Net,' p. 102.

camps are usually in poor conditions with lack of food, clean water, health care, sanitary facilities and other social services.¹⁷

Similar stories take place in other conflict areas such as in Poso, Ambon, and Sambas. Armed conflicts and wars result in only victimisation. As victims, women and children who are mostly located outside the political centre are the most affected. Tabrani Yunus argues that indeed it is the “patriarchal civilisation” that causes such conflicts as conflicts are usually preceded by ideological or political disputes. Only men are involved in the decision making of war or peace and women are simply left out, yet the most victimised are women and children, particularly those from grass root level with no ideological or political interests.¹⁸ Julius Lawalata adds further that differences in religion, educational level, social status, culture and language do not contribute significantly to conditions and effects of armed conflicts to women. Any armed conflict or any war will bring about similar violence to women: economic violence, health violence, and social violence. Economic violence he means when the death of their husbands leave women as single mothers working double burdens to support the family as the state fails to provide enough economical support, health violence occurs when they risk their life with poor conditions of the refugee camps, while social violence gives women no room for privacy as living in poor camps where no separation between private and public they are risky of sexual harassment.¹⁹ Again, kinds of violence that Lawalatta elucidates are other forms of state violence as the state fails to provide security and stability socially and politically. Another interesting point raised by Lawalatta is the rise of abandoned pregnant women in conflict areas. Military officers – mostly men - who are stationed to help securing the areas often involve in love relationship with the local women, and when their duty are over, many of them abandon these women and leaving them in their pregnancy.²⁰

Exile versus Home

Poso in the island of Sulawesi and Ambon in Molucca are regions in Indonesia experiencing similar conflicts: the so-called religious conflicts between Muslims and Christians. Helvi's another story portraying such conflicts is entitled *Sebab Aku Angin Sebab Aku Cinta* (Because I am Wind Because I am Love). The story is set in Ambon, and the narrator is the wind, retelling a story about a girl's struggles to keep her theological identity despite injustices and brutality that are forced upon her. The narrator, presumably the voice of the author,²¹ articulates her personal views on acts of inhumanity that war never ceases to produce. The narrative centralises the female protagonist named Nona or often called by the narrator as Cinta (love). Nona is a title addressed for a young girl, typical for the Ambonese. *Darahitam*, another Helvy's

¹⁷ Julius Lawalata, 'Fakta Tak Terlihat Posisi Perempuan Dalam Konflik Sosial Maluku,' (unseen facts of women's position in social conflicts in Molucca, *Jurnal Perempuan* No. 33, 2004, p. 10 – 13. His study shows that around 75% of the victims in Moluccan conflicts are women, and similar to other conflict areas.

¹⁸ Tabrani Yunus, 'Petaka Bagi Perempuan: Pemahaman Baru Konflik Politik Bersenjata di Aceh,' (disaster for women: new understanding off armed conflicts in Aceh) quoted in Julius Lawalata, p. 13.

¹⁹ Julius Lawalata, p. 11 – 12.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.13.

²¹ In an Interview with Helvy Tiana Rosa, in June 4, 2004 at Universitas Indonesia, Jakarta, she said that she pretty much wanted to exist in her stories. Her stories would mostly have women as main characters; a story about women by a woman.

short story, like the story of Nona, also captures the story of unnamed girl. The anonymity for the protagonist seems to aim raising generality of the experience. Any girl of any social categorisation might become another Nona or another nameless Dayak girl. Nona is not an exclusive to Ambonese Muslim so is the Dayak girl. They are representations of many nameless girls or women across archipelago who are victimised by forces external to them, violated due to their gender and have to struggle to maintain their identity. In *Sebab Aku Angin Sebab Aku Cinta*, the narrator recalls the occasion when Nona and many Muslims were massacred during their prayer in Eid El Fitri. The most celebrated day in Muslim calendar was simply turned into a tragedy. Nona and many Muslims witnessed how their family, neighbours and other Muslim fellows were killed: just like her father who was beheaded in front of her; her mother stoned to death; and her baby brother thrown into a burning building. Since that massacre many Muslims were driven away from the city of Ambon. Thousands became IDPs. This story is Helvy's fictional representation of the incident in 19 January 1999 when the so-called religious conflicts between the Muslims and non-Muslims (Christians) began to sparkle. What triggered the conflicts remained unclear, many believed what began as criminal issue easily escalated as religious conflicts and what was left after the incident followed by another incidents was extremely expensive social cost.²²

Exile is archetypal for people in conflict areas. Exile or IDPs becomes a major phenomenon in war stories. The allegory of woman as a historical metaphor signifying woman as mother/earth/country/homeland appropriates woman as signifier of communal identity. The relationship between place and identity is strongly embodied in the gendered nature of such allegory which posits woman as bound by communal identity. Exile is forced upon majority of women and children in conflict areas thus implicates failure to establish a community that is capable of collective action, a community without community as land is no longer available signifier of identity. For many women, losing their land –losing identity- means also the collapse of female agency as land becomes a seminal entity in inscribing identity. Land, like religion, in the story of Nona revolves primarily around female identity. Resistance to exile functions as a way of complex strategies to reinforce identity. When Nona was forced to exile thus leaving her motherland, and to take off her *jilbab* (veil) thus relinquishing her religious identity in order to secure her safety, she persistently defied such evocation. Rather, she chose to confront her assailants. She had decided to define her own agency, her own *jihad*: "I will never leave. . . . All I have now is Allah and this land. I have to defend the truth."²³ Claiming her love to the land and her avowal to remain in her homeland, she creates a story of struggles in order to defend her rights of freedom in keeping her religiosity and homeland, re-negotiating her role within narratives of struggles against oppressive discursive practices.

Regardless their religion, ethnicity of ideological creed, there are those who do not take side amongst the opposing sides, yet are victimised because of their refusal to choose a certain side. In the battle between the oppressor and the oppressed, the ultimate victims are those innocent. Helvy's story *Darahitam* embodies the victimisation of the innocent. Any conflict requires its cost, and the major cost will be paid by both opposing sides and the innocent. Without taking any side, Helvy through

²² Julius Lawalata, Fakta Tak Terlihat, *Jurnal Perempuan*, p.10.

²³ Helvy, 'Because I am Wind Because I am Love.' *Lelaki Kabut dan Boneka*, p. 142 – 143.

this story suggests that war all sides are the losers, no side wins over the other: that is perhaps the message Helvy likes the readers to grasp, everyone is victim and only violence survives. The story captures the experience of a nameless girl of Dayak ethnic whose father was murdered by a Madurese, the migrant ethnic. She was the only survivor of the family. This story took place in Sambas, in the heart of Kalimantan, where ethnic conflicts between the indigenous Malay Sambas (often called the Dayaks) and the migrant Madurese -mostly Muslims - reached its peak in 1999 – 2000, resulting in the displacement of the Madurese from the region. This nameless girl was in hatred to the Madurese for murdering her family yet when her neighbour a drunken-indigenous Malay named Nerang attempted to rape her, and it was her Madurese neighbour named Alawy, a Muslim living just across her house and opened an orphanage for children regardless their ethnicity or religion, who saved her from the rape attempt. She was saved by the very person from the ethnic group she hated. It was her, again, who witnessed his beheading²⁴ by Nerang, and again, it was her who heard Alawy's last confession about how the conflicts generate more complicated problems:

It's true that I'm of Madurese decent, but I was born in Palangkaraya. I've never been to Madura . . . My parents have lived there for many years. Oh yes, my name is Alawy. What's yours?²⁵

Alawy brings into account the complicated definition of "home." Ethnically Alawy is a Madurese, but his home is Sambas. Alawy's case shows the ambivalence of migrant identity. What is "home"? Is it defined in terms of race, ethnic, culture or geological location? Is it constructed by genealogy or geographically or is it culturally defined? Through the figure of Alawy, Helvy presents the sense of problematic migrant identity that manifests itself through a semiotic bonding of self and place. Alawy's grounding of identity is not formed under his ethnic per se but his "earth" also contributes to a presence of a notion of identity that resists being subsumed under merely ethnic labelling. Alawy could be an example of migrant identity that is often inevitably hybrid. Hence, the author introduces the hybridity of cultural practices between the Madurese and the Dayaks. Aware that migrant identity walks uneasy lines between the adopted and the genealogical practices, she is concerned with articulating that in-betweenness rather than attempting to dogmatically assert any sense of ethnical purity. There is always uneasy way of establishing identity through ethnicity alone.

The shock of witnessing the killing of her family by the Madurese and the murder of Alawy by Nerang subverts the girl's hatred to this so-called ethnic conflicts. Ethnic difference and religious difference indeed are not major source of conflicts, what most likely the primary cause is the failure to understand and tolerate such differences. At the end, she decided to take a new road "the road that was once laid down by the man in his indifference. The road of most love, the road that doesn't discriminate anyone's blood."²⁶ Alawy, despite his genuine nature of religious piety and *amr ma'ruf nahy munkar* (enjoying good and forbidding evil acts) is not exempted to be victimised by the violence of war. His innocence does not allow him to radically escape from death. Witnessing Alawy's tragic death and knowing his devotion in love and non-violence,

²⁴ Beheading or *mangayau* is a common way for the Dayaks to kill someone.

²⁵ Helvy, *Darahitam*, p. 120.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 121. The Dayaks believe that they identify the Madurese and any other ethnics from the smell of their blood. This perhaps is hard to explain from non-Dayak origins. But

she then takes him as her role model. Alawy's ability to remain indifferent of these differences had her realised that violence must stop for attacking violence with violence, revenging hatred with hatred will not stop the cycle of violence and victimisation. In the narrative, the conflicts between the Dayaks and the Madurese are never resolved, although in reality all the Madurese were driven out of Sambas, they were no longer welcome by the Dayak to re-live in Sambas. The conflicts in Sambas have been suppressed in recent years still the conflict seedlings are existent and problems of relocation are yet to be resolved.²⁷ The story ends without clearly giving us a solution to the basic problem of the conflicts. The war brings only death, despair, anger, revenge, hatred, and sorrow. Nevertheless, through the female protagonist, the writer celebrates an alternative to reconstruct plural community based on justice and equality: the road with no discrimination. She continues Alawy's heritage, looking for alternatives of non-violent action struggles, standing up for involvement in causes to help the oppressed and the disposed such as the children that Alawy housed in his orphanage. Her real awareness and sensitivity that war results only in victimisation leads her to become socially committed to peace and to the fate of the poor, the disposed and the oppressed in general, and active for change in her personal life. This Dayak girl is then creating a non-violent act breaking the cycle of violence. In so doing, she recreates a representation of anti-violence that perpetuates the culture of non-violence.

With this story also, the author challenges any attempt to categorize ethnic-religious conflicts as monolithic: simple homogenisation that different ethnics or religions are necessarily the cause of these conflicts. Helvy's representations of this nameless Dayak girl and Alawy illustrate this failure of homogenisation. In any ethnicity, religion, class, or any group, conflicts are likely coloured by personal interests which is undeniably central yet very subtle as ethnic/religious/ideological differences are then used to envelop and mask these vested personal interests. Ethnic, religious and ideological values are, to a certain degree certainly dissimilar, yet personal and communal relations between members of different groups are not always shaped by such differences. Labelling a person simply from her/his ethnicity or religion is dangerous and problematic. Any classification is risky for discrimination. In the case of the Dayak versus the Madurese, the problems become complicated when homogenised labelling is applied. Alawy, for example, is of Madurese descent, yet culturally he is Dayak although religiously he is Muslim, not *helu* (the earliest religion of the Dayak Ngaju).²⁸ His confession brings into question the problematic of identity, be it in terms of ethnicity, religion or ideology. Identity is not monolithic; univocal system determined only through structures within that system. It is an opening often fragmented, channelling a possibility of a multi-vocal construction of personal and communal identity.

The story of Ze in *Ze* is Helvy's another portrayal of conflict problems that produces similar representation to *Darahitam*. Ze's genuine love for East Timor caught him between those who support integration (East Timor as part of Indonesia) and those in their defense for independence. This story captures the chaos in East Timor pre-

²⁷ Mita Noveria and Haning Romdiati, 'Kehidupan Pada Masa Pemulihan: Kasus Perempuan Korban Kerusuhan Sambas di Kabupaten Pontianak,' *Jurnal Perempuan*, No. 33, p. 39.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 117 and 121.

referendum.²⁹ Ze is a native Timorese boy who became a martyr as he refused to leave the land. He, like many Timorese was disappointed with Indonesian government handling problems in East Timor. Yet, when he was confronted to choose between “pro-integration” or “pro-independence” side he refused to take any side, for Ze neither side should forget their differences and concentrate only for the progress of the land. He wanted only justice and peace and not disintegration and chaos.³⁰ He was in deep concerned with those who were “pro-integration” as they were all forced to exile from the land. For him, exile was not a freedom; it was an enforcement to detach one from one’s identity. In his opinion, those who did not support its independence deserved to live in the land, they should not be forced to exile from their homeland. Perhaps, the land was to be separated into two, as the referendum results showed, that 30% for the “pro-integration” and 70% “pro-independence.” His love to the land was to be paid with his death. In his efforts to send his message to the United Nation Secretary General Koffi Annan he was mistakenly identified as a militiaman and shot to death. Ze became a martyr in his way to articulate his “truth” and “justice.”

Ze and Alawy are few of those innocent, like millions of IDPs who are forced to exile from their homeland. Like Alawy, in Ze’s views, roots are a search of identity, self and place are intertwined in shaping one’s identity and exile is a terrible fate. Their innocence is simply sacrificed in such a situation where violence rules. The nameless Dayak girl and Inong join many others in conflict areas in such a system where women are dominated, violated, abused, beaten, raped, led to suicide, killed or victimised by men who are themselves manipulated by power. It is vicious circle of power struggles in which women are the ultimate victims.

War in the Global World

Physical spaces, geographic locations, homelands are key indicators of the divergent articulations of *cinta tanah air* (literary means loving the homeland, patriotism) that Indonesian women writers are producing. Patriotism is not exclusive practices to male. A girl, like Nona, has transgressed this commonly associated male territory and transformed it into hers. In Helvy’s hand, Nona’s story is also taken beyond regional boundary. As Nona parallels her *Jihad* to those of other Muslims across the world such as in Bosnia, Palestine, Kashmir, Kosovo, Myanmar, Azerbaijan, Chechnya, Algeria and other regions where Muslims are targets of ethnic/religious cleansing,³¹ the author undeniably moves her national agendas to global ones. Her stories entitled *Maut di Kamp Loka* (Death in Loka Camp), *Bait-bait Aku, Ayah dan Dudayev* (The Stanzas of Mine, Father and Dudayev), *Je Ne Te Quite Jamais, Palestine*³² (I will never leave you, Palestine) all include similar underlining: brutality and injustices that Muslims have to suffer. In these stories, Helvy attempts to address the notion of

²⁹ B.J. Habibie, the third President of Indonesia allowed the people of East Timor to conduct the Referendum on 30 Agustus 1999 under the protection of the United Nation and its military operation. The result showed that more than 78% of East Timorese chose their independence. After the referendum, East Timor was in chaos where thousands of people were massacred and many buildings were destroyed. It is said that this mayhem was caused by Indonesian military forces and its militians. More than 4000 Timorese were forced to refuge in West Timor.

³⁰ Helvy, Ze, in *Lelaki Kabut dan Boneka*, p. 178.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

³² All these stories are collected *Ketika Mas Gagah Pergi*, Asy Syaamil, Bandung, 2000.

patriotism through her female protagonist. If *jihād* is commonly exclusive to masculinity, through the *jihād* of her female characters, the author posits the struggles for national identity within the boundary of female narratives. Lizetta, a Bosnian Muslim in *Maut di Kamp Loka* shows her last struggle against the Serbians who were about to kill all Bosnians in Loka Camp. Before she was run by a military tank, Lizetta helped her fellow Muslims in the camp to revolt against their Serbian oppressors. Her martyrdom is religiously and patriotically justified as she believes that to die in strong faith, defending her religious and nationalistic identity is part of Muslim responsibility. She said that to fight in the path of God and to die for it would satisfy Muslims' yearning to meet their Creator. In her agenda, death was not to be afraid of for death could be one of many means to reach God.³³

Similar to Lizetta, Zahwa in *Je Ne Te Quite Jamais, Palestine* carries out the same duty. Her duty as the daughter of her country calls even stronger when she visited Palestine after ten years of exile in Paris. Coming from a rich family, Zahwa followed her parents to live in Paris when Israel began to invade Palestine. Her longing to see her homeland brought her back to Palestine. In Gaza, she met Sarah, a mother of three children whose husband was killed by the Israeli soldiers. Suspected to be connected to Hamas, Sarah was shot to death in front of Zahwa and the children. Zahwa was left untouched by the Israelis knowing that she was the daughter of Kareem Abror, a Palestinian political elite. Like all Helvy's characters, Zahwa too becomes a witness in atrocities presented in the narrative, and from this witnessing Zahwa decided to leave her luxurious life in Paris to join Hamas in Palestine despite her father's disapproval. For this political sciences student, Hamas was the only way she could manifest her patriotism. First believing that Hamas was a radical organisation, later Zahwa understood Hamas's use of *intifadhah*: war is used to destroy the oppression of the Israeli invasion. Zahwa traded her luxury with patriotism, risking her life to join those, who in her conviction, were those refusing to sell their land for anything.³⁴

Lizetta's and Zahwa's resistance to oppression is also joined by Vakha Bolshov in *Bait-bait Aku, Ayah dan Dudayev*. This story depicts the struggles of Chechnya against the Russian aggression. Together with General Dudayev, Vakha followed her father military calling, became a famous female commander for her bravery and courageous patriotism. In the end of the story, she lost people she loved and admired most, her father and General Dudayev. In re-living Dudayev in her memory, she modelled after his strong belief that in faith alone rest the strongest power, and that the future belongs to only those in faith.³⁵

In those stories, Helvy portrays her woman protagonist as victims of wars, however they are not simply silenced victims. They are able to show their resistance even if it means they need to give up their life or pleasure. Their *jihād* implicates an extension of gendered actions: their physical involvement in war allows them to find resistance which they can perform in their capabilities. Their reaction of war and violence are in many ways substantiated with their belief that going to war, especially when it is done for the "right" cause is dignified. War must be exercised when all of them fall as its causalities. Their efforts to make sense of war are by re-inforcing another war that

³³ Helvy, *Maut di Kamp Loka*, p. 52.

³⁴ Helvy, *Je Ne Te Quite Jamais, Palestine*, p. 121.

³⁵ Helvy, *Bait-bait Aku, Ayah dan Dudayev*, p. 96.

they participate. Through it, they reach certain autonomy. However, it is interesting to see that their participation to war is affected after they witness violence forced upon them. Violence becomes a channel for revenge and defence, and never the cause. In this war stories Helvy shows that indeed woman, like men are capable of submission to violence and cruelty. She demystifies the notion of female physical weakness and submissiveness. Female engagement in war also signifies female resistance into the narrative of patriotism and nationalism. Helvy's having her major female characters joining violence with their participation in war, hoping to be no longer its victims could be explained. Joining war may be a way of proving autonomy. Through war, women attain their autonomy and freedom, but such freedom and autonomy are not stood upon solid ground. Violence is fought back with violence, pain is attacked pain, authority is challenged with authority, power is confronted with power. When seeking liberation through war, it means that liberation is achieved only through death rather than life, and the result is merely death. When war is used to destroy aggression, war begets more war and violence produces another violence and the ultimate result is victimisation and destruction. Seemingly in most of Helvy's stories, on one hand she champions war as a liberating agent for female characters, on the other hand her stories also show a dreadful face of war and conflicts. She constantly warns the readers that war and violence are at greatest risk to be exploited in the name of religion and ethnic supremacy and that warfare and violent acts are often legitimated to be authoritative means for action of vengeance.

Indeed, Helvy draws Muslims from various standpoints. However, her most depicted character is female characters facing problems in sustaining their religious identity, especially in the conflict areas. Her war stories are narratives of women of the resistance whom she relocates them from the contexts of their historic struggles to fiction. In so doing, she exhibits aspects of their lives linked to the affairs of the world that are influential to their struggles. The women's empowerment in her fiction even goes to a higher level as it transgresses the male domain. The story of female *jihad* is a vivid example for this. The notion of *jihad*, in Helvy's reading comes in various meanings from an actual participation in war to a more-subtle emotional struggle such as maintaining one's religious identity, but basically any struggle against any injustice, subjugation and domination is the very notion of *jihad* itself. Within such perspective her role as an author telling the narratives of struggle is her own *jihad*.

The portrayal of women's *jihad* is an impulse toward a new reading of *jihad*. *Jihad* is commonly regarded as men's action in public sphere. In Helvy's narratives, women including young girls nevertheless undertake this so-called men's property. In doing so these women and girls destabilize and challenge this prevailing tradition. Contrary to the conventional figuration that women only signal their domesticity, Helvy presents her heroines as active individuals whose responses are redeemable in challenges the traditional gender role. She also undermines the corporate ideal of true woman as weak, meek and emotionally ruled. But more directly, she unmask the ideology of true womanhood in their domestic roles by presenting women who collude in their fully participation of social and public affairs. This also shows her response to the strong bondage of Muslim community (*ukhuwah islamiyah*, Muslim unity). For that reason she creates a world supportive to Muslim women's struggles, a world of strong Muslim relationship, which demystifies the conventions of sentimental fiction that women's stories are often identified. Helvy's war stories blatantly expose the casualty, terror and violence of war. She rewrites the fiction of

war as the fiction of public as opposed to the fiction of domesticity by calling direct political action and intervention that her heroines conduct. Of more effect are the celebration of self empowerment and the assertion of an alternative moral vision that challenges the simplistic notions of morality associated with true womanhood such as female passivity and physical weakness. For these reasons, through her narratives Helvy might be calling for a new definition of female morality grounded in the heroines' experiences in maintaining their religious conviction. Such a notion of morality would not be founded solely upon woman's physic and biological order but on more complicated contextual grounds. Thus Helvy uses her narratives as women's documentation to effect narratives that free women from the confinement of only private sphere, and indeed to rewrite the history of morality that women have founded since the beginning of their creation.

Through her stories too, the author provides the many notions of *jihad* that Muslims have contested throughout the ages. *Jihad* is a multifashionly-defined term required to be located in its complexity of backgrounds. The following quote from Esposito might capture broad notions of *jihad* ranging from nonviolent to violent acts:

Jihad as struggle pertains to the difficulty and complexity of living a good life: struggling against the evil in one self in order to be virtuous and moral, making a serious effort to do good works and to help reform society. Depending on the circumstances in which one lives, it can also mean fighting injustice and oppression, spreading and defending Islam, and creating a just society through preaching, teaching and, if necessary, armed struggle or holy war. The two meanings of jihad, nonviolent and violent, are contrasted in a well-known prophetic tradition. . . . The greater jihad is the more difficult and more important struggle against one's ego, selfishness, greed, and evil.³⁶

Esposito explains further that the multidefinitions that *jihad* has associated with situates such a term in the centrality of the Muslim's identity. Through *jihad*, Helvy identifies her characters as those engaging both nonviolent and violent struggle. The nameless girl in *Darahitam* achieves her triumph through understanding and philanthropical act while other girls like Vakha of Chechnya and Zahwa of Palestine choose to take their path in violence by joining armed struggles. Different reasons and social contexts have provided multi meanings of *jihad* and the ways Muslim make sense of it. However, within any circumstance, *jihad* as violent struggle brings only destruction and victimisation which are indeed the very reason *jihad* comes into existence: a counter struggle against one's greed and ego to destroy and victimise others. *Jihad* is proposed to preserve life, not death and not to bring it to destruction.

In the age of terror today, especially when religion is often coopted as the scape goat, Helvy's portrayals of war and conflicts may well serve as a reminder of the pain that war only causes. Like her message articulated in *Darahitam*, through her stories, all of us are challenged to move beyond stereotypes and differences in terms of ethnics or religions, historical grievances and societal revulsions in order to recognize our shared values and interests and to build common future which is just and more humane.

³⁶ John L. Esposito, *Unholy War Terror in the Name of Islam*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, p. 27 – 28.

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Women, War and Conflicts Indonesian Fiction: Muslim Women's Struggles for Religious Identity in Indonesia

In the literary era today, where identity is manifested in narratives, looking at written narratives in literary works, one can see through the formation and construction of identity in the making, and religion is one of many contributing factors of identity. Thus, this paper attempts to look at how women, in particular Muslim women, are represented in the narratives written by one of prominent Muslim women writers in contemporary Indonesian literature, Helvy Tiana Rosa or simply called Helvy, in order to see the making of religious identity in Indonesia. Helvy's stories often express how Muslim women are targeted and affected by religious conflicts that recently were and, in some cases, still are taking place in some regions in Indonesia. Helvy claims that her narratives are her ways to act in response against any injustice and discrimination experienced by the oppressed men and women: her narratives are her ways of portraying women's struggles for equality in times of wars and conflicts. As a result, she explores much of these war stories in conflict areas where Muslims are repressed victims. Her short stories are fictional in its nature but her pen is a powerful means to react against these injustices since in writing her war stories she always equips herself with researches in providing vivid illustrations and accurate local colours.



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The Situation of Bangali Women in Nineteenth Century

According to social history so far, we came to know that the philosophy of women's emancipation was unknown to women as well as to men before nineteenth century. There were no information found about qualified women in old writings too. On the other hand, quite a few names of men were mentioned in the history: they were specialists, researchers and scholars but not a single name of a woman of such caliber. Maybe the time was like that in our sub-continent when power, wealth and existing values strongly dominated the society and so did to women. Hence it was very difficult to find any promising woman's name who was laid under a dark shadow.

The picture of nineteenth century was very different. Radical changes came in Bengal province through British influence in relation to very many aspects of social life. There started English medium education, young Bengal movement, eradication of "shotidaho," the introduction of Hindu widow marriage, the emergence of elite "brammo shamaj," etc had faded away the dark shadow from over the lives of women.

Now I would like to focus on the following socio-cultural aspects of women of the century:

- a) Women and family life
- b) Women and education
- c) Women and social rituals/superstitions/customs
- d) Women in brammo shamaj,
- e) Women and literature, and
- f) Women and religion

The points mentioned above would be supported by information while reading the paper.

POLITICS AND RELIGION

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Development of Religious Harmony by Civil Society in Varanasi, India

Is civil society as small community relevant in religious conflicts? Looking into Varanasi's (the holiest Hindu sacred place in India, located at the riverside of holy Ganges in the eastern Uttar Pradesh) small communities this paper asks this question. The economy of Varanasi is complicated. It is because Varanasi is the product place of famous Banaras Saree which is weaved by Muslim artisans. Basically, the weaving of Banaras Sarees were dominated by Muslim community, and also marketing of it were dominated by Hindu merchants. Relationship between merchants and artisans remain as if it were a medieval guild. Therefore, Varanasi has maintained harmony in the best interests of economy, even though religious conflicts have occurred in other cities. However, since the past 20 years, increased sales by retail chains of Sarees lead to the downfall of local merchants, and the artisans have established their own sales channels including exports. This situation has allowed the termination of previous state of religious harmony and religious conflicts and violence including terrorist blasts occurred in recent years. This paper thus analyzes the relationship of religious festivals breaking out into violent conflicts and the role of small communities where Hindus and Muslims are living together. It also finds out that on such occasions members of civil society has acted well to establish harmony of religions at their own community through prior consultation for the implementation of the festival, notice to residents to avoid conflict, and promoted cooperation with police and city office.



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Filipino Immigrants in Greece: Religious Organization and Social Inclusion

The immigrants from the Philippines constitute one of the first and most populous immigrant groups in Greece, numbering about 20,000 people. The launch of the Philippine immigration dates back to the 1970's when mostly women came to Greece for employment in hotels, hospitals and homes, mainly as domestic workers. The vast majority of them resides in the area of Athens, the capital of Greece, and has the highest paying positions, as "internal staff," among all other immigrants in Greece.

This paper attempts to link the religious profile of the Filipino migrants with their integration into the Greek society. More specifically, it examines the religious organization of the Filipinos in Greece, its role in their adaptation or integration as well as the role of gender in the relationship between religion and migration. The paper is based on the hypothesis that the Filipino immigrants, as they are mainly women and Christian, can more easily be included in the Greek society than other Asian immigrants who are mainly men and non-Christian.