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IDENTITIES IN EXILE Re-remembering Identities, Re-remembering the Nation in Laksmi Pamuntjak's *Amba*

By: [Ahmad, SN](#) (Ahmad, Siti Nuraishah)^[1]
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Abstract

Laksmi Pamuntjak's first novel, *Amba* (2012) is one of several contemporary Indonesian novels by the post-1965 generation that breaks the silence on the violent suppression of the Indonesian left in the mid-1960s. Like other recent creative responses and initiatives by Indonesian artists and civil society, *Amba* represents the "postmemory" of the 1965-66 events. This paper examines the modes of internal exile triggered by 1965 as portrayed in three characters in *Amba* and how exile disrupts and delays identity formation across different generations of Indonesians—hence, exiled identities. The history of Moluccan exile post-1950 is also crucial to the novel's representation of people whose identities were displaced, ruptured, or in limbo as a result of political violence. The depiction of internal exile in *Amba* is examined based on work done by scholars on Indonesian exile narratives (Hill, Hearman) and concepts of transgenerational trauma (Schwab) and postmemory (Hirsch). This paper then discusses the various acts of "re-remembering" to recover a coherent sense of self and of the nation depicted in *Amba*, such as through literal and figurative journeys, re-establishing kinship ties, narrating personal memories of the traumatic past, and the role of art in revealing suppressed memories of the 1965 event.

Keywords

Author Keywords: contemporary Indonesian fiction; exile in fiction; Indonesia 1965-66; Laksmi Pamuntjak; literature and memory; literature and postmemory

Author Information

Reprint Address: Ahmad, SN (reprint author)

+ Int Islamic Univ Malaysia, Dept English Language & Literature, Literature, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Addresses:

+ [1] Int Islamic Univ Malaysia, Dept English Language & Literature, Literature, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

E-mail Addresses: aishah@iium.edu.my

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