

Jakarta Flânerie:
Selected Writings of Seno Gumira Ajidarma

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Declaration of Originality

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November, 2010

Jakarta Flânerie:
Seno Gumira Ajidarma's Writing of Urban Indonesia

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Fuller', with a stylized, cursive script.

Andrew Fuller

November, 2010

Abstract

The intersection of urban life and literature is the starting point for this thesis on the writings of Seno Gumira Ajidarma. Seno has been writing since the early 1980s and is widely recognised as being one of the key figures of contemporary Indonesian literature. Throughout this thesis, Seno's works are used as the source material for an analysis of a writer's imagining of urban life in contemporary Indonesian literature. As such, this research seeks to contribute to discourses on Indonesian urban societies, Indonesian social and political cultures and contemporary Indonesian thought. I link Seno's work and studies of Indonesian urban trends with those occurring in other parts of the world. By drawing on historical, anthropological, literary and postcolonial studies of urban spaces and societies, this thesis shows the key ways in which urban spaces – particularly those of Jakarta – are imagined in the writings of Seno Gumira Ajidarma. I argue that Seno's writing allows a reading of urban spaces and societies that draw on ideas regarding Indonesian cities found in writings both from within and outside of Indonesia.

This thesis uses theories developed on the idea of 'the flâneur' and the practice of flânerie in contemporary urban societies. These theories are used to analyse the ways in which Seno Gumira Ajidarma writes of and about contemporary urban conditions in Indonesia in general and Jakarta in particular. I locate four primary areas where the concept of 'the flâneur' is present in the writings of Seno Gumira Ajidarma. Firstly, Seno imagines the flâneur as a figure who engages in urban life in both an ambivalent and a critical manner. Secondly, he engages in flânerie as a consumer of jazz in late night jazz clubs and as a reader of news reports detailing stories of state violence far from urban Jakarta. Thirdly, he is a flâneur who negotiates the meanings of the urban soundscape. And, finally, the flâneur is a part of the urban landscape in a time of crisis who interprets the scenes before him through taking photographs and using a taxi to

pass through city streets. The thesis shows that Seno's writings are both a continuation of an earlier tradition of flânerie and that he engages with contemporary theories and ideas concerning urban societies.

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Introduction

The city is the frontier of modern Asian society (Dick, 2002, p.xvii).

The centralising tendency to define 'Jakarta as X' is dead (Ajidarma, 2008, p.242).

Over half of the world's population lives in urban societies. Many of the largest cities in the world are in Asia. Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, is one of several cities in Asia to be identified as a megacity (Firman, 2009; Silver, 2008): it has a huge and growing population, is densely populated and continues to spread out into other neighbouring regions. An understanding of the history and sociological conditions of Indonesia necessarily involves an analysis of the geographical, political and symbolic positions of Jakarta – and the city in general – within the Indonesian nation. Jakarta is the centre of both political and cultural power: it is the home not only of the national parliament, but also of many important cultural institutes. Jakarta's growth, density and development differentiate it significantly from other Indonesian cities: it is both exceptional as well as being a metaphor for Indonesian life.

Throughout the last hundred or so years, Indonesian writers – and others who have lived in or visited the city formerly known as 'Batavia' and 'Djakarta' – have written about Jakarta and thus helped imagine it and create a vast discourse on what the city is and how it is experienced, lived and interpreted. Seno Gumira Ajidarma (b.1958) is one writer who has written incisively, creatively and critically on Jakarta and on urban conditions in Indonesia. It is because of Seno's extensive writings on Jakarta and city life, his critical acceptance as a significant writer and his ongoing productivity (as the author of some 30 books) that I have chosen him as the subject for my research.

The intersection of urban life and literature is the starting point for this thesis on the writings of Seno Gumira Ajidarma. Since the early 1980s Seno has been widely recognised as one of the key figures of contemporary Indonesian literature. Throughout this thesis, Seno's works are used as the source material from which I analyse a writer's imagining of urban life in contemporary Indonesian literature. As such, this research seeks to contribute to discourses on Indonesian urban societies, Indonesian social and political cultures and contemporary Indonesian thought. I also link Seno's work and studies of Indonesian urban trends with those taking place in other parts of the world. By drawing on historical, anthropological, literary and postcolonial studies of urban spaces and societies, this thesis shows the key ways in which urban spaces – particularly those of Jakarta – are imagined in the writings of Seno Gumira Ajidarma. Throughout this thesis, I argue that Seno's writing allows a reading of urban spaces and societies that draw on ideas regarding Indonesian cities found in writings both from within and outside of Indonesia. The city in literature is a site where the elements of 'change' and 'continuity' can be explored. This applies to Jakarta as it does to other cities. Jakarta, as a site of intense political meaning and symbolisation (Kusno, 2000; Permanasari, 2007), is given meaning to through literary works.

Indonesian literature has long been shaped by cities and urban culture. Modern Indonesian literature is an urban product. 'Low-Malay' literature of the nineteenth century written by Indonesians of Chinese background was set in Batavia and other cities of Java (see Salmon, 1985). Early modernist writers like Mas Marco Kartodikromo wrote vivid representations of cities such as Semarang¹. Recent literary products are a key source through which we can understand how cities and urban spaces are interpreted, approached and imagined in contemporary Indonesia. Seno's writings are cultural products that complement

¹ I discuss these stories in Chapter One.

recent films, comics and plays that draw on the urban setting as a starting point for narratives on Indonesian cultural and social change. Just as the urban spaces and societies of Indonesia are dynamic, so are the ways in which they are imagined. The urban spaces in Mas Marco Kartodikromo's writings differ from those of Pramoedya Ananta Toer (2000), which differ in turn from the urban spaces and societies of Putu Wijaya's novel *Stasiun* (1977), for example. Writers evoke the city for their own rhetorical purpose.

The various ways in which the city is represented show both the richness of urban life and the diversity of modern Indonesian literature. 'The city' cannot be pinned down to having one particular form, shape or use. Cities, after all, are given meaning by their users – the 'citizens'. Contemporary Indonesian literature offers readers and students of urban history a vast source for understanding how Indonesian cities are imagined. The writings of Seno Gumira Ajidarma, I argue, offer a key body of work in the interpretation of Indonesian urban life.

This thesis uses the concepts of the flâneur and flânerie as a means to distinguish Seno's particular way of writing about urban spaces and societies. Throughout Seno's texts both the flâneur and the practice of flânerie are present in varying ways. Seno draws upon and develops the tropes of the flâneur and of flânerie to show particular aspects of Indonesian urban life. I argue that Seno's manner of using the flâneur and of broadening the practice of flânerie questions established notions of how to engage with urban spaces, how to move through urban spaces, how to listen in urban spaces, how to see and look in urban spaces and how to give meaning to urban space. Further, I argue that Seno's writings on urban spaces and societies present a counter-narrative to the dominant ideologies of 'development' and urban order within the context in which he writes. I use his writings as an example of a writing practice that particularly relates to urban life in contemporary Indonesia. Literary texts provide a different perspective from state and administrative perspectives on urban cultures in Indonesia.

Although the concept and practice of flânerie and the figure of the flâneur are identified with nineteenth century Paris, I argue that its definitions can be broadened and applied to the texts of Seno that are studied in this thesis. The flâneur, as an archetypal figure, strolls through the arcades of Paris consuming with his eyes the products before him, walking with a tortoise to avoid ever walking too quickly and becoming caught up in the speed of modern urban life. According to Keith Tester, the 'flâneur is the secret spectator of the spectacle of the spaces and places of the city' and thus flânerie is 'the activity of the sovereign spectator going about the city in order to find the things which will occupy his gaze and thus complete his otherwise incomplete identity' (1994, p.7). The flâneur takes pleasure in the spectacles of the modern city. The flâneur enjoys the sights. I show, in chapters five and six, that flânerie can be practised by drawing on other senses: particularly hearing. I show in chapters five and six how hearing and listening are essential parts of a character's practice of flânerie. The flâneur is typically a man – the feminine equivalent being a flâneuse – for it was men who were able to wander freely and independently through urban spaces.

The notion of the flâneur and the practice of flânerie are present in modern Indonesian urban environments. That is, the general and earlier idea of the flâneur takes on a specific embodiment in Indonesia – in both its pre- and post-independent states. For example, a kind of flânerie is evident in the writings of Mas Marco Kartodikromo. His writings are discussed in more detail in Chapter One. Also, in Brousseau's *Batavia: Awal Abad 20* (2007) a kind of flânerie is imagined through the eyes of a foreign soldier in the Netherlands East Indies. Becoming a flâneur in the rapidly changing urban environments of Indonesia involved a break with the past; a point of differentiation from others whose values were informed largely by 'tradition' and 'religion'. To be a flâneur was to be modern and cosmopolitan: up-to-date in terms of fashion and *au fait* with the world of ideas and news. It is part of the purpose of this thesis to investigate the

ways in which the notion of the flâneur becomes a part of Seno's writing of urban Indonesia. The notion, thus, has both global and local usages: its definition shifts across social and cultural contexts.

In this thesis, I show how the concept of the flâneur and the practice of flânerie relate to listening, hearing and writing in urban spaces. That is, I seek to remove the concepts from their historical contexts in nineteenth century Paris. I draw on the statement from Tester (1994, p.1) that the flâneur and the activity of flânerie 'appear regularly in the attempts of social and cultural commentators to get some grip on the nature and implications of the conditions of modernity and post-modernity'. I argue that flânerie is an attitude, a flexible and mobile practice that can be applied in multiple circumstances. It is a practice that is of the urban and of the cosmopolitan. Practising flânerie involves an ambivalence: it affords the flâneur the possibility of being 'involved' or 'detached' in the circumstances in which he or she finds himself. Marshall Clark describes the flâneur as being 'in the thick of things *and* contemplative' (2010, p.31). Throughout this thesis, I show that the ways in which flânerie is practiced can serve as a critique of contemporary Jakarta and urban Indonesia.

This thesis comprises seven chapters. The first chapter – "The City in Indonesian Literature" – is an overview of some of the important literary writings on urban Indonesia. I draw on the writings of Mas Marco Kartodikromo, Armijn Pane, Mochtar Lubis, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, S.M. Ardan, Misbach Yusa Biran and Putu Wijaya, amongst others, to provide a kind of literary backdrop to the more recent writings of Seno Gumira Ajidarma. To varying degrees, these writers have used Jakarta and Indonesian cities in general to describe sites, scenes and spaces of oppression, excitement, disappointment and suffering. The purpose of this chapter is to show how Seno's engagement and writing of Indonesian urban space and societies is both a continuation of an early interest as well as a development upon it. That is, Seno's writings represent a nuanced and insightful

perspective on urban space in Indonesia and in Jakarta specifically. The chapter is concluded by providing a summary of three recent films that also use Jakarta as a key element of their narrative. I include these films to show how Seno's writings exist alongside a broad array of cultural products that engage with an imagining and representation of urban life in Indonesia.

Chapter Two – "Framing the City" – introduces theories and ideas regarding urban spaces and societies that will be used throughout chapters four to seven. This chapter draws on scholarly discourses from outside and inside Indonesia in order to uncover theories and ideas regarding changes in urban societies throughout the twentieth century. I draw on scholars of sociology, history, economics and architecture amongst other fields. The writings of scholars such as Simmel, Benjamin and Wirth and others are central to the task of placing Seno's writings on urban Indonesia in a broader context. Seno's writings contribute not only to the literary traditions of Indonesia, but also to scholarly discourses on Indonesian urban spaces and societies.

In Chapter Three – "An Introduction to Seno Gumira Ajidarma" – I present an overview of his texts published to date. I argue that, as an author of some 30 books, he has made a significant contribution to Indonesian writing over the past thirty years. To emphasise this I refer to the writings of various scholars who have focused on Seno's work to show the relevance of their scholarship to an understanding and analysis of contemporary Indonesian society and literary practice. I draw on elements of their work in order to ask new questions about how Seno has contributed to recent Indonesian literature. Although other scholars including Bodden, Clark, Allen and Kusno allude to the urban conditions of Seno's writings, this thesis places the 'urban-ness' of Seno's writings as a key connecting thread throughout his writings. That is, I argue that in order to understand Seno's writings one must come to terms with the manner in which the urban environment is present throughout his texts.

Chapter Four – “The Urban Spaces of *Kentut Kosmopolitan*” - focuses on one of Seno's more recent texts – *Kentut Kosmopolitan* (Ajidarma, 2008). This text is a collection of Seno's short essays written over a period of roughly ten years. The essays of *Kentut Kosmopolitan* present Seno's perspective on urban conditions in Jakarta. The essays describe conditions of the street, the dichotomy of public and private, the interaction between members of different social and economic groups and notions of what it means to be 'cosmopolitan', 'modern', 'urban' and 'fashionable' in contemporary Jakarta. *Kentut Kosmopolitan* contributes to the growing number of publications dealing with the current social conditions of Jakarta. I argue that in the essays of *Kentut Kosmopolitan*, Seno places a strong emphasis on the space of the 'street' as an area with diverse functions and uses. I argue that Seno's stories draw on the practice of flânerie - both as a method of writing the essays and as a way of seeing - within the texts themselves. Seno acts as a flâneur in Jakarta and his way of seeing expresses a contemporary act of flânerie that counters dominant modes of urban experience in contemporary Jakarta. In these essays, the narrator is Seno himself; through these essays the reader can trace Seno's acts of flânerie through the streets and spaces of Jakarta. In these essays, with Seno as narrator and as flâneur we gain an immediate perspective on how Seno frames Jakartan urban space. Through these essays Seno plays the role of 'documenter' and analyst of Jakartan urban life. He draws on his knowledge of Indonesian history and the social sciences in general to convey his ideas regarding the ways in which urban life in Jakarta is experienced.

In Chapter Five – “A Listening Flâneur: *Jazz, Parfum dan Insiden*” – I use Seno's 1996 novel, *Jazz, Parfum dan Insiden* as a means to investigate the manner in which listening is represented in an urban space. Seno's novel presents particular ideas regarding the political agency of jazz as music of liberation and also in regards to mediating urban experience. I argue that the narrator of *Jazz*,

Parfum dan Insiden, through his listening to jazz on his personal stereo (a Walkman), both remembers and forgets. The narrator (Seno himself) both 'remembers' the violence taking place at the periphery (in the then Indonesian province of East Timor) of New Order Indonesia, while at the same time he forgets his own immediate context: that of urban Jakarta, a site that is also subject to violence and displacement. *Jazz, Parfum dan Insiden* is a text comprising three narratives: the history of jazz, the perfumes of the various women the narrator meets at the jazz performances he attends and thirdly 'the incident' -that is, reports of the massacre at Santa Cruz in Dili in 1991. Throughout the novel, these three tangential narratives occasionally meet, cross over and intersect. As such, the novel reproduces the form of jazz composition. Seno's novel presents the flâneur as a figure who consumes a wide variety of texts and source material and who is able to move effortlessly from one form of media to another.

Chapter Six - "Listening to the City: "*Bunyi Hujan di atas Genteng*", "*Penjaga Malam dan Tiang Listrik*" and "*Dilarang Menyanyi di Kamar Mandi*" - uses three stories drawn from different periods in Seno's career as a writer. I argue that these stories show how the soundscape can be used as a means to understand, negotiate and give meaning to the Indonesian urban environment. This chapter draws on the writings of Colombijn, Schafer and others to show how sound plays a role in the imagining of urban space. Through the three stories studied in Chapter Six, I show how the silencing of particular erotic sounds is used to represent the suppression of disorder in an urban *kampung*, how sound can be used to represent a particular imagining of time, and thirdly how sound is invested with meaning in such a way as to reproduce the 'state terrorism' of the New Order government. The stories of Chapter Six use sound to embody the practices of surveillance as present throughout the era of the New Order government in Indonesia.

Chapter Six includes a discussion of the "*petrus*" (mysterious shootings) campaign that was instigated during the early to mid-1980s. This campaign involved the shooting of suspected petty criminals and gangsters and the displaying of their corpses in public places such as busy intersections and markets. This is one example of the 'state violence' that partly characterised the Suharto-led New Order era in Indonesia. Seno shows how a particular way of listening can question, challenge and negotiate the manner in which the state performs surveillance against its citizens.

The final chapter, "Streets of Violence: "*Clara*", "*Jakarta 2039*" and "*Jakarta, Suatu Ketika*"" , draws on three short stories written around the time of the May 1998 riots. These stories also practise the double movement of 'remembering' and 'forgetting'. Seno remembers some aspects of the May 1998 riots while forgetting others. Particular narratives are 'remembered' through the act of writing, while other narratives are 'forgotten' through their exclusion. In particular, Seno sees this time not as one of heroic deeds performed by brave and courageous students, but as a time during which the city and its streets became sites of violence, rape and transgression. Seno draws on narratives of gang rapes against Chinese Indonesians as being a key historical moment. His stories of the sexual violence against Chinese Indonesians emerged at a time when their reporting in the mass media was largely taboo and their occurrence was largely disbelieved. The representations of rape in Seno's stories "*Clara*" and "*Jakarta 2039*" are given particular urban dimensions. That is, they are rapes that occur in anonymous urban environments; spaces through which 'the crowd' and 'the masses' are able to move according to their own desires. He presents Jakarta, 1998, as a dangerous space for an individual. It is a time and space where it is dangerous to be a flâneur and when the imagined dichotomies of 'Chinese' and '*pribumi*' are regarded as being fixed and real. A key element of the stories in this chapter is the depiction of the spaces of the toll-road and shopping

mall. These are examples of 'non-places' (Augé, 1995). 'Non-place' refers to 'spaces formed in relation to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, leisure), and the relations that individuals have with these spaces' (Augé, 1995, p.94). The urban space of Jakarta in these stories is one in which the process of othering is a dominant trope.

I argue that throughout his short stories and essays Seno uses the trope of the flâneur as a key figure in the understanding and practice of urban life in contemporary Indonesia. This flâneur is a figure that is variously a narrator, a listener, a soundscape documenter and a photographer. Through Seno's stories and novels, the urban spaces of Jakarta are shown to be variably subject to flânerie. Sometimes the spaces are available to flânerie, and at other times they are not. The writings of Seno Gumira Ajidarma show that the flâneur, however, is a central figure in the negotiation of urban life in contemporary Indonesian literature.

Chapter One: The City in Indonesian Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to show how other writers wrote about the city prior to the emergence of Seno's writings in the mid-1980s. In this chapter I outline the dominant themes, manners and ways of describing and representing urban life. I situate these writings within the social, political and cultural conditions of the era in which they were written. This chapter examines works by Mas Marco Kartodikromo, Idrus, Armijn Pane, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Mochtar Lubis, Misbach Yusa Biran and S.M. Ardan. Each of these authors has represented Indonesian urban life in a particular manner. Their writings reflect a persistent focus in modern Indonesian literature on urban themes and modes of living. Although this chapter primarily addresses writings concerning Jakarta, I do draw on some literary works that evoke other cities. The short stories of Mas Marco Kartodikromo - set in Semarang - are one example. Towards the end of this chapter, I also present a brief overview of three recent films that use Jakarta and its urban context as an essential aspect of the film's dramatic impact.

Modern Indonesian literature, like other forms of modern literature, has long engaged with the idea of the city. In the modern and contemporary European novel, 'the city' regularly emerges as a major theme. Examples include James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), the novels of Émile Zola such as *The Belly of Paris*² (1873), the New York based novels of American author Don DeLillo (2003, 2007), the novels of Dickens, the poetry of T.S. Eliot and the postmodernist urban folktales of Italo Calvino such as *Marcovaldo* (1983). Modern Indonesian literature, with its specific social, political and cultural background and context, makes a significant contribution to contemporary literary discourses on urban life.

It could be said that urban life and modern literature are inseparable. For Malcolm Bradbury, cities act as both 'generative environments' as well as 'novel

² *Le Ventre de Paris*

environments, carrying within themselves the complexity and tension of modern consciousness and modern writing' (Bradbury in Preston & Simpson-Housley, 1994, p.6). Urban geographer Terry McGee has asserted that 'in view of the dominance of the great Southeast Asian City as a centre of intellectual activity [...] much of the contemporary indigenous literature portrays the problems of their changing societies within the milieu of the city' (McGee, 1967, p.196). Our notions of both the city and literature are tied up in mutually overlapping discourses. Literature has traced the trajectories of urban development. The novel has long been the pre-eminent form of modern literature (Moretti, 2006). In Indonesia, however, as Derks has argued (Derks, 1996), poetry and short stories have featured as the most easily consumed and most widely read and written forms of literature. Maier's assertive account of 'Malay writing', however, focuses on Malay novels (2004). Yet, developments and changes in the social and political conditions of urban life are also reflected in changes in literary discourses. As such, in this chapter I provide the literary context within which Seno writes. I also refer to other authors who have written on Indonesian urban life.

The early twentieth century writings of Mas Marco Kartodikromo are one kind of representation of urban life in Indonesia. As with other authors such as Pramoedya and Mochtar Lubis, Mas Marco uses the city as a place to show the differences between rich and poor and between ethnic groups, as well as projecting the city as a site of urban discontent. Mas Marco also pays close attention to the physical attributes of the urban scenes he describes. He writes of the particular infrastructure in the city of Semarang: paved roads, gas lamps, tram stops. These are markers of modernity and simultaneously markers of modern life. For Frisby, 'the processes of modernization that generate the 'modern' dimensions of modern societies appear to be driven by unilinear and ostensibly inexorable forces [... which] appear to create modes of ordering society and its structures' (2001, p.2). The modern, and modernity, are juxtaposed

against that which is 'traditional' and cities are often the sites 'on which the spectacles of modernity [are] played out' (Frisby, 2001, p.4). These are familiar tropes of early twentieth century literature. Mas Marco's stories "Black Semarang", "Images of Extravagance" and "The Corrupted Life of a Big City"³ (Kartodikromo, 1981) set the stage for later literary writings on urban life in Indonesia. Given their 'pioneering' role, it is appropriate here to provide a summary of the plots of these stories.

"Black Semarang" (Kartodikromo, 1981, pp.7-12) was published in *Sinar Hindia* between 29 March and 8 April, 1924. It is an early example of literature published in newspapers, a practice that continues until today. "Black Semarang" describes the events of a Saturday evening in Semarang, a city on the north coast of Java. Saturday night is described as a time for 'fun', as workers have the opportunity for walking through the city and taking in its sights. This flâneuristic pleasure is something that is further explored in Seno's short stories and essays. Yet it is a pleasure that is denied to the workers on the night described in "Black Semarang", for the ambience is disturbed by incessant rain. The streets are empty – only in the distance does the narrator hear the sound of a horsewhip propelling a cart. The narrator hears the sounds of a saté vendor 'hawking his wares', he sees the gas lamps dim when they are struck by the east wind.

In the first instalment of the story, the narrator begins to tell the story of a young man who is engrossed in a newspaper report about a vagrant who dies on the side of a road in the city. The young man moves through various urban spaces and encounters typical urban phenomena. He comes across a crowd of people watching a gamelan and dance performance at a Chinese wedding. He sees people wearing traditional Javanese clothes and he hears fragments of conversations. A person who will soon lose his job at a factory is told to just watch the dancing. The young man despairs at the apathy of 'the educated youth'

³ Their original titles are *Semarang Hitam*, *Tjermin Boeah Keroyalan*, *Roesaknja Kehidoepan di Kota Besar*.

who are only concerned with pleasure. The young man continues to wander. He comes across the house of a capitalist and soon after 'a house of ill-repute', where 'women sell their virtue just to get a bite to eat' (Kartodikromo, 1981, p.10). He hears the sounds of arguments and guitars. He comes to the conclusion that it is poverty that causes moral degradation. While in the town square (*alun-alun*) he drinks a cup of coffee and is disturbed by a beggar. He gives the beggar some money yet doubts it will do anything to improve the beggar's condition. The young man comes across a prison – this too is a site of capitalism, where people are incarcerated for their search for justice. As the young man is too engrossed in his thoughts, he hasn't noticed the change in the weather. He walks through the quiet city streets. He arrives home with his mind still mulling over what he has just seen. I argue that his presence within the cityscape is an early evocation of the flâneur. In contrast to the flânerie present in Seno's stories, Mas Marco's characters take little pleasure in the urban environment. They view it as a site of moral degradation and as a starting point for political action. Their distaste for city life differs from the more ambivalent flâneuristic attitude found throughout Seno's stories.

"Images of Extravagance" (Kartodikromo, 1981, pp.13-18) is the story of the downfall of Soedirga, a young man who, after an evening at the theatre, moves in with a lady of ill repute. He spends all his money on satisfying and maintaining his pleasure before, in an act of desperation and in search of work, heading off to Belawan Deli - the port near Medan in North Sumatra - in the hope of finding work on the plantations. Notwithstanding the simplistic plot, the urban life of Semarang is described in fine detail in the story. Various aspects of early twentieth century urban life in Indonesia are revealed. These include the changing dynamics of interpersonal relations in public, and the rise of brand names and the use of consumer products - conspicuous consumption - in order to increase one's social status. Clothes and means of transport are signs of one's

social position. In the case of Soedirga, his fancy clothes hide the fact that he hasn't been paying the bills at his accommodation. Soedirga, nonetheless, uses a *delman* - horse drawn cart - to get to the theatre, so that his shoes do not become dusty. Particular kinds of clothes are no longer reserved for members of particular classes. Yet Soedirga's 'real' social position is part of the end of this short story: destitute, with clothes dirty and worn, he leaves Semarang. Like "Black Semarang" this story is highly didactic and moralistic. Mas Marco's story asserts that those who fall for such superficial luxuries are bound to end up ruined.

The urban life of the city in "Images of Extravagance" is described as follows: 'there was bustle everywhere. Cars, horse carriages and various other sorts of vehicles were all turning their wheels over the wide asphalt roads. The night tram to Djomblang Boeloe was crammed with people sitting side by side on benches' (Kartodikromo, 1981, p.13). Soedirga is done up in the fashion of an urban dandy: newly cut hair, a white boursaline hat, a rain coat and silver watch chain (Kartodikromo, 1981, p.13). "Images of Extravagance" also shows the manner in which an audience is expected to interact (or not) with others throughout a performance: 'Soedirga's thoughts whirled about in his head, thinking of ways to open a conversation with the young woman beside him' (Kartodikromo, 1981, p.15). Women are also not expected to be at the theatre by themselves: "'By herself! Who is this young woman?'" (Kartodikromo, 1981, p.15).

"The Corrupted Life of a Big City" (Kartodikromo, 1981, pp.19-23) tells the story of two young activists, Goeno and Dirdjo. They have come to Surabaya for a conference to discuss 'matters of important to the people at large' (Kartodikromo, 1981, p.20). The story is based around their experiences as they leave their meeting and head to their homes in quieter suburbs near Surabaya.

What they see in the 'big city' of Surabaya provides starting points for discussions on various forms of social injustice.

Mas Marco Kartodikromo was one of the most astute observers of urban social conditions in early twentieth century Indonesia. Despite the abrupt and clichéd endings of the stories discussed above, Mas Marco's stories provide descriptions of intricate details of daily life in pre-independent Indonesia. Mas Marco's writings, published in the mass media, contributed to a growing sense of nationalism and formulation of ideas regarding class, justice and modernity. The rapid social, cultural and political changes of early twentieth century Indonesia are reflected in the descriptions and fragmentary narrative style of Mas Marco. He saw much of what was 'new' in terms of technology, infrastructure, modes of travelling and ways of interacting. The language used by Mas Marco – particularly in *Student Hijo* (Kartodikromo, 2000) – is one that is varied and rich with vocabulary from various languages. His stories reflect a culture in transition and a language yet to be made 'good and correct'⁴. The variety and plurality of the language used in Mas Marco's stories reflected the heterogeneity of the urban society he sought to represent. These short stories are some of the significant predecessors for Seno's writing on contemporary urban life in Indonesia.

Ways of interacting in public, public transport and inter-racial relations are also important themes of Idrus's story "Kota-Harmoni"⁵ (Ismail, 2002, pp.37-42). The story is of a tram trip from Kota to Harmoni – two suburbs in the northern (and older) part of Jakarta. Idrus's style of writing is typical of 'modern' literature: it is straightforward, unadorned, journalistic prose. The story emphasises the harshness, roughness and tension of everyday urban life in 'Djakarta' under the Japanese occupation (1942-1945). By contrast to the scene at the theatre in Mas Marco's story "Images of Extravagance", on the tram from

⁴ The *Pusat Bahasa* – 'Language Centre' – is part of the National Education Department and serves to develop and promote 'good and 'correct' Indonesian language and the appreciation of Indonesian literature.

⁵ This story was published in Idrus, *Dari Ave Mari ke Jalan Lain ke Roma*, Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1948.

Kota to Harmoni the passengers freely talk and interact with each other. These stories show how in different urban milieus different rules of politeness apply. As in other social situations, to be properly urban is to know how to behave in each different circumstance. The crowdedness of the tram is both a source of complaint and also a reason for the enforced mixing of people of different classes. The passengers complain about the slowness of the tram journey and the customs of the other passengers who 'don't know the rules' (Idrus in Ismail, 2002, p.38). The space which one occupies on a tram is ordered by the price one pays for a ticket, rather than whether or not a person should be given respect (Idrus in Ismail, 2002, p.38). The crowdedness and discomfort of the tram trip from Kota to Harmoni affords the passengers a moment of nostalgia: 'it's difficult now. It was a difficult era twenty years ago, but it wasn't as difficult as it is now' (Idrus in Ismail, 2002, p.41). This is a common trope of writing on urban life: the city is seen as a source of difficulty and oppression, a place that can be escaped from by either imagining a calmer and more tranquil rural life, or, through imagining a more peaceful and less difficult past (Lehan, 1998; Williams, 1973). The city, on the other hand, is a place of escape from the impoverishment of rural life and the restrictions of traditional customs.

Belenggu (Pane, 2004), a novel by Armijn Pane, published in 1940, is an early portrait of urban life in Jakarta. The story involves a love-triangle between Tono, his wife, Tini and the 'other woman' Yah. Tono is a sophisticated young doctor who reads in his spare time, while Yah is a singer of ill repute, who is portrayed as being an independent and strong-minded woman. The novel was rejected by Balai Poestaka, the dominant publishing house of the time. Henk Maier writes that *Belenggu* was different from other novels of the era for it is entirely focused on the urban setting of Jakarta, rather than the traditions of regional Indonesia (2004, p.276). The language of the novel *Belenggu* included terms thought to be unfamiliar to some of its readers: there is a glossary at the

beginning of the novel. Urban life in Jakarta of that era was (as it remains) cosmopolitan, and the daily language used was one of great richness and borrowings (as it remains). *Belenggu* provides a portrayal of the ambience and culture of urban Jakarta in the pre-independence era. Tono practices a new kind of pleasure: observing the city from his vehicle.⁶ For example, in *Belenggu*, one passage reads as follows: '[Tono] was happy to be in his car. Sitting in the back, on one side, he smoked a cigar. The car moved smoothly, the day had become dark and the lights on the side of the road had been turned on. The air had started to cool. To calm his thoughts, his eyes looked left and right out the window' (Pane, 2004, p.19).

Pramoedya Ananta Toer, 'an author close to being the conscience of his nation' (Foulcher, 2006), was one of the main contributors to literary discourse on Jakarta – particularly his collection *Tales from Djakarta* (Toer, 2000), which included stories written in the 1950s. Pramoedya's *Tales from Djakarta*, originally published in 1957 as *Tjerita dari Djakarta*, is a study of life in Jakarta after Indonesia gained her independence.

"Letter to a Friend from the Country" (Pramoedya in Aveling, 1976, pp. 69-76) is a condemnation of life in Jakarta. The narrator ("I"), Pramoedya himself, writes a letter to a friend as part of an effort to dissuade him from coming to Jakarta. Throughout this story-as-letter, Pramoedya creates a blisteringly negative portrayal of Jakarta and Jakartans. He argues that it is a 'city built on dreams', yet with each new arrival in Jakarta there is a new story of failure. He writes of women who become prostitutes and men who are unable to escape their difficult circumstances. For Pramoedya, in this story at least, the nation of Indonesia will not be served well by yet another person seeking his fortune in Jakarta. Instead he implores his friend to 'develop your own province' (Pramoedya in Aveling, 1976, p.76). For Pramoedya, those who came to Jakarta

⁶ This is another kind of flânerie of the sort that is also evident in Seno's short stories and essays.

were 'monument[s] to the failure of the Revolution' (Pramoedya in Aveling, 1976, p.76). Unlike in other stories in *Tales from Djakarta* (Toer, 2000), "Letter to a friend from the Country" does not evoke the social, political and cultural conditions in a slow and measured manner; it merely provides a detailed list of 'how things are' – as if they are fixed and unchanging. The story is highly polemical and serves as a rhetorical tract that indicates the author's disappointment in Jakarta.

Tales from Djakarta is a further elucidation of Pramoedya's negative perception of daily life in Indonesia's capital. In Jakarta, Pramoedya witnesses the failure of the aspirations of the dreams for independence. He sees a similar kind of moral and physical degradation and corruption that had persisted throughout Dutch colonisation and the Japanese occupation. The revolution has failed and for him this is exemplified most harshly in Jakarta.

Mochtar Lubis, an author and journalist who was diametrically opposed to Pramoedya Ananta Toer during the debates on culture throughout much of the New Order era⁷, is the author of one of the most well-known and well-read literary works on Jakarta: *Twilight in Djakarta*⁸ (1983). While Pramoedya makes the claim that '[Jakarta] is still a collection of villages, with no specifically urban way of life' (Pramoedya Ananta Toer in Aveling, 1976, p.70) and that the city is hopeless for prospects of development, Lubis presents Jakarta as a city whose social conditions - despite their desperation - are worthy of consideration, investigation and exploration. Pramoedya's negative attitude towards the city is fixed from the outset. *Twilight in Djakarta* novel presents one of the most significant and thorough literary investigations into the city life of Jakarta in newly

⁷ Mochtar Lubis and Pramoedya Ananta Toer were two of the leading writers throughout the second half of the twentieth century. Lubis was largely aligned with the 'right', while Pramoedya was on the ideological left. For the first fourteen years of the New Order era, Pramoedya was exiled to the island of Buru on account of his ideological views; at the same time, many writers on the ideological right enjoyed a kind of literary hegemony. Lubis and Pramoedya's mutual antipathy stems from the highly charged debates leading up to the attempted communist coup of 1965 – a time when the leftists were in ascendancy and those on the right were highly marginalised and publicly criticised. The New Order era saw a reversal of these fortunes.

⁸ The translation of *Sendja di Djakarta - Twilight in Djakarta* (translated by Claire Holt) - was first published in English by Hutchison & Co in 1963 before the original work was published in Indonesian.

post-independent Indonesia. The novel places 'Jakarta' as one of the subjects of the novel: it is the place where characters such as Saimun, Itam and Suryono struggle to make their living and to live fulfilling lives. This novel presents various tropes familiar in discourses on Jakartan urban life. Jakarta appears as a place for both the extremely rich and the extremely poor, as a place of ethnic diversity (and where people are categorised by their 'race'), as a city with 'so many shortcomings' (Lubis, 1983, p.23) in comparison with other cities, as a city for intense political discussion and the struggle for political power. Each chapter concludes with a section titled 'City report'. In each of these sections a different aspect of the underside of urban life is covered, including petty crime, petty violence and the daily lives of the urban poor.

S.M. Ardan, a lesser-known author in 'modern Indonesian literature', has also been a significant contributor to the literary discourses on Jakarta. Ardan's stories from the 1950s, published in *Terang Bulan, Terang di Kali* (*Bright Moon, Clear in the River*) (Ardan, 2007), for example, provide a portrait of Jakarta as a Betawi⁹ urban space. In Ardan's stories of Jakarta, the characters speak in the Betawi dialect, make their lives through informal trade and live in accordance with Islamic values. Like the 1970s stories of Misbach Yusa Biran, Ardan's stories emphasise the daily struggles of the urban poor and the manner in which self-deprecating humour is a technique for overcoming persistently difficult circumstances. The characters in these stories include *becak* drivers, factory workers and the unemployed. Significantly, there is little discussion of the significance of Jakarta as the nation's capital and its position as the source of hope for newcomers from rural Java – as in the writings of Lubis, Pramoedya and Goenawan Mohamad (2002). Ardan's Jakarta is the home for its inhabitants, who face changes to the city without being able to long for and imagine an 'other' and

⁹ The Betawi are considered to be the original inhabitants of Jakarta. Betawi culture is largely Muslim and also has links with Arab and Chinese cultures. Betawi language is also distinct from contemporary standard Indonesian.

more distant geographical location as 'home'. Ardan's characters see their homeland changing before their eyes.

The short stories of Misbach Yusa Biran, such as those that appear in *Keajaiban di Pasar Senen (Miracle at Pasar Senen)* (Biran, 2008) provide a detailed perspective on the lives of a group of bohemian artists who base themselves in the area of Pasar Senen, in central Jakarta. These are humorous stories that document the daily lives of artists, would-be artists and writers who have been marginalised from mainstream Jakartan life during the 1970s. The stories contain frequent reference to Betawi foods such as *kue putu*¹⁰. Misbach also uses informal Indonesian as well as the occasional incorporation of Dutch language. Pasar Senen becomes a central focus point of Jakarta – and the city becomes a site of struggle for living an artistic and intellectual life juxtaposed against desires for development and personal enrichment. Where Pramoedya sees persistent failure and depression, Misbach Yusa Biran on the other hand presents a lighter side to this 'failure'. Instead, Misbach focuses on the tenacity of the artists and their sense of humour in spite of their fate.

Putu Wijaya's early novel, *Stasiun (Station)* (1977), represents a surrealist and nonsensical portrayal of Jakarta in the first decade of the New Order. In this novel, the train station becomes the vital centre of contemporary urban life. The novel details the life of the workers who are based at the station and the quickly changing and highly dynamic life of the hub of the train station. Like the tram in Idrus's story *Kota-Harmoni*, the train station serves as a 'microcosm' of urban life. The main character of Wijaya's novel is a figure that lives a purposeless existence in the urban context of a city that seems *to be like* Jakarta. Upon leaving his home one morning, he leaves for the station, undecided about where he is going. Wijaya emphasises the absurdity of the urban condition. His emphasis on the 'absurd' and 'nonsensical' places him in a different literary

¹⁰ A kind of traditional Betawi cake.

tradition than Mas Marco and Pramoedya Ananta Toer, for example. Nonetheless, Wijaya's novel provides an insight into a character's perceptions of modern urban life. Wijaya's characters are nameless; they are only identified in relation to the other figures of the story.

Goenawan Mohamad, an important and influential intellectual who has lived in Jakarta for more than 40 years, is the author of the *Catatan Pinggir*¹¹ columns that have appeared throughout the publication of the weekly magazine *Tempo*, which he founded in the 1970s. Although Mohamad established himself as a writer, editor and columnist a decade or so before Seno, his literary career relates generally to that of Seno. The two figures share similar interests and critiques. Seno's short stories have sometimes been published in *Tempo*. Where Seno has been occupied with the individual projects of writing and working as an academic and lecturer, Mohamad has been entrepreneurial with the establishment of *Tempo* news magazine, the daily *Tempo* newspaper, *Institut Studi Arus Informasi*, *Komunitas Utan Kayu* and *Komunitas Salihara*¹². Mohamad's projects have played a major role in the development of the arts infrastructure in Jakarta.

Mohamad has played the dual roles of being both a writer in Jakarta as well as someone who has actively re-shaped the urban arts infrastructure of Jakarta. Despite being on the ideological right during the cultural debates of the mid-1960s¹³, he was a consistent and vocal critic of the New Order government. Throughout the post-New Order era, Mohamad has frequently championed those whom he considers to be the victims of censorship – whether coming from the state or societal forces. As an intellectual, he has considerable insight into the daily life of Jakarta. Three of his essays on Jakarta from the *Catatan Pinggir* columns include "City" (Mohamad, 2002, pp.112-114), "The Street" (Mohamad, 2002, pp.169-171) and "Twilight in Jakarta" (Mohamad, 2002, pp.214-215).

¹¹ These essays have been translated and collected under the title 'Sidelines' in English.

¹² Institute for the Free Flow of Information. Utan Kayu Community and Salihara Community are venues for theatre and music performances, art exhibitions and public discussions on cultural and social issues.

¹³ See earlier footnote regarding these debates.

"City" is an exploration of the relationship between an individual and urban life – in this case it is the city of Jakarta. The essay is a discourse between the narrator (Mohamad), his friend and abstracted ideas of the city and urban life – he refers to 'an expert' and also to Italo Calvino. Mohamad directly draws the reader into the dialogue (albeit written 'conversation') through addressing the reader in the following manner in the opening sentence: 'I have a friend who is very much like your friends: he lives in this city of Jakarta, he earns his living here, and he curses this city' (Mohamad, 2002, p.112). Jakarta, in the eyes of the unnamed expert, simultaneously experiences a process of 'urbanisation' and 'ruralisation': newcomers bring their lifestyle to the city and thus make it 'more like a village'. For Mohamad the consequences of this are 'the number of infant births and deaths [...] superstition and [...] lack of freedom' (Mohamad, 2002, p.113). He concludes the essay by suggesting that the 'hope and fear' of his friend is that he does not feel a part of Jakarta (Mohamad, 2002, p.114).

"The Street" presents a dichotomy within the urban context of Jakarta. The narrator, Mohamad himself, contrasts the freedom of birds with that of an increasingly privatised city. Mohamad writes of the 'privatised birds [those that are caged], privatised grass, privatised sport, and privatised leisure' (Mohamad, 2002, p.170). Mohamad also reflects on how 'privatisation' is part of the 'construction of a city' and that 'the city [...] becomes something because capital and profit give it birth and shape it' (Mohamad, 2002, p.170). Mohamad sees 'the street' as a place that functions as a Javanese *alun-alun* (town square); he writes that it is a place 'where people meet, watch games, show their solidarity' (Mohamad, 2002, p.170). This kind of Jakartan city life is being threatened by a generic figure he labels as 'Mr. Official' who transforms what is important for the public into something that is important for an individual. The contemporary 'Mr. Official' is contrasted against the figure of a former governor of Jakarta, Ali Sadikin. Mohamad refers to him for he implemented changes to Jakarta so that it

became a more heterogeneous society. Now, privatisation threatens the publicness of the streets and other communal spaces.

"Twilight in Jakarta", originally written in 1982 and whose title refers to Mochtar Lubis's novel of the same name (discussed above), like "The Street", is a description of the changes in public space in Jakarta. In this essay, Mohamad describes the various kinds of advertisements one sees on the streets of Jakarta. He sees 'stupid' sentences and not-so stupid sentences and slogans. An example of a stupid sentence, for Mohamad, is: 'traffic discipline shows national discipline' (Mohamad, 2002, p.215). Here, Mohamad criticises the 'state' for presuming that Jakartans are acting within the framework of the nation during the times when they are seeking pleasure for themselves, at 'movie houses and [at] the foreshore' (Mohamad, 2002, p.215). Jakartans momentarily stop at traffic lights and check whether or not it is safe to go forward – it is at such moments that a user of a road ignores and denies the presence of the state that seeks to regulate behaviour and traffic discipline. Mohamad states that unlike in 'Western society', 'we don't know if we have ever had any [...] 'spontaneous desire to follow the law' or 'respect for the rights of others'" (Mohamad, 2002, p.214).

Mohamad's essays show the ambivalence of many Jakartans: the city is their home, yet they don't feel at home in Jakarta. It is the place in which they live and make money, yet they curse it and do not feel as if it shapes them – instead, it merely traps people and keeps them in its clasp. Mohamad, in his essay "The Street" also shows how there is an increasing tendency towards the privatisation of public space. Indeed, this is a concern felt in many countries. These are issues that are explored in more detail by Seno in several of his essays that are discussed in this thesis.

Mohamad has also shown that the state, while it seeks to be omnipresent, is not. He shows that the state exists as something that is 'negotiated' with by Jakartans. Goenawan Mohamad, like Seno, is a questioner and documenter of

urban life and change in Jakarta. His writings are a significant part of the contemporary discourses on the cultures, politics and social change of Jakarta.

A publication house founded by JJ Rizal, Masup Jakarta, focuses on providing a literary and nostalgic guide to Jakarta. Texts published by Masup Jakarta include those written from the perspective of a colonial policeman, H.C.C. Clockener Brousson's *Batavia: Awal Abad 20* (Batavia at the Beginning of the 20th Century) (2007), and recollections of growing up in a Chinese family in northern Jakarta: Tio Tek Hong's *Keadaan Jakarta Tempo Doeloe, Sebuah Kenangan 1882-1959* (Jakarta in the Past: Memories, 1882-1959) (2006). Masup Jakarta has also published texts that use Betawi folklore (*Gambang Jakarta* by Firman Muntaco) and Lance Castle's academic text on the ethnic profile of Jakarta¹⁴. The number of books published by Masup Jakarta on Jakarta's history suggests an increasing interest in the diverse history of Jakarta as well as interest in the history of Jakarta as told from numerous perspectives – including the local, colonial, folkloric and academic. Masup Jakarta, as a specialist publisher on Jakarta, reaches a broad and popular audience through its cheap and short texts. Its re-publishing of earlier texts provides analysts of Jakarta and urban Indonesia with vital sources to compare contemporary literary works.

Just as many writers have incorporated and/or foregrounded Jakarta in their literary works, so has Jakarta been central to many contemporary films. Three recent films set in Jakarta include *Eliana, Eliana* (Eliana, Eliana) (2002), *Janji Joni* (Joni's Promise) (2005) and *Merantau*¹⁵ (2009).¹⁶ In *Eliana, Eliana* and *Merantau*, Jakarta is represented as a city that poses difficulties for the newcomer from West Sumatra (the main characters in each film are of a Minang background). Jakarta is represented as being dangerous and the polar opposite of a rural way of life where people can be trusted and where people show respect for

¹⁴ Profil Etnik Jakarta

¹⁵ This film is known as *Merantau Warrior* in English.

¹⁶ Elsewhere, acclaimed television series such as "The Wire" and "Rome" continue a trend of city-based and urban-themed cultural products.

one another. Jakarta becomes the stereotypical 'urban jungle' in which citizens have to live by whatever means they can in order to survive. The condemnation of Jakartan life as voiced by Pramoedya in "Letter to a Friend from the Country" takes on a visual form in these films. *Janji Joni*, however, presents a more positive view on the ability of Jakartans to negotiate their way through their city. Joni is able to make his way through the city in a skilful and adroit manner through his daily work as a deliverer of film rolls.

Merantau uses Jakarta as the backdrop for the experiences of Yuda, a young man from West Sumatra who arrives in the city with hopes of becoming a *pencak silat* teacher. Yuda states that he is in Jakarta in order to teach 'silat for good deeds'. Yuda, however, doesn't have the opportunity to teach. Instead, his knowledge of *silat* and his desire to do good leads to him trying to bust a foreign and local crime network. Yuda's good intentions take him on a 'city tour' of Jakarta: through the narrow allies of inner city *kampungs*, to the nightclubs frequented by Jakarta's partying middle-classes and to the port of Tanjung Priok in northern Jakarta. In this case, Yuda is an outsider and a flâneur who can use his skills as a martial artist to overcome the difficulties he faces in his new environment. To *merantau* – to leave one's village – thus represents another kind of flânerie. *Merantau* depicts Jakarta with a key eye for its complexity and intermingling communities and the competing interests of its inhabitants. The ambitions and values of a boy from rural west Sumatra are, at varying stages, a source of trouble for those he seeks to save, and ultimately the cause of his own death. *Merantau* affirms the place of the country and the village as sites of respite and safety.

Jakarta and the subject of 'the city' have been dominant sources of inspiration and exploration in modern Indonesian literature. The city, and Jakarta in particular, has not only represented a geographical and political centre of Indonesian political life, it has also served as an important site for interpretation,

analysis and narrative. Jakarta has proved to be a rich starting point for writers, critics and intellectuals who approach the city in their own way and with their own political and ideological perspectives. The city of Jakarta is central to the imagining of the modern nation of Indonesia. It is also central to the writing practices of modern Indonesian literature.

Chapter Two: Framing the City

Theorists, scholars and academics have analysed the city from varying angles in efforts to reveal ever-changing dynamics, cultures and movements. 'The city' it seems, is a subject, a field and an area of inquiry that attracts scholars, academics, writers, filmmakers, artists and musicians. Or, in the words of Nas and Boender, 'the city can be considered a total social phenomenon, which means that it is related to all sorts of aspects encompassing the material as well as the social, cultural, linguistic, political, and economic aspects' (2002, p.3). In this chapter, I address recent theories of the city and urban life. The theorists I use are primarily from the twentieth century. I draw on scholars who have written on European, American and Asian cities. I make connections between research that has been carried out in Indonesia and elsewhere, showing how observations and theories from other places may or may not be applicable. Throughout this chapter I explore various concepts that will later be applied to the 'raw material' of the writings of Seno Gumira Ajidarma. I explore the notion of the flâneur as developed by Walter Benjamin, change in urban societies, the displacement of the urban poor and the manner in which national ideology is expressed in urban form.

This chapter uses the work of scholars from various fields that have developed and applied their theories from and to different cities. This heterogeneity is necessary for an analysis of the writings of Seno, which, by their nature, draw on many different social, political and cultural phenomena.

In this first section, I explore some of the key ideas regarding cities and urban life as developed by early scholars of the field. These scholars seek not only to understand the origins and developments of the modern and contemporary city, but also to define it and understand the kind of societies that emerge in urban environments. Influential scholars in this field include Lewis Mumford, Georg Simmel and Louis Wirth.

American urban historian Lewis Mumford whose work *The City in History* (1961) defined the city as a place of theatre and intense interaction. Mumford's work focused on 'community values and the city's role in enlarging the potential of the human personality' (LeGates & Stout, 1996, p.85). Mumford writes that the city is a 'geographic plexus, an economic organization, an institutional process, a theater of social action, and an aesthetic symbol of collective unity' (Mumford, 1996, p.87). Mumford writes that the city both fosters theatre and art while being theatre and art at the same time (1996, p.87). According to Mumford, man works out his 'purposive activities' in the city where he engages with 'conflicting and cooperating personalities' (1996, p.87). Moreover, the city is also a space in which its citizens have specialized interests and 'intensively trained aptitudes' (Mumford, 1996, p.87). As such citizens interact with each other in a fragmentary manner based on their own specialized interests. Mumford's idea of the 'city as theatre' and place for the fostering of art is reflected in some of the essays of *Kentut Kosmopolitan* (Ajidarma, 2008), which are discussed in Chapter Four.

Georg Simmel's idea of the blasé provides context for Benjamin's concept of the flâneur, which is addressed below. Simmel is one of the earliest scholars to have focused his research on the everyday life of urban societies. One of his more influential works is his 1908 essay, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (Simmel, 2005). Like Mumford, Simmel also perceived a highly specialised urban populace where each person's specialisation makes one 'dependent on the supplementary activities of all others' (Simmel, 2005, p.24). He saw urban citizens as being liberated from the prejudices of rural life; however urban society was dominated by the rule of money that led to an anonymity and matter-of-factness of daily interactions (Simmel, 2005). Simmel characterised the eighteenth century as a time when man sought to free himself from historical bonds, while during the nineteenth century man sought to differentiate himself from other men (2005, p.24). For Simmel, the blasé attitude that arises amongst urbanites is a result of

over-stimulation and a general agitation of the nerves (Simmel, 2005, p.27).

Simmel writes that 'the blasé attitude results first from the rapidly changing and closely compressed contrasting stimulations of the nerves' (2005, p.26). It is this same stimulus that had led to the 'enhancement of metropolitan intellectuality' (Simmel, 2005, p.26).

Louis Wirth – one of the leading figures in the Chicago School of urban sociology, who wrote on urban life in the first half of the twentieth century, categorised the city by three elements: size, density and heterogeneity. He sought to assert the peculiarity of the urban way of life – that is, it was a 'distinctive mode of human group life' (2005, p.34). Wirth writes that 'a city may be defined as a relatively large, dense, and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals' (2005, p.34). Within a city, Wirth sees roles as being 'highly segmental'. That is, people remain dependent upon others, but they are less dependent upon particular persons' (Wirth, 2005, p.35). Urbanites remain indifferent to others as a means to 'immunise' 'themselves against the personal claims and expectations of others' (Wirth, 2005, p.35). This aspect of separation and disconnection between others was seen earlier in the stories of Mas Marco Kartodikromo. The manner of interacting in urban space is something that is also frequently a theme of Seno's stories. Wirth also sees the density of urban living in negative terms: 'frequent close physical contact, coupled with great social distance, accentuates the reserve of unattached individuals toward one another and, unless compensated by other opportunities for response, gives rise to loneliness' (Wirth, 2005, p.37). In a heterogeneous urban society, people are parts of numerous communities; each individual is associated with highly divergent groups. An urbanite is footloose and it is difficult to establish 'lasting acquaintanceship' between members of groups (Wirth, 2005, p.37). Size, density and heterogeneity are three key elements that provide a backdrop for Seno's stories, and as Wirth argues, they are primary conditions for a city.

The figure of the flâneur and the practice of flânerie is a key motif of modern literary writings. Walter Benjamin, through his work on Charles Baudelaire (2006), the essay "Return of the Flâneur" (1929) (Benjamin, 1996, pp.262-267) and his work *The Arcades Project* (1999), is one of the key theorists of the flâneur and one whose work largely is framed by discourses on flânerie. The flâneur is used in this thesis as a method for exploring the ways in which Seno Gumira Ajidarma writes of the city and represents urban life. I argue that Seno's writing practices continue the practice of flânerie. A flâneur is described as a wanderer and an ascetic animal that moves through the city: 'an intoxication covers over the man who walks long and aimlessly through the streets. With each step, the walk takes on greater momentum; ever weaker grow the temptations of shops, of bistros, of smiling women, ever more irresistible the magnetism of the next street corner, of a distant mass of foliage, of a street name' (Benjamin, 1999, p.417). A flâneur is a figure who takes pleasure in the city while at the same time remaining aloof from its temptations. Although Seno does not explicitly and directly write about 'the flâneur' *per se*, he writes in a manner that continues the tradition of the flâneur and of flânerie. That is, Seno's gaze and manner of moving through the spaces of the city evoke the concepts, ideas and theories of the flâneur and of flânerie. The concept of the flâneur, although derived from nineteenth century Paris, is a flexible enough concept to be applied to contemporary literary and cultural practices.

Benjamin's works, "One Way Street" (1928) (Benjamin, 2007, pp.61-94) and *The Arcades Projects* (Benjamin, 1999), are examples of flânerie as a means to produce texts. Regarding these works, Featherstone writes that 'the reader is invited to stroll down the street, to indulge in a little textual *flânerie*. The *flâneur*, then, is not just the stroller in the city, something to be studied. *Flânerie* is a method for reading texts, for reading the traces of the city. It is also a method of writing, of producing and constructing texts' (Featherstone, 1998, p.910). The

fragmentary qualities of Benjamin's method of writing are reflected later in the writings of Seno's fragmentary and postmodern texts, which represent contemporary Jakartan urban life. Featherstone proposes that walking might not be the only means by which flânerie is practised. He asks, 'is *flânerie* possible as one sits enclosed in a moving vehicle with varying degrees of sensory deprivation?' (Featherstone, 1998, p.911). Even in the 1929 essay, "The Return of the Flâneur", Benjamin had found a relevance for the figure of the flâneur, which he himself had thought to be lost to the past. In a time of consumerism and speed, the practice of wandering had not been lost. A flâneur represented a counter to prevailing urban social trends. The notion of the flâneur has proven itself to be a varied and flexible concept. This association of flânerie with walking is discussed later in Chapter Seven.

To be a flâneur is to observe the happenings of an urban space. It is to be detached from what is happening around oneself and to be aware of one's context. The flâneur enjoys the freedom of being in the city, and moreover the flâneur is able to move through different spaces seamlessly and without being noticed. Tester writes that 'he can or does look just like anyone else, nowhere is forbidden to him; spatially, morally and culturally the public holds no mysteries for the man who is proud of the mystery of himself' (Tester, 1994, p.4). A flâneur's sense of anonymity is also brought about by the presence of the crowd. A flâneur remains aloof from the crowd and also from the products on display for sale in the arcades of Paris, for example (Ferguson, 1994, p.27). On the other hand, Frisby argues that to know what it means to be a flâneur, one needs to explore the practice of flânerie – i.e. what a flâneur does. Frisby writes that '[it can be] associated with a form of *looking*, observing [...] a form of *reading the city* and its population [...] and a form of *reading written texts*' (Frisby, 1994, p.83). The flânerie of reading the city is seen in Seno's text *Kentut Kosmopolitan*

(as explored in Chapter Four); the flânerie of listening and hearing is discussed in Chapters Five and Six and the flânerie of looking is discussed in Chapter Seven.

Indonesian urban spaces have been framed in numerous ways. In what follows, I present a discussion of the various ways in which academics and scholars of urban history and societies have written and framed discourses on Indonesian urban space and societies. I draw on research regarding the dislocation of the urban poor, the manner in which a city reflects a national political culture and ideology, change in the structure of local communities and transitions of colonial/postcolonial societies. Throughout this section I connect writings on Indonesian urban spaces with debates, ideas and theories that are being applied in contexts beyond Indonesia. As such, I argue that Seno's writings on Indonesian urban societies are not only a continuation of earlier literary writings in Indonesian, but also engage in contemporary urban studies discourses.

It is not possible to define Jakarta by a single adjective or limiting notion as, like other cities, Jakarta also is neither 'homogenous, one [or] indivisible' (Preston & Simpson-Housley, 1994, p.11). As such it is more practical to think of the city in terms of plurality: as Jakartas, rather than as a singular Jakarta. Wherever one looks, researches or engages with others one may gain an appreciation of the city's diversity, plurality and richness. Jakarta, in spite of its infrastructure problems, economic imbalances and political injustices, is a rich source of exploration, investigation and analysis. It is a city heavily ingrained in the national imagination, and to explore the city – both physically and through research – leads to further questions regarding the Indonesian nation and its other regions. Jakarta is a worthy place to start.

Jakarta is a complex array of societies, cultures and economic conditions. At the airport in Jakarta, newly arrived travellers are greeted with advertisements for the more exotic 'tourist' locations of Bali and Lombok. Nonetheless, within

tourist advertising, Jakarta is increasingly promoted as being a city with the necessary facilities and infrastructure for international business and trade, and being comparable with cities such as Singapore and Hong Kong – at least in terms of shopping. It is also regarded as being the 'party capital' of Asia. Jakarta, on first impression, can be a startling contrast of huge shopping complexes (such as Grand Indonesia, Plaza Senayan and countless others) and vast areas of urban slums, which are passed over by the encircling toll roads of the city. Wirth's comments, in a different context, regarding the daily urban exposure of the contrasts between 'splendor and squalor' and 'riches and poverty' (Wirth, 2005, p.36) are an apt description of the daily life of Jakartans. The contrast between extremes of wealth and poverty is one of the issues that forms the context for Seno's short stories, novels and essays.

Jakarta is different from other Indonesian cities and at the same time embodies much of daily Indonesian life. It is the *ibu kota* – 'mother city' – of Indonesia and also it is bigger, denser and possibly more diverse than other cities in Indonesia. It is also particularly 'Indonesian' for, as Susan Abeyasekere wrote, Jakarta is one of the few cities where people use Indonesian as 'the normal means of communication' (1989, p.xvii). The use of elements of Hokkien and many other languages in daily Jakartan Indonesian indicates the diverse history of the city and as such the Indonesian that is used in Jakarta is also representative of its history, rather than being 'true and correct' Indonesian. The use of one kind of Indonesian in public may be balanced by the use of another language in the private sphere. Sub-cultural groups in Jakarta have also developed their own language, which further upsets the ideal of the uniform national language. Informal Indonesian links Jakartans from different regions: 'it [is] used by the young as a *lingua franca* different from the native regional languages of their parents or the stuffiness of the standard [Indonesian] used by authorities in school, work or in government' (Abeyasekere, 1989, p.236). The

physical geography of Jakarta is also present in such expressions as '*dari Grogol dia*' (he's from Grogol' which is used as a euphemism for someone who is crazy – Grogol being one of the areas where there is a hospital for patients with a mental disease).

Abeyasekere writes that 'Jakarta is different from the rest of the nation, a world of its own, because it is a large urban concentration, because it is the centre of government and administration, because it is exceptionally privileged in its amenities, and because it is a melting-pot of cultures' (1989, p.xvii). Jakarta is both different from and similar to other Indonesian cities. For example, Medan is one city where Indonesian is used as the daily language and which is also clearly a 'melting-pot' of cultures, with its large minorities of Hokkien speaking Chinese, Acehnese, Javanese, Minang, Malay and Batak communities. Jakarta, I argue, is 'different' by the *degree* of its size, density and heterogeneity. It is also the city that has been most drastically shaped and reshaped in the national imagination and by presidents Sukarno and Suharto. Salim and Kombaitan write that Sukarno's Jakarta was one that 'looked like the world's great cities, such as Paris, New York and Moscow', and similarly Suharto's Jakarta was 'characterized by broad avenues, highways and electric railway lines...hundreds of high-rise buildings, golf courses [and] luxurious housing estates' (Salim & Kombaitan, 2009, p.121). Jakarta, despite the way the name of the city is so often used to refer to a clichéd place of Indonesian success and national development, is also a city that offers great variety and difference over time and space – that is Jakarta is home to many diverse communities with their own interests, and the power relations between Jakartans changes over time.

Sukarno wanted Jakarta (then Djakarta) to be 'an inspiration and beacon to the whole of struggling mankind and to all the emerging forces [...] Indonesia must [...] proudly present Djakarta as the portal of the country' (Sukarno in Kusno, 2000, p.54). Kusno argues that in Sukarno's vision, 'Jakarta, like other

cities throughout the world, had to convey an image of a center with its traces of decolonization and signs of being parallel to other world cities' (Kusno, 2000, p.55). Sukarno sought to place Jakarta on the 'map of world cities' (Kusno, 2000, p.55). Landmarks such as the 'National Monument' and the Masjid Istiqlal were symbols of Jakarta's centrality to national Indonesian life and the modernity of its architectural practices. The engineering of Roosseno Soerjodihadikoesoemo created Sukarno's monuments. Mrázek writes that 'throughout the Sukarno era, and after it ended, Roosseno designed and dreamt out the concrete face of the metropolis, and of Indonesia, as far as it aspired to be modern' (2004, p.436).

Ali Sadikin was installed as governor of Jakarta in the last year of Sukarno's presidency (1966). He would become one of the most influential figures in the shaping of contemporary Jakarta. His ideas and policies for Jakarta were a continuation of Sukarno's ideas – in terms of putting Jakarta on the 'map of world cities' – and his programs were part of the 'development' (*pembangunan*) programs of the New Order government led by President Suharto. Sadikin's programs were implemented at a time of major economic and population growth in Jakarta. Abeyasekere writes of the ambivalent legacy of Sadikin. He sought to declare Jakarta a 'closed city' and prevent further migration from the rural areas, yet, also 'was the sponsor of culture, of urban conservation, of a more rational urban infrastructure' (1989, p.221). He was popular with the middle-classes who 'could afford to appreciate the better things of life' (Abeyasekere, 1989, p.221). Sadikin implemented a *kampung* improvement program, yet was also responsible for land clearances that were implemented in a 'military' like manner (Abeyasekere, 1989, p.227). Elsewhere, Silver asserts that Sadikin's policy of removing *becak*¹⁷ from the streets of Jakarta was one of the most controversial of his policies (2008, p.157).

¹⁷ A three-wheeled bicycle which can transport passengers who sit in a small cabin at the front. Some *becaks*, such as in Medan, have the cabin next to the cyclist. Some *becaks* are propelled by a motorbike and are also used to transport goods as well as people.

Jakarta is a city of difference both within the city itself (but, where do its borders end?) and nationally in comparison with other Indonesian cities. Dick argues that the (economic) history of Indonesia can be read as 'the tale of two cities' (2002, p.xvii). In the nineteenth century, Surabaya had been the larger of the two cities (thanks to its harbour), while 'by the 1920s Surabaya had slipped to second place in terms of population but remained the commercial center' of Indonesia (Dick, 2002, p.xviii). As with Jakarta, during the 1990s Surabaya's cityscape became replete with high rise buildings, 'condominiums, five-star hotels, and shopping malls' (Dick, 2002, p.xix). After Jakarta, Surabaya was Indonesia's other leading 'industrial heartland and metropolis' (Dick, 2002, p.xix). Later Dick marks differences between Jakarta and Surabaya in the following way: 'Surabaya is not Jakarta. In Jakarta the forces of capital were almost unimpeded and ruthlessly supported – and exploited – by the state' and 'a small, like-minded group of senior officials and academics managed in Surabaya fairly successfully to deflect the worst excesses of the New Order' (Dick, 2002, pp.474-475). Unlike in Jakarta and Solo during the time of the May 1998 riots, troops in Surabaya remained stationed at key intersections and protected possible targeted buildings (Dick, 2002, p.475). Difference from Jakarta is not only evidenced in terms of the economic factors as observed by Dick above, but also in terms of cultural objects. Surabaya, for example, in the post-New Order era has used the symbols of the monument 'Jalasvee Jayamahe' near Tanjung Perak port (Salim & Kombaitan, 2009, p.124), the Masjid Al-Akbar and the Suramadu bridge (which connects Surabaya to Madura) (Salim & Kombaitan, 2009, p.124-125). Salim and Kombaitan write that these 'grand objects' are a city's 'attempt to distinguish itself from Jakarta and is [...] spurred on by Surabaya's prominence as a regional city' (Salim & Kombaitan, 2009, p.125).

The rapid increase in Jakarta's population has been an important element in the development of the city. The urban spread of Jakarta has led to the

formation of the region known as Jabodetabek. This is a region that includes the neighbouring cities of Bogor (to the south), Tangerang (to the west) and Bekasi (to the east) (Firman, 2009). According to Firman, Jakarta and Bandung 'are physically integrated' and form an 'urban belt' that is 'characterized by a mixture of socio-economic activities, including agriculture, industries, trade [which has] created very intense rural-urban linkages' (2009, p.327). Salim and Kombaitan have shown that, although Jakarta's population is only increasing at a modest rate, it is the cities on the periphery of Jakarta - Depok, Bekasi and Tangerang - that are showing the highest growth rates. That is, 'the extended metropolitan region is expanding quite rapidly' (2009, p.123). The current rapid growth in cities neighbouring Jakarta is also reflected in the rapid growth of cities in other parts of Indonesia, such as Makassar, Semarang, Bandung and Medan. These cities are growing faster than Jakarta (Salim & Kombaitan, 2009, p.123).

The population - now given at around nine million¹⁸ - has also affected the ways in which urban planners and governors have sought to impose an order or system upon the city. A visitor to contemporary Jakarta - and other Indonesian cities - can easily see the daily interaction between 'formal' and 'informal' life. Abeyasekere, notes that 'the two cities overlap, footpath vendors displaying their meagre wares outside brand-new multi-storey market buildings, scavengers making good pickings in the streets of prosperous suburbs' (1989, p.xvi). Those involved in informal trade live under the threat of policies issued against them: 'police round up unlicensed pedlars' and *becak* drivers are arrested if they venture onto main streets (Abeyasekere, 1989, p.xvi). As Cybriwsky and Ford write, it is difficult to provide accurate and precise figures on the population of Jakarta owing to the 'unknown tens of thousands of poor residents and illegal squatters' (2001, pp.200-201). It is the urban poor - often who have little or no rights to their

¹⁸ Tommy Firman gives the urban population of the 'Jakarta-Bandung Region' as 24 million in 2000 (2009, p.331).

places of dwelling - that are the subjects of Mike Davis's book *Planet of Slums* (2006).

Davis, an urban sociologist, writes of the competing claims for space in Jakarta. He argues that throughout Southeast Asia (and Africa), processes of urban cleansing and ordering of the urban environment are similar to those of Hausmann's practices in nineteenth century Paris¹⁹. Davis argues that the policies of (former) governor Sutiyoso (1997-2007), with the backing of powerful business interests, have been particularly repressive of the urban poor in Jakarta. Davis writes, 'With support from big business, mega-developers ... the governor has evicted more than 50,000 slum-dwellers, thrown 34,000 pedicab drivers out of work, demolished the stalls of 21,000 street vendors, and arrested hundreds of street musicians. His ostensible aim is to make Jakarta (population 12 million) into a "second Singapore"' (Davis, 2006, p.113). On the other hand, suburbs such as Lippo Karawaci are being created that are 'totally protected zones'. In these suburbs, residents can live self-contained lives – with the suburb having its own hospital, shopping mall, cinema and university (Davis, 2006, p.116). Davis's observations are useful, for they show a desire for cleanliness, order and safety on the one hand, and on the other, urban policies that provide no space for the urban poor to maintain their lives. Davis's rather dire conclusion is that 'urban segregation is not a frozen status quo, but rather a ceaseless social war in which the state intervenes regularly in the name of "progress," "beautification," and even "social justice for the poor" to redraw spatial boundaries to the advantage of landowners, foreign investors, elite homeowners, and middle-class commuters' (Davis, 2006, p.98).

The examples described above by Davis relate to what Abidin Kusno calls 'nationalist urbanism'. Kusno writes that by 'insisting that the nation needs all

¹⁹ Baron Haussmann is credited with the implementation of broadening the streets of Paris and demolishing small and narrow streets. The 'Haussmannisation' of Paris saw the city defined by numerous large boulevards that facilitated the faster and free-flow of traffic and people throughout the city.

kinds of 'development', infrastructure and monuments in one place, they [political élites] transform the physical spaces of the city. If a *kampung* [...] has to be demolished and the master plan changed the 'further development' of the nation provides sufficient justification' (2004, p.2377). In the post-1998 era (i.e. after the downfall of President Suharto), Governor Sutiyoso implemented several policies, which, according to Kusno, reflect the ideology of 'nationalist urbanism'. These policies include the fencing and intense maintenance of Monas²⁰ and the renovation of the roundabout in front of the Hotel Indonesia. These policies have limited the opportunities for the informal sector and also the possibility for public gatherings and protests against the political élites. Kusno writes, however, that such moves by Sutiyoso were criticised by those he sought to silence. Quoting a report from the daily *Kompas* newspaper, Kusno writes that the vendors recognised the importance of Monas as a national icon, but also asserted that their rights to the city were more important than the 'pride of the nation' (2004, p.2386).

Part of the ideology of 'nationalist urbanism' includes the building of wide roads that provide space for users of motor vehicles to move through the city. Jakarta's and Surabaya's protocol roads and the Semanggi intersection in Jakarta, built during the Sukarno era, are features of the modern infrastructure of these Indonesian cities. Dick reflects on the changes in Surabaya's planning, which had prioritised the car, but which now seeks to provide a little more room for pedestrians. The Tunjungan area of Surabaya has been subject to 'road-widening' and the one way street is 'terrifying to cross, choked by exhaust fumes and with only a narrow alleyway for pedestrians' (Dick, 2002, p.13). The car has defeated the pleasures of being a pedestrian: 'there is no longer any pleasure in strolling' (Dick, 2002, p.13). The municipal government of the area, however, trialled a closure of evening street traffic in 1994 – which was 'perhaps the first [...]

²⁰ 'Monumen Nasional', or, 'National Monument'. It is an iconic image in central Jakarta built by Sukarno.

momentary setback that the motorcar has suffered in Surabaya' (Dick, 2002, p.13). In this case, Dick observes that the sheer abundance of cars has taken the pleasure out of strolling (2002, p.13). In a later chapter of this thesis, drawing on Seno's stories, I argue that flânerie can be practiced within the confines of a car.

Nostalgia for an urban (and colonial) past is also a part of Sutiyoso's nationalist urbanism. In recent years the city government has sought to turn the northern part of Jakarta (Kota, Sunda Kelapa) into a tourism site, popular with both domestic and international tourists. Kusno quotes a newspaper report in *Suara Karya*, in which (governor) Sutiyoso states that the northern part of Jakarta is to become the future of Jakarta 'to attract tourists, to increase security, to preserve old buildings and their surroundings in order to create an artistic and cheerful atmosphere' (Kusno, 2004, p.2388). The attempt to show another side of Jakarta is to distinguish it from the clichés of traffic chaos and an over-dependence on the private motor vehicle. Kusno argues that such efforts are part of an attempt to restore perceptions of Jakarta that were damaged after the violent riots of 1998, many of which took place in the northern area of Jakarta known as Glodok (a region often generalized as being 'Chinese').

City-based tourism is one of the activities of 'The Indonesian Heritage Society', an organisation that seeks to maintain appreciation of artifacts of Indonesia's history. Nostalgia for colonial culture is also evident in the boutique collection (and use) of Dutch bicycles. Fragments of footage shot in the cities of the Dutch East Indies are available on Youtube.²¹ In these clips of footage one sees the variety of means of transport and the flexible and improvised use of space, which arguably remains current in the contemporary era.

The Jakarta/Batavia that is imagined in these touristic explorations is a city that was a 'transplant' of a Dutch city. Batavia, as planned by Jan Pieterszoon

²¹ See for example Soerabaja Pasar Besar 1929: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_BYm-EoMQk or Batavia 1910-1915 at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuGxCBzo45M&feature=related>.

Coen, was 'complete with canals and stuffy, tightly packed and many-storeyed houses' (McGee, 1967, pp.50-51). This attempted replication failed, and colonials instead sought comfort in the southern area of Batavia. And a new kind of replication emerged: 'the stuffy Dutch canal houses were replaced by country villas [...] surrounded by extensive gardens. The new houses of the Dutch [...] gained some inspiration from the Javanese Priyayi home [...] just as the suburb plan of the streets [...] was imitative of the Javanese kraton-based cities.' (McGee, 1967, p.51). Contemporary tourists to the northern parts of Jakarta can easily consume an imagined urban past without being affected by the social-political-cultural forces of the time.

An evocative portrait of the daily life of an Indonesian city is found in the section 'Rhythms' of Howard Dick's book *Surabaya, City of Work* (2002, pp.19-36). Surabaya's rhythms are divided into daily, weekly, monthly and yearly cycles. The city's rhythms are organised by the ways in which the city's inhabitants perform their work. Dick writes of the servants ('who are first to rise'), the women at the markets ('who arrive on foot or by *becaks* to buy the daily needs of vegetables, fruit [...] and soybean cake'), of peddlers who use bicycles to sell their goods and move throughout the city (Dick, 2002, p.21). The early part of the day is characterised by foot traffic and bicycles, prior to the normal starting time of public transport. It is at this time that normally busy and car-jammed streets are used by the middle classes for their daily exercise: '[at] around five o'clock it is still safe to walk to market or jog in the middle of the road' (Dick, 2002, p.21). Six in the morning marks the moment of the 'exodus to work and school' (Dick, 2002, p.21). Work takes place not only in offices, but also along the streets: 'along main roads, countless newspaper stalls, cigarette sellers, and hawkers of snacks and drinks ply a busy trade' (Dick, 2002, p.21). Dick concludes that the daily rhythm is 'well suited to the demanding climate and that [it] seems to have changed very little in a long time' (2002, p.27).

The informal life of Jakarta – so despised and targeted by Sutiyoso and others – is evident in terms of squatter settlements and also in street trade. Tiwari argues that the rapid growth of major urban regions doesn't allow for 'formal planning techniques' to respond to the needs of the newly arrived urban population (2007, p.348). As in Delhi, Mumbai or Bangkok, in Jakarta one sees the contrast between the planned and formal shopping centres selling the products of global brands, and the 'informal' street traders outside the malls selling local foods, mobile phone cards and cigarettes (Tiwari, 2007, p.348). Informal traders also sell their wares within the planned spaces and transport networks, such as on the trains that run from the north of Jakarta to Bogor, a city to the south (or indeed, southern part) of Jakarta. Tiwari argues for the importance of street vendors 'who make it possible for the poorer sections of society to obtain nutritious food at affordable prices'. But not only this, Tiwari writes that cities with higher numbers of street vendors are also safer places as people are able to monitor what is happening in their community (2007, p.350). A challenge for planning, Tiwari concludes, is planning for the unplanned (Tiwari, 2007, p.351).

The informal street food trade of Bogor is explored in Irene Tinker's chapter on Bogor in *Street Foods* (1997, pp.23-41). Her study shows how the Bogor city government has sought to manage the informal street food trade. Such crossover between the 'formal' and 'informal' aspects of urban life is a frequent backdrop to the writings of Seno Gumira Ajidarma.

The crossover and interaction between the urban and the rural is formulated in the concept of the '*desakota*' or 'cityvillage'. This concept refers to 'regions of dense population and mixed land uses' in which 'traditional agriculture is found side by side with modern factories, commercial activities, and suburban development' (McGee and Robinson in P. J. M. Nas & Boender, 2002, p.10). This aspect of mixture and hybridisation is also referred to as being a kind of

'extended metropolitan regions' (Drakakis-Smith in Davis, 2006, p.10). That is, this kind of urban/rural region 'represent[s] a fusion of urban and regional development in which the distinction between what is urban and rural has become blurred' (Drakakis-Smith in Davis, 2006, p.10).

This chapter has shown how Indonesian urban experience has been approached by a range of scholars from different perspectives. I have provided a theory of the flâneur and also some of the defining features of urban experience as explained by Mumford, Simmel and Wirth. Both this chapter and the previous one have shown the complexity, richness and diversity of experience in Indonesian urban life. The discourses of urban studies complement the literary imaginings of urban life as presented in the first chapter. I argue that the city is subject to a constant contestation of meaning and interpretation. Seno, I argue, continues this act of interpretation of urban space and urban societies. In the next chapter, I introduce an overview of Seno and his work.

Chapter Three: An Introduction to Seno Gumira Ajidarma

This chapter has three main purposes. Firstly, I will present an overview of Seno's life and writing and literary career to date. This covers his time as a student, journalist, writer and academic. This overview shows how Seno's interests and career have been shaped by his time growing up in the United States and (mainly) in Yogyakarta in a mixed-Javanese and academic family. Secondly, I present an overview of his many and varied published works. To date, Seno has had some thirty books (of varying genre) published. This section shows how Seno's works cover a variety of subjects and themes and also how he explores genres and writing practices. The final section of this chapter addresses academic commentary on Seno's writings. I suggest that although there has been relatively little scholarly attention paid to Seno – in comparison to say, more prominent Indonesian writers such as Pramoedya Ananta Toer – the work already completed offers useful starting points for further research.

I conclude that Seno performs his writing practice as a flâneur. That is, he positions himself as an outsider looking in on the circumstances in which he finds himself. This facilitates a critical distance from the social, cultural and political conditions of contemporary urban Indonesia which – through his writings – he observes, critiques and deconstructs.

Seno has made a significant contribution to Indonesian writing over the past thirty years. I illustrate this by reference to the writings of scholars who have focused on his work to show how Seno's work contributes to an understanding and analysis of contemporary Indonesian society and literary practice. I firstly turn towards a brief overview of Seno's biography and career.

Seno's Biography and Career in Journalism

Seno was born in Boston, USA, in 1958, the older of two siblings. His father, Mohammad Setia Adji Sastroamidjojo, earned a PhD in physics and was an expert in alternative energy, based at the University of Gadjah Mada in Yogyakarta.

Seno was born when his father was attending university at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Seno's mother, Poestika Kusuma Sujana²² was a medical doctor, who specialised in internal diseases (Hartiningsih, 2005). From an early age Seno was called 'Mira'. 'Seno' was the name used for his father. Until he was five, Seno (Mira) lived in America and thus learned English as his first language and used it to speak with his parents. When they returned to Indonesia to live in Yogyakarta in 1963 Seno used Javanese as his first language. Regarding the languages used in his family, Seno writes that:

I heard my parents speak to each other in Dutch, I spoke to them in Javanese. Since they were young, both of my parents had used Dutch and, during family visits, I'd always hear that language being spoken. It was only because of the Japanese occupation, that they were forced to use Indonesian – a language which sounded strange to my ears (Ajidarma, 2007b, p.4).

Seno's interest in Javanese culture is evident through his appropriation of wayang stories (for example in his novels *Wisanggeni*, *Sang Buronan* and *Kitab Omong Kosong*) and in particular the comics written by R.A. Koesasih²³. Seno attended primary school and high school in Yogyakarta. During his first years at high school, he started reading books by Karl May with the stories of Old Shatterhand's adventures. This gave him the inspiration to start travelling. Seno went to West Java and then to Sumatra. When he arrived in Medan (North

²² The novel, *Negeri Senja*, is dedicated to her.

²³ Koesasih's comics were often based on the Ramayana and Mahabharata. They also drew on some elements of Chinese martial arts. Seno has said that it was through Koesasih's comics that he learned the stories of the Ramayana and Mahabharata and where he also developed a strong reading habit.

Sumatra) he started working in a *krupuk* factory. When he ran out of money, his mother sent him a ticket to Yogyakarta. Seno then continued his schooling in Yogyakarta. He remains a broad and frequent traveller.

When he was in senior high school, Seno became interested in theatre. For two months he joined the *Alam* theatre group, under the leadership of Azwar A.N.. Seno was drawn to the world of the arts, personified in the charismatic figure of Rendra. He was also influenced by the '*mbeling*²⁴' poems of Remy Sylado, which were being published in *Aktuil* magazine. Some of Seno's early poems were also published in *Aktuil*. Soon, his poems were published in the more prestigious literary magazine *Horison*. It was then that Seno felt that he could justifiably call himself a poet (Amorita, 2010).

Seno moved to Jakarta at the age of nineteen and studied cinematography at the Jakarta Arts Institute. While a student, he earned a living by working as journalist for the dailies *Merdeka* and *Zaman*, before ending up at *Jakarta Jakarta*. After ten years, Seno received his Bachelor of Arts from the IKJ, after which he studied philosophy at Driyakarya and at the University of Indonesia. His Master's thesis was on the discipline of photography and formed the basis for his book *Kisah Mata: Perbincangan Tentang Ada* (Ajidarma, 2002b). In 2005, he finished his PhD at the University of Indonesia with a thesis on the comic series *Panji Tengkorak*. Currently, Seno works as a lecturer at both the University of Indonesia and IKJ. He continues to write for publications such as *Intisari*, *djakarta!* and work as a curator at Antara News Agency in Jakarta.

The written word is the main medium through which Seno Gumira Ajidarma engages with the world. Writing, reading, editing and compiling texts are all parts of his profession. Seno describes himself as a '*tukang*': roughly translated as a 'skilled laborer or craftsman' (Echols & Shadily, 1990, p.590). The term refers to someone who performs his job to order and for a particular

²⁴ Playful, irreverent, insubordinate.

market. Seno, as a writer and academic, could also be described as a 'cendekiawan' (intellectual) – a role or position that is more cerebral, rather than belonging to the intuitive and physical abilities of the hand. According to Sennett, 'craftsmanship' is not something that 'waned with the advent of industrial society', but is something that 'cuts a far wider swathe than skilled manual labor; it serves the computer programmer, the doctor, and the artist' (Sennett, 2008, p.9). Similarly, Seno says that 'to be a craftsman [*tukang*], skill is not enough. One must struggle intensely. A carpenter must have individual knowledge of wood. A farmer must have an individual knowledge of the weather, soil, water and seeds' (Hartiningsih, 2005).

Agni Amorita AMD, a confidante and former colleague of Seno's at *Jakarta Jakarta*, argues that Seno's writings show the 'beauty of love and hope' while also forcing readers to confront 'death, terror and the blackest kind of tragedy'. She argues that Seno's writings 'encourage us to enter into those tragedies, and, undeniably in those tragedies we see our own faces' (Amorita, 2010, p.1). This sentiment is also echoed by Stefan Danerek, a scholar of Indonesian literature who writes that, 'Seno is...able to depict the harsh social reality in an easygoing ironic way that takes the edge off the misery in the reading experience' (2006, p.32). Amorita had access to stories written by Seno prior to their publication. In 1999, Amorita was also the founder of a Yahoo email discussion group that focuses on Seno's writings.²⁵

Seno's first artistic forays were in acting, before pursuing writing and journalism more seriously. As a journalist, his career was halted in the early 1990s when *Jakarta Jakarta* published articles on the Santa Cruz massacre in Dili, in the then Indonesian province of East Timor (Clark, 2010, p.12). The violence in Santa Cruz, Seno's attempts at publishing material on the violence and the eventual censorship suffered by Seno and two other editors at *Jakarta Jakarta*

²⁵ Seno himself is not involved in this email discussion group. The email group was designed, initially, as a forum for discussing his texts.

were significant points in Seno's career as a writer and journalist. The Santa Cruz incident formed the backdrop to and impetus for three books by Seno: *Jazz, Parfum dan Insiden* (Ajidarma, 1996a), *Saksi Mata* (Ajidarma, 2002d) and *Ketika Jurnalisme Dibungkam Sastra Harus Bicara*²⁶ (Ajidarma, 1997). Although some of Seno's early stories in the *Penembak Misterius* collection had dealt with state violence and social issues, the stories of *Manusia Kamar* (Ajidarma, 1988) and *Negeri Kabut* (Ajidarma, 1996b) were largely abstract, philosophical and general – that is, somewhat removed from the immediate social, cultural and political context of New Order Indonesia. It can be argued that the Santa Cruz violence was a turning point in his career: not only did it bring Seno increasing media coverage and attention for his writings on the violence in East Timor, the incident also provided Seno with a clear point of opposition. By criticising the Indonesian army (*Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia*), Seno's criticisms were going to the very heart of the New Order regime.

At the time of the Santa Cruz incident, one journalist, Sri Lestari, from *Jakarta Jakarta* was sent to cover the story. Two news magazines – *Tempo* and *Editor* – also sent journalists (Ajidarma, 1996b, p.2). Due to the unavailability of other members of staff at *Jakarta Jakarta*, at the time of the incident Seno was the editorial leader. Sri Lestari sent her reports by fax to the *JJ* office in Jakarta. These were summaries of transcripts from interviews with victims and witnesses who were present at the Santa Cruz cemetery. It was the task of Antyo Rentjoko to wait for the faxes from Dili and to submit them as articles to the editor of the 'national news' desk. These articles would then finally be approved by the 'editorial leader' (Amorita, 2010, p.2).

The military reacted strongly to the reports regarding the violence in Dili. The reports were considered to be too 'vulgar in uncovering the crimes committed by the military' (Amorita, 2010, p.2). Senior figures from the Gramedia group

²⁶ This is both an essay and title of a collection of essays.

were threatened with the removal of *JJ*'s publishing licence. A publishing licence (*Surat Izin Usaha Penerbitan Pers*) was essential to publishing during the New Order era, and its removal, or threatened removal, was one of the main tactics of censorship and imposing media conformism. Subsequently, it was proposed that *JJ*'s publishing license would not be removed as long as Sri Lestari and another journalist involved in the reports were fired. In a personal communication between Sri Lestari and Amorita, Sri Lestari states, 'Seno was very responsible as a senior. He said to the management that I was only doing my job and that I was just following orders. So, he asked that I shouldn't be punished' (Amorita, 2010, p.2). As a result of the compromise between *JJ* and the ruling elite, three of *JJ*'s editors were sacked. These were Seno, Waskito Trisnoaji (implementing editor) and Usep Hermawan, who worked as editor for the domestic news. They were sacked at the beginning of 1992 (Amorita, 2010, p.2).

At the time of his removal from the post at *JJ*, Seno received offers from other media outlets. But Jakob Oetama - founder of *Kompas* newspaper - requested that Seno and the two others remain as part of the Kompas Gramedia Group. The three were allowed to continue to come to their office as usual, on condition that they didn't perform any journalistic tasks. Before that decision was made, however, Seno's story, "*Pelajaran Mengarang*" (The Writing Lesson) had already been published in *Kompas* (January 5, 1992). It was at this time, around the early 1990s, that Seno became more active as a short story writer. Prior to this, he had frequently received recognition for his stories; however, subsequently his stories became more strongly focused on the violence committed by the government - particularly in Aceh and East Timor. Several years later, he would also write the theatre manuscript, "Why did you kidnap our child?", which referred to the student activists who disappeared in 1998 (Amorita, 2010, p.3).

Seno returned to being a journalist in 1993 when he was asked by Oetama to work with Bre Redana to fill the content for the tabloid magazine *Citra*, which was concerned with popular culture and was also a part of the Kompas Gramedia Group. In 1994, Seno returned to *JJ* and was installed once more as editorial leader until the closure of the magazine in 1999. Now, Seno works as a permanent writer at the monthly magazine *Intisari*, the oldest magazine owned by Gramedia.

Overview of Seno's Oeuvre

Seno's published work includes thirteen collections of short stories, seven novels, one play, three comics and five books of non-fiction. He also has three books of poems under the name of Mira Sato. These are *Mati, Mati, Mati* (Sato, 1975), *Catatan-catatan* (Sato, 1978b) and *Bayi Mati* (Sato, 1978a). Two of his books have been translated: *Eyewitness* (a translation of *Saksi Mata* by Jan Lingard) and *Jakarta at a Certain Point in Time* (translations by Michael Bodden). Seno is also the editor of a collection of short stories, *Dua Kelamin Bagi Midin: Cerpen Kompas pilihan 1970-1980* (Ajidarma, 2003b). One of the comics that appears under Seno's name, *Taxi Blues*, is an adaptation of a short story that appears in *Iblis Tidak Pernah Mati* (Ajidarma, 1999). The degree of co-operation with Seno on this book was minimal, as only immediately before the publication of this comic did the comic artist seek permission from Seno to print the book. The illustrations are by Erwin Prima Arya²⁷. Seno's first book was published in 1975 and his most recent book – *Nagabumi*²⁸ (Ajidarma, 2009) – was published in late 2009. Given that he published little between 1979 and the late 1980s, he has had

²⁷ The book is published by Smart Reading, 2001.

²⁸ *Nagabumi* as a serialised text is available at:
<http://suaramerdeka.com/v1/index.php/read/entertainmen/2009/11/26/1562/NagaBumi-1010>.
(Accessed May 2, 2010)

books published at a rapid rate. The 1990s and 2000s have been Seno's most productive decades.

As I will discuss later in this thesis (Chapter Seven), Seno usually concludes his stories, essays or novels with the time and place of their writing. Place and location is significant in Seno's writings. For example, in the case of the novel *Kitab Omong Kosong*, written between 2000 and 2001, the locations of the writing are Jakarta, Yogyakarta and Victoria (Canada) (Ajidarma, 2004d, p.620). He has written stories in North America, Europe, Africa, Central Asia and various parts of Southeast Asia (outside of Indonesia), not to mention various remote parts of Indonesia. Location and the travelling undertaken to reach various destinations are part of what informs Seno's writing process. For example, the following statement can be found at the conclusion of *Negeri Senja*: 'Pondok Aren, March-May, 2003 (while reflecting on Timbuktu, a city on the edge of the Sahara Desert, Mali, December, 1996)' (Ajidarma, 2003a). On the other hand, the story "*Kyoto Monogatari*", which deals with 'either a trip from Tokyo to Kyoto or from Kyoto to Osaka' (Ajidarma, 2004b, p.61), is a reflection on the possibilities of 'knowing' while moving through a landscape in a bullet train. The story was written in Durban and Cape Town in March, 2002 (Ajidarma, 2004b, p.68).

Several of Seno's texts are collaborations with other writers and he frequently asserts his indebtedness to other figures. Seno's comics *Jakarta 2039* (Ajidarma, 2001) and *Sukab Intel Melayu* (Ajidarma & Zacky, 2002) are collaborations with the Yogyakarta-based comic artist Asnar Zacky. The drawings for *Wisanggeni, Sang Buronan* (Wisanggeni, The Outlaw) (Ajidarma, 2000c) are by Danarto, an important Indonesian short story writer. Seno has said that Danarto's images were important to him in his writing of the story: as such, they are not illustrations of Seno's narrative, but rather Seno's story is a response and engagement with Danarto's drawings (Clark, 2010, p.57). The book "*Aku*

Kesepian, Sayang." "Datanglah, Menjelang Kematian." (Ajidarma, 2004b), is the work of Seno as 'text writer' (*penulis teks*) and Avi Basuki as 'graphic designer' (*perancang visual*). *Negeri Senja*, written as a serial in *Media Indonesia* between 1997 and 2003 draws on the work of a clothes designer, Poppy Dharsono (Ajidarma, 2003a, p.242). Seno explains his collaboration as follows: 'I didn't feel I could write precisely about the clothes being worn by the characters in the story, so I needed the help of a clothes designer and an illustrator' (Ajidarma, 2003a, p.242). Seno's novel *Kalatidha: Sebuah novel*, is based on 'an idea from Nugroho Suksmanto' (Ajidarma, 2007a, title page). *Biola tak Berdawai* (Ajidarma, 2004c) is based on the film script by Sekar Ayu Asmara. The number of literary collaborations and the variety of kinds of texts Seno has produced shows his flexibility as a writer. It also shows, however, that Seno is willing to expand the concept of the 'author' and 'writer' as someone who is an isolated individual drawing upon his or her own creativity, intuition, knowledge and research.

Seno's versatility as a writer is also evident in the range of subject matter with which he engages. We see this in his writing of novels, short stories, poems, essays and academic works. His serial novels such as *Kitab Omong Kosong* (Ajidarma, 2004d) and *Nagabumi* (Ajidarma, 2009) and his serialised essays and columns such as those used as the basis for the books such as *Sembilan Wali & Siti Jenar* (Ajidarma, 2007d) make Seno's texts readily and easily consumable through the mass media. *Sembilan Wali*, for example, documents Seno's journey through Java and his visits to the graves of the 'saints' who spread Islam throughout Java. *Nagabumi*, on the other hand, is a martial arts story set in thirteenth century Southeast Asia. *Layar Kata* (Ajidarma, 2000a) is a series of essays of film criticism. *Surat dari Palmerah* (Ajidarma, 2002f), a collection from Seno's columns in *Jakarta Jakarta*, largely deals with the daily politics of New Order Indonesia in a relaxed and ironic manner. This text also uses images from Indonesian – mainly Javanese – popular culture. On the other hand, Seno has

also written a largely theoretical discussion of photography – *Kisah Mata* (Ajidarma, 2002b) – that draws on the writings of John Berger, Jean Mohr, Susan Sontag and other cultural theorists. The magazine *djakarta!*, the columns of which have been collected in *affair* (Ajidarma, 2004a) and *Kentut Kosmopolitan* (Ajidarma, 2008) has been the main media for Seno's writings on urban life.

Seno's practice accords with that of a flâneur in that his writings appear frequently as short essays or serialised novels in mainstream media. His works are easily consumed throughout the day – read in newspapers, or through browsing on the Internet. The form of his writings (for example the essays of *djakarta!* or the serialised novel in *Suara Merdeka*) bring to mind the presence of feuilleton in late nineteenth and early twentieth century newspapers. Seno's writings on daily urban and political life continue a part of that tradition as his writings refer to a vast array of experiences and sources that are related back to urban contexts. Seno also practises his flânerie, not only as an observer of daily urban life, but also as a writer who moves through the world writing and drawing on these experiences. In this sense Seno is a cosmopolitan: he is comfortable in many cultures, capable of creating a space for himself in the circumstances he occupies. As I have shown above, Seno moves easily across both subject matter and form of writing: again, this is the flexibility and detachment typical of a flâneur. As a writer, Seno refuses to be pinned down to one form or one subject matter. Also, he refuses to be pinned down to one geographical location, moving comfortably in urban Jakarta, rural Java, the national parks of Indonesia and throughout Europe, central Asia and northern America.

Critical Analyses of Seno's Writing

In this section I give an overview of the scholarly work on Seno's writings. The relatively small amount of writing on Seno reflects a general lack of interest in

modern Indonesian literature amongst 'Indonesianists' and also the inability of even major Indonesian writers to reach an audience beyond Indonesia and outside of specialist circles. In this section I discuss the interpretive writings of Efrizan, Clark, Allen and Bodden.

Efrizan's 1996 MA thesis analyses Seno's book *Saksi Mata*. He draws three conclusions regarding Seno, namely that he is a 'humanist', 'journalist' and that he has his own specific 'ideology' (Efrizan, 1996, pp.98-102). Efrizan states that Seno incorporates elements of oral literary traditions, and that the character of 'Sukab' is the author's representative. He argues that these attributes differentiate Seno's writings from those of other short story writers. The character of Sukab recurs throughout Seno's stories and he becomes a standard and typical feature of Seno's stories. In the short comic, *Sukab Intel Melayu* (Ajidarma & Zacky, 2002), for example, as I have argued elsewhere, 'Sukab' is a parody of the conventions of the spy character. This use of parody and repetition of previous styles or characters is a part of postmodern literary practice. [...] Sukab is made to be a mere literary convention rather than an independent and original character (2004, p.53). In relation to the *Saksi Mata* short stories, Efrizan sees that Seno makes an effort to introduce the reader to particular 'facts' regarding historical events in East Timor. Through the stories, Seno acts as a subjective journalist as well as that of an individual who presents a humanistic perspective.

Marshall Clark's essay "Seno Gumira Ajidarma: an Indonesian Imagining East Timor" emphasises the importance of the *Saksi Mata* stories in Seno's literary output (Clark, 1999). As in other analyses of Indonesian literature by Tickell and Bodden, Clark questions the dichotomy of 'realist/anti-realist' literature as a continuing trend in contemporary Indonesian writing. Or, as Stefan Danerek has written, '[Seno's stories] were about real topical issues but are conveyed with an aura of absurdism' (Danerek, 2006, p.28). Elsewhere, Clark has argued that Seno's stories, which he calls 'anti-realist', are not necessarily a

disavowal of direct social and political criticism. Rather, they are a response to the social and political conditions of New Order Indonesia. Clark writes, 'Seno obscured the fact that the stories were obviously written about...East Timor...he did this by inscribing the stories with very little textual reference to East Timor itself' (Clark, 1999, p.35). Henk Maier argues that by 'rejecting realism and strict moralism, the tales of the seventies and eighties were preoccupied with an experimental freedom that confused the critics and alienated those who thought that "literature" still had a role to play in the New Order' (1999, p.258). Although Maier doesn't name or mention Seno he glosses over some of the critical aspects of literature from the New Order era. On the other hand, Clark suggests that Indonesian writers can be both non-realist and critical of social-political conditions. He writes that writers such as Putu Wijaya, Danarto and Seno were 'in their own oblique way just as oppositional and political as their realist counterpart, Pramoedya' (Clark, 2001, p.165). I argue that rejection or contestation of dominant ideologies or literary practices functions in varying ways: a writer's work is open to interpretation from numerous perspectives. For example, Seno's controversial stories from *Saksi Mata* may speak primarily to a middle class Jakartan elite, but they do not necessarily mean the same thing to the East Timorese whose suffering he sought to represent.

Clark presents the writings of *Saksi Mata* as indications of Seno's 'desire to not only reach deeper within his own subconsciousness, but also the reader's subconscious, whatever the reader's geopolitical background' (Clark, 1999, p.52). As such, Clark further asserts the position of literature (or the arts in general) as a means to uncover the 'subconscious' and 'deeper thoughts' of an individual author. This approach places literature and the text as something that is secondary to a primary understanding of 'the subconscious'. By contrast, I adopt an approach that places the text as an independent document in itself, rather than arguing for how it might relate to an author's 'subconscious'.

The heroic figure of the writer is also a theme picked up in Bodden's article, "Seno Gumira Ajidarma and Fictional Resistance to an Authoritarian State in 1990s Indonesia" (Bodden, 1999). In contrast to Maier's statement regarding the lack of political engagement from writers of the New Order era, Bodden asserts the 'courage' of Seno in his works that 'touch on sensitive social and political problems' (Bodden, 1999, p.153). Significantly, Bodden argues that Seno is 'interesting for other reasons' – that is, beyond his criticism of state policy and socio-political conditions in Indonesia. Bodden considers Seno's work to be 'a register of the middle-class artistic modes of resistance' (Bodden, 1999, p.154). This is relevant for it describes the form in which Seno seeks to convey his ideas. That is, Seno's writings are of interest to a particular social-economic group. Moreover, they are made available through media that is easily consumed by Indonesia's (and Jakarta's in particular) growing middle classes.

Bodden identifies several styles within Seno's writing oeuvre, including 'psychological realism', and 'magic realist' and 'absurdist' (1999, p.154). Examples of these styles can be found in Seno's collection *Saksi Mata*. Bodden also states a case for Seno's postmodernist practices, which he identifies as his use of collage, combining fact with fiction, multiple perspectives in narrative structure and a self-conscious writing style (Bodden, 1999, p.154). Seno's postmodernist writing, Bodden writes, is also another 'mode of resistance' against the New Order state. The final phase Bodden writes of relates to the early stages of the *reformasi* movement. Bodden claims that Seno's stories of the late 1990s are examples of a kind of *sastra aktual* – or 'topical literature' (1999, p.155). The past ten years have shown that Seno is capable of writing both works that can be considered as 'topical' or 'critical of social and political conditions' and those that are more experimental in form and style (Bodden, 1999, p.154). The short essays in the collections *Surat dari Palmerah* (Ajidarma, 2002f), *affair* (Ajidarma, 2004a) and *Kentut Kosmopolitan* (Ajidarma, 2008) also represent another aspect of

Seno's style. These essays reflect pithy combinations of philosophy, cultural studies theories and commentaries on urban daily life.

Pam Allen picks up on a different aspect of Seno's writing in her introductory essay to her translation of *Tujuan: Negeri Senja*, which is translated as "Destination: The Land of Never-ending Sunset" (Allen, 2002). Allen cites Seno himself to show his ambivalence regarding the meaning of his stories and the manner in which they are read. Allen argues that it is not the stories themselves that determine meaning, but instead, the reader is the holder, maker and determiner of a story's meaning. Allen writes that we as readers must 'make the meaning' for ourselves (Allen, 2002, p.178). Allen's translation places Seno's works in a different light to other translations that generally emphasise the political observations in his writings - such as in Hellwig and Tagliacozzo's volume. Seno is a writer of diverse styles and this is yet to be seen in the translations that are available in English. He is flexible and able to adapt his writings to his own professional career (as a writer), personal ambitions and curiosity. It is difficult to pin him down.

The most significant work on Seno to date is the book *Jakarta at a Certain Point in Time: Fiction, Essays and a Play from the Post-Suharto Era in Indonesia* (Ajidarma, 2002a). This book includes an introductory essay by Michael Bodden, short stories, a play script ("Why did you abduct our son?" pp.60-92), essays and illustrations by Semsar Siahaan. Two of the illustrations by Siahaan are direct visual responses to Seno's short stories - "*Jakarta, Suatu Ketika*" and "*Sepotong Senja Untuk Pacarku*". As with *Eye Witness*, Jan Lingard's translation of *Saksi Mata*, this book provides English language readers an opportunity to gain a focused introduction to Seno's post-1998 career.

In my Masters thesis I explored the postmodernist aspects of Seno's writings. In particular, and in a similar vein to Bodden, I argued that Seno's postmodernist style is evident through multiple narratives in a given story or

novel, through his imagining of characters as fractured selves, through his appropriation of popular culture (and in turn, his deconstruction of what 'culture' is) and through his questioning of the modernising aspirations of the New Order government. I juxtaposed Seno's postmodernism against the ideologies of the New Order government. I classified Seno as an author who not only crosses a number of styles in his writings, but as someone who represented a kind of 'opposition' to mainstream Indonesian politics throughout the New Order era.²⁹

I have also published two short articles on Seno's writings: "The Jazz of Jakarta" (2008) and a review of *Kentut Kosmopolitan* (2009). "The Jazz of Jakarta" questioned the notion of jazz being a keynote sound in the urbanscape of Jakarta. In this article, I conclude that the idea of Javanese or Balinese gamelan as 'the music of Indonesia' is outdated and clichéd and that instead, just as other musicians throughout the world do, Indonesian musicians make jazz, and other kinds of music for that matter, that is representative of both local and global identities. This argument is further developed in Chapter Five of this thesis. My review of *Kentut Kosmopolitan* situates Seno's collection of essays in relation to other books and writings on Jakarta. I compare his book to Christopher Silver's book *Planning the Megacity* and also Lea Jellinek's book on *kampung* life in Jakarta during the 1970s and 1980s³⁰. I argue that the significance of Seno's essays is their focus on how the urban populace – so often represented as being a hindrance to 'development' – provides valuable and necessary services. Not only this, the urban poor adapt to the new and often harsh environment in innovative ways. I address this in more detail in Chapter Four.

This review shows that there is much scope for new works on Seno and his writings. Clearly, there still exists an opportunity for a biography of Seno. We are also yet to see writings that cover the perspectives of contemporary Indonesian

²⁹ The thesis is available from 'archive.org'. It will be published in Indonesian in 2011.

³⁰ Lea Jellinek, *The Wheel of Fortune: the history of a poor community in Jakarta*, Sydney: Asian Studies Association of Australia in association with Allen and Unwin, 1991.

intellectuals and how they consider Seno as a writer, critic and intellectual. The literary overview also shows that there is virtually no previous scholarship that directly relates Seno's writing to urban life and the development of literary *vis a vis* the city. A comparative study with writers from other Southeast Asian countries would also be valuable.

The next chapter addresses the questions of how Seno interprets the daily urban life of contemporary Jakarta. This chapter draws on the essays first published in *djakarta!* and republished in the book *Kentut Kosmopolitan* (Ajidarma, 2008). This book is perhaps Seno's most self-conscious inquiry into daily urban life. Furthermore, it is his most personal account of daily Jakartan life. His voice as the narrator is present throughout the essays which document his subjective experiences of Jakarta. Throughout, the practice of flânerie is explored in a new and critical manner. These essays also draw on and question dichotomies of formal and informal public space, global and local cultures and the limits of public and private space.

Chapter Four: The Urban Spaces of *Kentut Kosmopolitan*

These essays are an effort to be critical towards the world around me – that is, Jakarta – with the risk that this perspective will change³¹ (Ajidarma, 2008, p.vii).

The ordinary persons who use urban space from day to day imbue it with meaning and symbols, and have a strong sense of space (Colombijn, 2007, p.258).

Writing Jakarta and Its People

Seno's essays compiled in *Kentut Kosmopolitan*³² (Ajidarma, 2008) present a particular way of knowing Jakarta. In these essays, Jakarta is a site of contested urban meaning and interactions. Seno, through postmodernist observations, explores the manner in which power relations are formalised, strengthened and challenged. In this chapter, I show how Seno's essays in *Kentut Kosmopolitan* explore the dichotomies of 'formal' and 'informal' public space, global and local cultures and the borders of 'public' and 'private' space.

An important element of Seno's essays relates to notions of 'the *rakyat*' and the emerging middle classes. He shows how the 'powerless' – often identified as 'the *rakyat*' (or ordinary people) create specific uses for space and their own meanings of the city. In these essays the *rakyat* are not presented as powerless and oppressed. Nor are the middle classes of Jakarta represented as being a homogenised class of people. Ideas regarding the middle classes and the *rakyat*

³¹ Sudut pandang itu adalah usaha untuk bersikap kritis terhadap dunia di sekitar saya, yakni kehidupan Jakarta, dengan resiko bahwa sudut pandang itu kemudian juga berubah.

³² Or, in English, 'Cosmopolitan Fart'. The essay of the same name is found on pages 35-38 of *Kentut Kosmopolitan*.

are part of the process of establishing what is 'formal' and what is 'informal' space.

I explore the writings of *Kentut Kosmopolitan* separately because it is the most recent collection of Seno's writings on Jakarta and as such provides readers with a direct insight into his perspective on contemporary Jakartan life. The essays included in the collection also address similar themes to those in some of his short stories and novels, but in these essays Seno explores those issues in a more overtly theoretical and self-reflexive manner.

The ideology of the city's landmarks has been explored in the works of Kusno (2000) and Permanasari (2007). Seno's essays in *Kentut Kosmopolitan*, on the other hand, look at the 'small' and 'trivial' aspects of daily life in the national capital. They relate to the scholarly interests of theorists such as Henri Lefebvre (1991) and Michel de Certeau (1988), who explore how public space is reshaped and imagined through the ways it is used by the city's inhabitants. As Seno states in the quote above, the essays of *Kentut Kosmopolitan* are an attempt to understand 'the world around' him. This book – his second that deals explicitly with Jakarta, the other being *affair* (Ajidarma, 2004a) – is a significant addition to the increasing number of contemporary texts that deal with Jakarta: a literary topic that is becoming increasingly diverse. Seno's essays are significant for they develop notions of the flâneur and flânerie as well as questioning, interrogating and negotiating the idea of public space. These elements of the essays lend themselves to an engagement with the writings of Benjamin (1996), Sennett (2002) and other critics of Indonesia's urban history such as Marco Kusumawijaya (2004), Peter Nas (2002) and Christopher Silver (2008).

The essays of *Kentut Kosmopolitan* provide a complementary perspective to other writings on Indonesian cities and Jakarta in particular. While part of the popular media, these essays offer a more nuanced perspective on Indonesian urban life than, for example, the official government promotional materials on

Jakarta and the state ideology on Jakarta that posits the capital city as the hallmark of 'development' in Indonesia. Seno's essays also provide a philosophical study of urban life in contrast to the daily columns of 'crime' and 'metropolitan' found in newspapers such as *Kompas* or *Tempo* news magazine. Seno's essays are chronicles that indicate an author's response to the events and situations of which he is a part. Like Pramoedya's stories in *Tales from Djakarta*, these are also 'caricatures of circumstances and their human beings'. Yet, Seno views Jakarta in a somewhat more positive light than Pramoedya did.

The quote used at the beginning of this chapter is relevant for it refers to the 'elusiveness', 'flexibility' and 'fluidity' of Seno's identity as a writer. Seno, in this quote, acknowledges that his perspective on Jakarta is subject to change. His own flexibility and openness to a diversity of styles is also reflected in the multiple identities, spaces and meanings of the city of Jakarta – the city that he routinely occupies, but which he also habitually leaves. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Seno is an author who is difficult to pin down. This flexibility and ambivalence is a typical characteristic of postmodernist cultural practices. Seno's postmodernist tendencies are reflected in the variety of forms and styles of his writing as well as in the variety of spaces, milieus and social, cultural and political spaces he occupies.

According to *The Lonely Planet*, Jakarta is 'filled with all the good and bad of Indonesian life'. However, the paragraph on Jakarta merely emphasises what is 'bad' about the city. Readers are told that: 'Jakarta's infamous *macet* chokes its freeways, town planning is anathema and all attempts to forge a central focal point for the city have stuttered and ultimately failed. The first – or only – thought on most travellers' minds is how quickly the city and its polluted streets can be left behind.'³³ Such descriptions of Indonesian cities aimed at tourists, however, can be dismissed in the manner of Howard Dick who, in his book on

³³ <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/indonesia/jakarta#>

Surabaya, stated that 'the perspective of the foreign tourist has no intrinsic merit' (2002, p.1). Yet, Seno's essays share some commonalities with the tourist's perspective, given that he remains, in various instances, an 'outsider' within Jakarta. He is, after all, from the small Javanese city of Yogyakarta and is deeply influenced by its traditions. Seno is new to Jakarta and, like tourists and short-term visitors, experiences a newness and exoticness in the city.

On the other hand, Christopher Silver, an academic who has written a history of the planning of Jakarta, contrasts his first impressions with impressions he formed based on an understanding of Jakarta's history:

Jakarta, with its jumbling and chaotic urban activities seemed devoid of the basic elements of planning typically found in the West...[but it was] in many respects the outcome of carefully calculated planning interventions; a city where planning was an integral part of the apparatus of government management (Silver, 2008, p.2).

The essays "*Puisi Jalan Tol*" (2008, pp.72-75), "*Jakarta dan Ruang*" (2008, pp.225-229) and "*Jalan Tol*" (2008, pp.63-66), in *Kentut Kosmopolitan*, address the matter of 'planning' and how some members of Jakartan society have their lives affected by government sponsored urban planning. Marco Kusumawijaya, an urban activist based in Jakarta, has also written of the problems of urban planning in Jakarta and, in particular, how it has favoured the creation of spaces for motor vehicles at the expense of pedestrians and bicycle users (2004). Kusumawijaya is the leading activist for creating a greener and more environmentally friendly Jakarta.³⁴ The planning of Jakarta has increased the city's amenity and function, while at the same time displacing urban poor and isolating sections of the city's population. The essays of *Kentut Kosmopolitan* are

³⁴ See in particular Kusumawijaya's two websites: <http://rujak.org> and <http://mkusumawijaya.wordpress.org>

part of the discourse that addresses the displacement of the urban poor as well as the ambivalent nature of 'development'.

Ambivalent engagement with urban spaces and cities in Indonesia is also reflected in an observation of Pramoedya Ananta Toer regarding both Surabaya and Medan, cities that produced a sensation of 'discomfort' in him. In a letter to one of his children, Pramoedya writes, 'I lived there [Surabaya] once, for quite some time...I can't say I like Surabaya very much. For me, it's a bit like Medan – I just don't feel comfortable there' (Toer, 2009, p.388). Through the essays of *Kentut Kosmopolitan*, it seems that Seno is making sense of his un-ease in the city. Through writing Seno formulates his 'sense' of what is going on around him. Writing is an act that allays a sense of un-ease.

Kentut Kosmopolitan is an attempt at going beyond 'just feeling' a particular way about a city or environment; his essays are investigations and exploratory. Seno doesn't consider Jakarta as a place from which to escape (even if Jakartans themselves are often looking for 'escapes' and 'retreats' from daily urban life), but instead explores the manner in which Jakartans address the often harsh daily realities of Jakartan life. He shows how Jakartans adapt to their situation and make the most of their circumstances. And, unlike Pramoedya in his conflation of Surabaya and Medan, Seno doesn't accept his immediate and intuitive reaction to the city. Instead, the city – and Jakarta in particular – is a site for intellectual, theoretical and writerly investigation.

The essays in this collection were first published in *djakarta!: the city life magazine* between 2004 and 2008. Seno's essays published in *djakarta* stand in contrast to his series of essays for *Intisari*.³⁵ This monthly magazine provides Seno with a forum for his writings on urban life. The audience for the magazine comprises young cosmopolitan Jakartan elites who are interested in 'lifestyle' and

³⁵ For example, in *Intisari*, Seno was able to present lengthier essays on subjects of his own choice. One of his notable series of essays were those on the Wali Songo – the nine saints credited with spreading Islam throughout Java – and his visits to their graves. These essays and the photographs that Seno took were to form the basis of his book, *Sembilan Wali & Siti Jenar*.

who have time and money to spare. The taste of the audience is a hybrid of global and local interests: this audience consumes products that are globally available as well as those that are specifically 'Indonesian'. Foreign popular culture is consumed alongside local culture. The essays in *Intisari* are generally less than 1,000 words in length. They sit amongst articles on where to get a good massage, where to eat the best kind of Italian or Japanese food and where the best cafes are in Jakarta or Bandung. The magazine, a large format glossy with thick paper, is a guide for urban living in twenty first century Jakarta. Seno provides readers with light theoretical essays with which to consider their context.

The style of the essays in *Kentut Kosmopolitan* shows Seno's skills as a journalist, academic researcher, short story writer, essayist and popular culture critic. Seno frequently draws on theory and philosophy to expose issues in contemporary urban society. The essays are sprinkled with references to de Saussure, Barthes, Appadurai, Althusser and Stuart Hall. Readers are introduced to the aforementioned philosophers and theorists in terms that are directly relevant to their socio-cultural situation. For example, "*Jakarta Sebagai Teks*³⁶" (2008, pp.5-8) draws on de Saussure; "*Uang Dengar*³⁷" (2008, pp.67-71), "*Udel Bodong*³⁸" (2008, pp.76-80) and "*The Fashion System*" (2008, pp.85-89) draw on Barthes; "*Puisi Jalan Tol*³⁹" draws on the cultural studies work of Stuart Hall (2008, pp.72-75) and "*Media, + &-*" refers to the work of Arjun Appadurai (2008, pp.81-84).

References to such theorists and academics who are known across broad areas of studies are intermingled amongst texts that repeatedly refer to local Jakartan and Indonesian cultural figures. These references include the comic book author Ganes Th in "*Si Jampang dan Maskulinitas*⁴⁰" (Ajidarma, 2008, pp.22-26), the essay "*Kentut Kosmopolitan*", which refers to the Javanese clown, Semar

³⁶ Jakarta as a Text

³⁷ Hearing Money

³⁸ Protruding Navel

³⁹ Toll Road Poetry

⁴⁰ Jampang and Masculinity

(Ajidarma, 2008, pp.35-38) and "*Menjadi Tua di Jakarta*"⁴¹ which refers to the prominent modern Indonesian short story writer and playwright, Putu Wijaya (Ajidarma, 2008, pp.39-42). A reading of these essays requires a degree of flexibility in being able to make connections between theorists from outside Indonesia with examples of sociocultural patterns in Indonesia. The essays are both *of* Indonesia and *of* theories and ideas from outside of Indonesia. Seno's writing style is questioning and provisional rather than assertive and declamatory. The essays are introductory, rather than sustained arguments about a particular subject. Seno explains that, 'I'm not exploring the art of writing in this book. But rather I'm offering the heat of an argumentative discussion in around 700 words' (Ajidarma, 2008, p.ix).⁴² Seno's essays are an act of creating a dialogue: they start a conversation with his unseen audience: an audience that is made up of young, cosmopolitan and educated urbanites.

The essays of *Kentut Kosmopolitan* (and also Seno's earlier book, *affair*) are part of an increasing number of texts relating to the documentation and analysis of contemporary Jakartan life and urban conditions in Indonesia in general. These include *Jakarta: Metropolis Tunggang-Langgang* by Indonesian architect and city-culture commentator and activist Marco Kusumawijaya, and the more sensationalist novelistic reportage of Moammar Emka in his series of books *Jakarta Undercover*, which apparently uncover the sex habits of Jakartan yuppies in the late 1990s and 2000s. The cartoons featuring the two characters Benny and Mice – published weekly in *Kompas* newspaper – are also available as books and present a humorous perspective on the lives of two men who are ill at ease with Jakarta's modernity and cosmopolitanism. Books such as *The Food Travelers Guide: Romantic Places, Tempat-Tempat Makan Romantis di Jakarta* by Dewi Fita and Mala Aprilia and the 'urban' section in *Kompas* offer specific guides on how to

⁴¹ Becoming Old in Jakarta

⁴² Bukanlah seni penulisan yang saya tawarkan dalam buku ini, melainkan hangatnya obrolan argumentatif, yang dalam format kolom +- 700 kata sebisa-bisanya saya jadikan optimal.

live in urban Jakarta and how to enjoy the luxuries it offers. The intended readers of these books and sections of newspapers are middle-class, knowledgeable of life outside Indonesia and upwardly mobile. Such texts present their own imagining of what it means to be 'cosmopolitan' and 'Jakartan'.

Seno's essays are complemented by the activist oriented urban studies writings of Marco Kusumawijaya. Like Seno, Kusumawijaya shares an interest in the street, mall culture, *becaks*, and politics of the city and daily urban life in Jakarta. Kusumawijaya's essays, nonetheless, differ in that they focus more on the failed aspects of planning in Jakarta. Moreover, Kusumawijaya frequently negatively compares the daily practices of Jakartans with those of urbanites in other cities in the world. He also draws on European and Western urban theory to describe the problems of Jakartan planning and life. His vocabulary incorporates many literal translations of English language terms. Rather than finding a discourse from within Jakarta and Indonesia itself to describe contemporary urban conditions in Indonesia, Kusumawijaya imposes a foreign urban pattern upon Jakarta. His approach seems to lack something – something that I seek to find through the writings of Seno Gumira Ajidarma. That is, a hybridisation of knowledge of urban theory (whether coming from 'the west', or locally) with that of the daily practice of urban citizens. Seno's essays, unlike Kusumawijaya's, draw meanings from how urban citizens make sense of and adapt themselves to their conditions.

Jessica Champagne writes that the reality of Jakarta is in contrast to how it is imagined in nationalist representations of the city. She writes that Jakarta is generally imagined as the incarnation of nationalism and of modernity, rather than a city where tens of thousands of people make their homes beneath toll roads (Champagne, 2006, p.11). Through Seno's essays in *Kentut Kosmopolitan*, a perspective on Jakarta is shown where the lives of those who live under toll roads are disrupted by development. Their lives are depicted to be of significance

to the historical reality of Jakarta. Seno considers the lives of people living under toll roads as integrated and meaningful, rather than something dispensable, moveable and subject to being ordered by a municipal or national government. The fate of urban *kampungs* that have their land turned into toll roads is discussed in the essay "*Jalan Tol*" (Ajidarma, 2008, p.63-66).

Seno describes the setting of a toll road under construction. He observes that the local residents of the *kampung* make use of the empty roads for themselves. The roads – which are not yet being used by vehicles – are the site for games of badminton, mothers taking their children for walks and for teenagers who, unhappy with their lives smoke marijuana, dye their hair, ride bicycles and have rings on all of their fingers (Ajidarma, 2008, pp.63-64). A toll road, Seno writes, 'changes everything' (Ajidarma, 2008, p.63 & p.65). Seno asks rhetorically why housing estates for the wealthy have not been cleared for the construction or extension of toll roads⁴³ (Ajidarma, 2008, p.63). The poor, who live in informal communities, have their houses destroyed for infrastructure that they cannot use. The toll road under construction becomes a site for 'play' for members of urban poor communities; upon its construction it is used by those with access to cars. Seno concludes that 'toll roads are born from the ideology of efficiency' (Ajidarma, 2008, p.66)⁴⁴. Where one lives, Seno writes, is part of 'identity', and through the construction of a toll road, this identity is destroyed. Identity, however, is not part of the ideology of efficiency.

The *rakyat*, according to James Siegel, are 'followers of a leader'. They are the audiences of political rallies and those who associate themselves with the nationalist movement (Siegel, 1998b, p.3). Doreen Lee, on the other hand, states that the *rakyat* are 'the common people...with overtones of their being poor and uneducated, but nonetheless remaining the good and moral citizens of the nation' (Lee, 2007, p.1). Siegel and Lee's observations are useful, for they show points of

⁴³ Kenapa jalan tol ini tidak pernah mengusir kompleks perumahan mewah.

⁴⁴ Jalan tol dilahirkan oleh ideologi efisiensi.

convergence and divergence with the manner in which Seno employs the figure of the *rakyat*. For Seno, the *rakyat* are not merely 'followers of a leader' and those identified with the nationalist movement, but are in control of their own fate – that is, they are able to determine their own course in life – and, this sometimes puts them at odds with the nationalist ideals of Jakarta's city planners. In contrast to Lee's observations, Seno's *rakyat* rarely feature as being 'good and moral', but as citizens acting in their own best interests and often in an innovative manner. As such, they are not separate from 'the nation', or a group that blindly follows national political leaders, but are rather individuals with their own ideologies and their own interests that they seek to protect. The innovation is seen in their willingness to disobey standard traffic laws (Ajidarma, 2008, p.62).

These essays consider the *rakyat* sympathetically and at the same time remove the *rakyat* from a romantic imagination: they show that the *rakyat* are not a general floating mass, but individuals with their own needs, agendas and abilities to negotiate their lives in their particular contexts. At the conclusion of "*The Motorcycle People*", Seno writes: 'for them, it is an impossibility that they put off their visit to grandma until they have enough money to buy a car or wait until the rules of road usage change' (Ajidarma, 2008, p.62).

The concept of *rakyat* and their presence in the essays of *Kentut Kosmopolitan* is significant as they form part of the 'crowd' in which the flâneur differentiates himself. The narrator is the flâneur; he looks and observes the others who are acting out their lives before him as a kind of spectacle.

The flâneur also, observes and comments on the actions, identity and behaviour of the crowd and masses. A flâneur is dependent on a separate and 'other' *rakyat* for the feeling of being 'different' from them. A flâneur, in the case of Seno's essays in *Kentut Kosmopolitan*, also documents the activities of the *rakyat* through his writings. The crowd is a group from which the flâneur differentiates himself. They are caught up in daily life without being able to take a

critical stance towards their surroundings or habits. The flâneur is a critical and detached participant in daily urban life, while the crowd, the *rakyat*, are often imagined as uncritical participants. Seno's essays, on the other hand, point to the creativity and ingenuity of the *rakyat*.

Kentut Kosmopolitan Streets

The street and the 'way of seeing' that is facilitated by being in a vehicle is one of the concerns that links the essays of *Kentut Kosmopolitan*. The street is the realm of a flâneur and the place where the flâneur conducts his investigations⁴⁵. Furthermore, the space of the 'street' is of particular importance, as will be discussed in chapter six – where it is a site of listening and hearing – and chapter seven where the street is a site of violence. Some of the key essays in *Kentut Kosmopolitan* that address the street, street life and negotiation include "Subuh"⁴⁶ (Ajidarma, 2008, pp.99-102), "Jalan Tol"⁴⁷ (Ajidarma, 2008, pp.63-67), "Puisi Jalan Tol"⁴⁸ (Ajidarma, 2008, pp.72-75), "Ojek Thamrin-Sudirman"⁴⁹ (Ajidarma, 2008, pp.230-234) and "The Story of Mister Cepek atawa Jalan Gronja"⁵⁰ (Ajidarma, 2008, pp.13-16). Doreen Lee, writes that 'the conditions of the street have come to represent the city' (Lee, 2007, p.1). The street is also given strong emphasis in the writings of Nas and Pratiwo (2003) and also by postcolonial urban theorist Abidin Kusno (2000, 2003b, 2009).

"Subuh", according to Seno, is a 'reflection from behind a taxi window' (Ajidarma, 2008, p.99). Dawn is the time of the first obligatory prayer according to Islamic orthodoxy, yet in this essay Seno offers a reflection on secular daily life

⁴⁵ An example of flânerie as artistic practice is seen in the work of Sophie Calle in Venice – in her work *Suite Venitienne* (1979). Calle follows a man known as 'Henri B.' through the streets of Venice, taking photographs of him.

⁴⁶ Dawn

⁴⁷ Toll Road

⁴⁸ Toll Road Poetry

⁴⁹ The Ojeks of Thamrin and Sudirman

⁵⁰ The Story of Mister Cepek or the Bumpy Road

in Jakarta. The author sees that the streets are already busy with people who are working and selling food at open-air markets. The author himself is in a taxi travelling towards the Jakarta airport at Cengkareng. Another quality of dawn is that the air is relatively clean. Seno asks at what time is Jakarta quiet and clean. His answer is before 4am, because by 4 o'clock buses are already running and their smoke is already contributing to the air quality of Jakarta. The Jakartan *metro-minis* – city buses – are already waiting at bus stops and stations with their engines running while waiting for passengers.⁵¹ Jakarta at this time of day is a 'difference'. Seno writes:

In the context of Jakarta, the early morning is a difference. The roads are quiet and those who can be seen on the streets are a kind of people who are truly amazing in the struggle of life. If during rush hour when people leave for and return from the office (not the market, not the fields, not the forest and not the sea) what we see are robots, at 4 in the morning, I guarantee that you will see the heroes (*para pejuang*⁵²) (Ajidarma, 2008, p.100).⁵³

Yet, there is another kind of difference that exists in this essay. It is not only the difference that exists between the 'usual, ordinary, typical Jakarta' typified by heat, population density and pollution, but also the difference between the narrator and the subjects he describes. The narrator is able to 'reflect'; those he sees are not able to reflect: they work for a small amount of money and at great physical cost. The narrator is free to travel to other cities in Indonesia, while the workers he sees at the market are bound by their work conditions to follow the same patterns, day in, day out. Reflection is an act reserved for those who are

⁵¹ This practice is known in the vernacular as '*ngetem*'.

⁵² It is difficult to convey the positive connotations of this word. It contains the meanings of 'fighter', 'struggler' and 'hero' all at once. It is someone who struggles against an oppressive force in a heroic manner.

⁵³ Dalam konteks Jakarta, pagi buta adalah sebuah perbedaan: jalanan sepi, yang sudah tampak adalah manusia-manusia mengagumkan dalam perjuangan hidup; kalau pada jam sibuk yang berlangsung pada jam berangkat dan pulang kantor (bukan pasar, bukan sawah, bukan hutan, bukan lautan) kita melihat robot-robot, pada jam 4 pagi saya jamin Anda melihat para pejuang.

able to have a privileged distance from their own condition. Although Seno empathises with the urban poor, his very act of empathising suggests his own position of distance.

Seno also identifies categories of urban citizens within his idea of 'difference'. These are the differences of income, wealth and debt – or class. While moving through the city in a taxi at dawn he sees people setting up their stalls at a street market. 'We will see people opening up sacks of coconut, lifting crates, throwing down bags. People who, even at this time of the day are already sweating⁵⁴' (Ajidarma, 2008, p.100). He sees people who sleep amongst the fruit and vegetables they are selling. This private act becomes a spectacle for a flâneur author travelling in the relative luxury of a taxi on his way to an airport. (The narrator is aware of his position, as indicated in the following paragraph.) This leads to a reflection on the possibilities of making money from such work. He sees that these people may make only enough to buy food for their next meal. They do not earn enough to pay for insurance to protect them from any kind of accident. In contrast to these workers and the little money that they may have in their pockets, the narrator reminds readers of those who live luxuriously but are in great debt. The narrator, Seno, is at once sympathetic to those he sees around him – members of the crowd, the *rakyat* – while at the same time detached from them. He is able to give meaning to their situation and to contextualise the injustices regarding class and economic systems. He writes:

I often think of how absurd it is that a conglomerate who has trillions of rupiah in debt is able to live in a luxurious manner, while small traders who are just able to make enough to live on have to struggle for a living in the early hours of the morning⁵⁵ (Ajidarma, 2008, p.101).

⁵⁴ Kita akan melihat orang membuka sabut kelapa, mengangkat peti, manjatuhkan karung, orang-orang yang sepagi buta itu sudah berkeringat.

⁵⁵ Saya sering merasakan betapa absurdnya mengingat konglomerat yang utangnya trilyunan bisa hidup secara nyaman dan mewah, sementara para pedagang kecil yang keuntungannya setiap hari pas untuk makan akan terus menerus bergulat di pasar sejak pagi Subuh.

The narrator's realisation of this discrepancy provides a moment of criticism of social injustices within daily Jakartan society. Dawn (*subuh*) offers a moment for an individual to become politically more aware – that is, aware of the suffering, plight and conditions of others. For the narrator, the moment is described as a 'what if I were in that situation?'⁵⁶ moment (Ajidarma, 2008, p.102). The narrator invites his readers to comprehend the social and political nature of the difference between the early morning and the daylight hours in Jakarta. He regards this moment as a potential spark for Jakartans to become politically aware. He writes: 'in the quietude of the street, but within the spirit of the struggle of the urban poor, isn't there the opportunity for Jakartans ['homo Jakartensis'] to feel a degree of political engagement? Isn't it possible for Jakartans to look out their window, to look at their fellow human beings and to discover a process of identification, as in what if I was in their place?'⁵⁷ (Ajidarma, 2008, p.102).

The narrator despairs at the disconnection between fellow human beings and the suffering that others experience. For the narrator, an example of this is not only the discrepancy between rich and poor within Jakarta itself, but is also evident in the disregard some have for the suffering of others, in the wake of the 2004 tsunami. The urban environment provides a context for the reflection on existentialist questions.

The narrator asks questions, but there are no answers – not at least in this format of the short essay. He points to the media for failing in its role to bring people closer together: 'What is the process that has made human beings so numb to the suffering of others? Is it the media that has served to enforce the

⁵⁶ Seandainya aku berada di tempat mereka?

⁵⁷ Dalam kesunyian jalanan, tetapi dalam gairah perjuangan kaum jelata, bisa saja terlentik nyala api untuk sebuah politik keterlibatan bagi Homo Jakartensis – bukankah dalam tatapan ke luar jendela, menatap sesama manusia yang bergerak dan bertahan terdapat suatu proses identifikasi semacam "seandainya aku berada di tempat mereka?"

gap between different people, rather than to create greater mutual understanding?'⁵⁸ (Ajidarma, 2008, p.102).

So, despite the author's distance from the scene that he observes, dawn (*subuh*) provides a moment for critical social observation and existential angst. In a similar manner, the narrator in "*Puisi Jalan Tol*" writes in search of poetry and a romantic sensibility derived from the experience of travelling along a toll road.⁵⁹ In this case, the narrator draws on an element of development and construction that is integral to the modernist ambitions of New Order Indonesia as part of the ideology of *pembangunan* (development – in terms of the imagined nation and the physical nation, evident in its infrastructure) (Heryanto, 1995). Development and its implications – dispersal of urban poor communities, suppression of political movements and opposition, murder of suspected criminals – has been a target of Seno's politically motivated social criticism. In "*Puisi Jalan Tol*", however, he acknowledges the poetic potential of a toll road. This perspective is something that is offered in order to counter a common literary trope: in this case, Seno questions the dichotomy of the rural idyll with that of urban malaise by showing the poetic qualities of a toll road. Instead of using the calmness and tranquillity of an imagined rural space as the source for poetic inspiration, Seno alludes to engineering and infrastructure as possible sources for poetic reflection. Seno concludes "*Puisi Jalan Tol*" with the assertion that there is a degree of crossover between the aesthetics of poetry and urban infrastructure. He writes: "it is possible that within the conscience of builders of toll roads are the unrealised talents of a poet"⁶⁰ (Ajidarma, 2008, p.75). Engineering and 'development' provides some necessary infrastructure for poetic reflection.

⁵⁸ Proses apa yang telah membuat manusia kebal terhadap penderitaan sesama? Mungkinkah media massa yang mestinya mendekatkan jarak dan rasa telah terfungsikan sebaliknya?

⁵⁹ The reliance on the theme of sunset (*senja*) is a familiar element for readers of short stories by Seno Gumira Ajidarma (see for example, *Sepotong Senja untuk Pacarku* (A Slice of Sunset for My Sweetheart), *Tujuan: Negeri Senja* (Destination: The Land of Sunset), *Negeri Senja* (The Land of Sunset))

⁶⁰ Tentu sangat dimungkinkan bahwa dalam diri para pembangun jalan tol terdapat bakat-bakat terpendam seorang penyair!

The toll road – an elevated road that encircles Jakarta – allows for a privileged perspective on the city. The toll road is compared with another of Jakarta's 'protocol' roads – Jalan Sudirman. The narrator tells us: 'if we are crawling along Sudirman (in a car), the sky is enclosed by multi-story buildings; but from the toll road, the buildings of the Golden Triangle take up only a small part of the sky'⁶¹ (Ajidarma, 2008, p.73). The narrator asserts that poetry is everywhere. Seno, who is ever present as the narrator of the essays, asserts that: 'the existence of a toll road is related to the political economy that is based on a particular ideology which is not necessarily related to poetry'⁶² (Ajidarma, 2008, p.75). The toll road invites thoughts of 'function', 'engineering' and 'development', while poetry reminds readers of 'reflection' and 'solitude'. The essay "*Puisi Jalan Tol*", however, asserts that toll roads can be imagined poetically. The opportunity to write a 'toll road poem' is exclusive to those 'only with the experience of using a car, one with air-conditioning and sound system – at least that is what I experienced'⁶³ (Ajidarma, 2008, p.73). By moving quickly along a toll road, in an isolated and private environment, Jakarta-which-is-so-annoying – but is now at a safe distance can become poetic: 'in such a situation... Jakarta can be poetic'⁶⁴, the narrator asserts (Ajidarma, 2008, p.73).

Jakarta is not only made up of toll roads and protocol roads but also comprises minor roads and narrow lanes that pass through local communities and sometimes can only be traversed using a motorcycle or on foot, or, at the most, in a vehicle moving very slowly. Roads that are now being used for vehicular traffic were not designed for such purposes, but, given the development of many urban *kampungs* with lots being turned into apartments and *kosts*⁶⁵, some roads

⁶¹ Kalau kita merayap di Sudirman, langit bagaikan tertutup gedung bertingkat; tetapi dari jalan tol seluruh gedung di Segitiga Emas hanyalah bagian dari langit.

⁶² Keberadaan jalan tol terhubungkan dengan suatu politik ekonomi, yang tentu saja tercela keberadaan suatu ideologi – yang tidak harus berhubungan dengan puisi.

⁶³ Pengalaman ini hanya dimungkinkan oleh pengalaman bermobil: barangkali mesti ber-AC dan bermusik pula – setidaknya itulah yang saya alami.

⁶⁴ Dalam keadaan begitu, Jakarta...bisa menjadi sangat puitik.

⁶⁵ Single bedroom apartments with shared kitchens often used by students.

are becoming sources of new traffic jams. These roads, while becoming increasingly relied upon by new residents to get to and from work in relative comfort, maintain their local and specific qualities through the activities that take place on the narrow footpaths beside them. These footpaths are sometimes covered by overhanging shop rooves and also used as a site of trade by cigarette sellers and food hawkers. For an example of such a transition one may visit Setia Budi in Jakarta. The toll road is a *non-space* through which vehicles pass (Augé, 1995; Bull, 2000). Car users engage with the city in a mediated and detached manner. Car users move through the toll road in an air-conditioned space – a space that has its own distinctive attributes -, separate from those outside of the car. The toll road and not just the street becomes a place that can be appropriated into poetic imagination. The flâneur can be found in the 'non-place' of a toll road, just as he can be found in a busy street.

In the essay "*The Story of Mister Cepek atawa Jalan Gronjal*" the narrator begins his reflection from the starting point of passing a connecting road. Seno writes, 'more than ten years ago, I started passing through that road – a short cut which connects my housing complex with another housing complex. From that housing complex is a road which heads towards the city⁶⁶' (Ajidarma, 2008, p.13). In Indonesian this is known as *jalan tembus*: a road that penetrates or breaks through. The title of the essay appropriates informal language. The man who is given the name of 'Mister Cepek' has light skin, so, just as Caucasian men in Indonesia are often given the uniform title of 'mister', so, this man is given the name 'mister'. As such, this word, borrowed from English, assumes a new meaning in its Jakartan context. The title of 'mister' assumes an irony in regards to notions of wealth and poverty. 'Misters' are assumed to be uniformly wealthy,

⁶⁶ Lebih dari sepuluh tahun yang lalu saya mulai melewati jalan itu – sebuah jalan tembus yang menghubungkan kompleks perumahan tempat saya tinggal dan kompleks perumahan lain. Dari perumahan lain itulah terdapat jalan menuju pusat kota.

while *cepek* – or Rp.100 – is the second lowest denomination of rupiah and is the denomination often handed out to beggars, street musicians or shoe shiners.

The *jalan tembus* provides a connection between the edge of Jakarta and the centre of the city. The kind of 'penetration' or 'breaking through' (*tembus*) also has a metaphorical resonance. The road breaks through the dichotomies of developed, undeveloped, informal and formal space. On the city's outskirts, the narrator sees a Betawi⁶⁷ community: a community that he says has been around since the days of Nyai Dasima⁶⁸. Here, they still follow the traditions of Betawi culture: setting off fireworks in the morning to announce a wedding and the showing of Indian films on a public screen in the middle of a road or other kind of public space. It is through this community that some of Jakarta's commuters pass on their way to work or the city centre in general. Here, at the city's periphery, we can get a sense that Betawi culture too has been marginalised within the constructed image of Jakarta. It remains as something exotic, traditional and of-the-past, rather than an integrated element of Batavia/Djakarta/Jakarta's changing image. The seemingly stagnant nature of the Betawi community's traditions is contrasted with the rapid transition of Jakarta. The by-line of the essay emphasises this contrast with the seemingly bland statement, 'in Jakarta there are also some things which do not change'⁶⁹ (Ajidarma, 2008, p.13). The narrator acknowledges the exoticism of his gaze:

Now, full of exotic feelings, I enjoy the view of seeing the Betawi
population laying out lines of bananas on the table for the wedding

⁶⁷ The Betawi, or '*orang Betawi*' are considered to be the 'native population' of Jakarta. Betawi culture is a hybrid culture. They are known to have strong faith in Islam. In terms of ethnicity, Betawi are a mixture of Indonesians, Arabs, Portuguese and Chinese. They speak a distinct language of their own which contains elements of Hokkien and Arabic. Writers such as S.M.Ardan and Firman Muntaco are Indonesian authors who have used Betawi language in their writings.

⁶⁸ The main character from a novel of the same name, authored by Gijsbert Francis in 1896. The story is set in Batavia.

⁶⁹ Ada juga yang tidak pernah berubah di Jakarta.

celebrations. I start to doubt whether such traditions will and need to disappear (Ajidarma, 2008, p.14).⁷⁰

Jakarta, as a so-called 'megacity' (Silver, 2008) is shown to allow for inter-personal relations that are both familiar and casual. A case of informal interaction in this essay is that between the narrator and his interlocutor, Budi. The narrator met Budi when the latter was still young, when he was working on the street, directing traffic on the *jalan tembus*, which the narrator doesn't name – it is only known for being on the 'edge' (*pinggir*) of Jakarta. The narrator gives Budi a small amount of money for the role he plays in the maintenance and conducting of organised traffic flow along the particular *jalan tembus*. The denominations he is given are *cepek*, *gopek* or *nopek*. The role played by Budi and his cohorts is to guide vehicles through narrow roads that are often riddled with holes. The narrator discovers over time that, due to the worsening condition of the road, it is quicker to drive to another *jalan tembus* even if it is further. After a time, the narrator returns to the first *jalan tembus*, because his alternative route is now just as hole-ridden as the first one, with the added burden of being further away. The narrator identifies a consistency and stagnation between himself, the road and the people who collect money on the side of the road ostensibly to fund the road's improvement. The narrator writes:

The road that is being "repaired" is, after ten years, still full of holes, the young guys on the road are now grown up and now have new sidekicks. The Mister Cepeks haven't changed, and the holey road hasn't changed – it's just getting worse and worse. I haven't changed either: I'm still taking the same road. (Ajidarma, 2008, p.16).⁷¹

⁷⁰ Kini, dengan penuh rasa eksotik, saya menikmati pemandangan warga Betawi menjajar pisang bertandan-tandan di atas meja dalam perhelatannya, dan mulai meragukan apakah adat seperti itu akan dan perlu hilang.

⁷¹ Jalan yang "seolah-olah sedang diperbaiki" itu setelah sepuluh tahun masih saja gronjal – dan anak-anak singkong yang sudah dewasa kini ditemani anak-anak singkong baru. Para Mister Cepek dan jalanan gronjal itu tidak berubah, malah tambah parah – demikian pula saya, masih selalu melewati jalan itu dan jalan itu-lagi.

The street is a key element in the writings of Seno Gumira Ajidarma. The street plays a role in the knowing of an urban environment in Indonesia and Jakarta in particular. Through the exploration of street life, street power relations and the manner in which the street is used, the author depicts an urban situation that is complex, dynamic and changing. It is not stagnant and merely subject to the designs of town planners and local government, but is a space that is re-created through daily use by urban Jakartans who negotiate the space of the street for their own purposes to suit their own needs. From the example above, it is seen that a street in disrepair can serve as a means for making money for its local residents, who take commissions from passing vehicles. The street is shown not to be an 'empty space' functioning only for the smooth flow of vehicles, people and goods, but is a space that has meaning for its users.

Kentut Kosmopolitan Flânerie

From the street itself we now move to the figure of the flâneur and the act of flânerie. Urban streets are the realms of flâneurs who view the surroundings – buildings, commodities, the crowd – for their entertainment. They participate in urban life without becoming attached, without becoming affected and without becoming involved. Flâneurs, as such, embody an ironic urban sensibility. They do one thing, while disavowing the act at the same time. Interpreting the city, giving it meaning is arguably Seno's dominant literary theme. The act of interpreting the city and cosmopolitan urban life reflects his biography: someone who has come from (relatively) traditional Yogyakarta to cosmopolitan and metropolitan Jakarta. Flâneurs are a part of the urban landscape, through their sheer presence, yet they reject an active engagement with their surroundings. A typical example of a flâneur's engagement with urban life comes in the form of a *feuilleton*: short essays that appear periodically in a newspaper. These two words

(*feuilleton* and *flâneur*) of French origin locate the history of the subject in Paris – a city *par excellence* for practising *flânerie*; the city in which Walter Benjamin compiled his unfinished book, *The Arcades Project*.

Seno uses and draws upon the city in varying ways. As well as being a *flâneur*, he also uses the *flâneur* in varying ways. Sometimes the *flâneur* is engaged, sometimes detached and at other times both. In chapter seven, I argue that the narrator of "*Jakarta, Suatu Ketika*" engages politically with what he sees, while still practising the art of *flânerie*. In essays such as "*Puisi Jalan Tol*" the degree of sociocultural and political intervention is rather limited. As such, Seno's essays and writings in general maintain a degree of ambivalence: an attitude that is flexible and open to numerous perspectives.

The essays of *Kentut Kosmopolitan* continue the established tradition of the *flâneur* and also the manner of *flânerie* that is typically identified with nineteenth century Paris. Synonyms for 'flâneur' include 'dandy', 'saunterer', 'wanderer', 'stroller', and 'idle man-about-town'. Yet, because these synonyms do not capture the essence of this figure, the term 'flâneur' has been adopted in English. The figure of the *flâneur* is often identified with the writings of Walter Benjamin (Benjamin, 1996, 1999, 2006), Charles Baudelaire, Edgar Allan Poe (for example, his short story "*The Man of the Crowd*"), Georg Simmel and Franz Hessel. In the words of Hessel, as quoted by Anke Gleber, to be a *flâneur* is to practice 'the art of taking a walk' (1999, p.vii). One of the questions posed in this thesis, though, is the degree to which the concept of 'flâneur' is relevant to an understanding of contemporary urban practices and conditions in Indonesia. I argue that it is significant both in terms of understanding urban-ness and city-ness as well as Indonesian literature.

Gleber argues the case for the contemporary relevance of *flânerie* and the critical importance of the concept of the *flâneur*, by stating: 'it [*flânerie*] is connected to such contemporary issues as the interpretation of images, visual

literacy, power and public space, the female gaze, and the cultural definition of identity' (1999, p.vii). In Indonesia, as elsewhere, the city is the site of intense contestation of identities. For it is in the city that we see negotiation of tradition and modernity, religion and secularity, tolerance and intolerance, freedom and oppression. Within this realm, it is the flâneur and, increasingly, the flâneuse, who negotiate these contested values and practices. The flâneur and flâneuse are of the time in which they live, yet they maintain a critical distance – operating on the border of observation and participation. The flâneur participates in daily life as an observer, participant and documenter. Literature – like other elements of popular culture – is one of the key sources for tracing definitions of the flâneur as well as the diverse ways in the urban environment is negotiated. The flâneur compiles his writings on urban life through short essays, literary works and cultural artifacts that address matters of urban life.

Articles by Lauster (2007) have questioned the validity of the Benjaminian concept of flâneur as aiding an understanding of the city, while elsewhere Featherstone has sought to broaden the definition of flâneur to include a range of practices beyond that of walking and engaging with 'the city' (1998). In relation to Indonesia, contributions to the study and presence of flânerie and related practices have been made by Mrázek in his chapter on the 'Indonesian Dandy' (2002) as well as Paul Tickell's translation and introduction to the short stories of Mas Marco Kartodikromo (1981). Mrázek writes of Mas Marco's characters – in *Student Hijo*, for example – being able to enjoy a new kind of mobility and individuality. The characters of *Student Hijo* experience 'plesir' or 'pleasure': a result of a certain individual freedom and cosmopolitanism. Modernity, Mrázek writes, '[streams] into manners, looks, and fashion' (2002, p.145). That is, 'modernity' is not limited to various technologies, but is also integrated into ways of interacting with others and of considering others and oneself. If the initial conceptions of the flâneur are identified with mid-nineteenth century European

life and turn of the century colonial Indonesia, a new formulation of who and what a flâneur is and does can be conceived from Seno's texts, making it relevant to contemporary Indonesia. Seno's essays and writing practice present the case of a flâneur of postmodern times and postmodern cities, that is, of a 'postmodern flâneur' and of 'postmodern flânerie'. Flânerie, as such, serves as a flexible concept – although it speaks particularly of nineteenth century Paris, it maintains a relevance to urban conditions beyond its original application.

A typical moment of mid-nineteenth century European flânerie is found in Allan Poe's short story, 'The Man of the Crowd'. The preposition 'of' is significant, for it differentiates the flâneur from 'the men in the crowd': i.e. those who are not aware of their own subjectivity within a mass of people. This is particularly differentiated in Seno's short story, "*Jakarta, Suatu Ketika*": where the *flâneuristic* photographer takes photographs of rioters looting the unguarded shops of a lawless and dystopic Jakarta. This story is discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven. Poe's narrator in 'The Man of the Crowd' describes his encounter with others as follows:

At first my observations took an abstract and generalizing turn. I looked at the passengers in masses, and thought of them in their aggregate relations. Soon, however, I descended to details, and regarded with minute interest the innumerable varieties of detail, dress, air, gait, visage, and expression of countenance (Poe, 1912, p.102).

The flâneur gazes upon the city for its attributes of spectacle, as shown clearly in Poe's description above. The city and public spectacle and theatre have a close and direct relationship. This is typical of both Europe and Indonesia. Rudofsky writes of how early theatres were developed to mimic the environment of the street, while in contemporary Indonesia it is not difficult to come across public screenings of films, performances of *wayang* and of course wedding celebrations in temporarily closed-off streets. As Rudofsky writes, 'the street is where the

action is' literally and figuratively. Rudofsky also points to the prominence of street scenes in Shakespeare's plays (1969, p.132). To practice flânerie is to view the city for its sights, sounds and wonders.

The readers of Seno's stories are those with time to spare and money to spend. The newspaper provides information on restaurants, nightclubs, spas, and fashion. Some who read it may well be flâneurs in waiting or indeed practising flâneurs. A key quality, however, of the flâneur or the flâneuse is that they are detached from their surroundings. The flâneur is detached, because engagement with urban life results in his consumption by that object. The flâneur must remain equally unstimulated or stimulated by all that surrounds him; passing through the urban context in one seamless movement, observing all while never being wholly consumed by what he or she sees.

Howard Dick writes of the decline in opportunities for practising flânerie in Surabaya.⁷² He writes of the development of roads made for vehicles that create discomfort for an afternoon stroller. The transformation of a city in which walking gives way to driving is nostalgically captured by Dick:

Road widening and conversion to several lanes of one-way traffic has turned it [Tunjungan] into a speedway that is terrifying to cross, choked by exhaust fumes and with only a narrow alleyway for pedestrians. There is no longer any pleasure in strolling. Nor are the furniture shops, electronics shops, and automobile showrooms the kind of stores conducive to such a pastime. The situation became so bad that the Municipality examined ways to restore the character of the street, culminating in December 1994 in a trial closure to evening traffic, perhaps the first (momentary) setback that the motor car has suffered in Surabaya (Dick, 2002, p.13).

⁷² On the other hand, Graham Robb writes that flânerie can also be performed in a traffic jam: 'they shared a certain Parisian *art de vivre*: sitting in traffic jams as a form of *flânerie*, parking illegally as a defence of personal liberty' (2010, p.5).

Contemporary Jakarta is also generally represented as being a city unfriendly to pedestrians. A 2009 essay in *IndoNews* presents Jakarta as a difficult city to negotiate for the foreigner. The view presents the uselessness of a map. The article demonstrates the difference between sensing space while moving through a city and the representation of space in a city map. This approach is curious because Walker sees his movement not in terms of where he has been or what he has seen, smelt and heard, but instead as to how far he has moved along a representation of the city in which he is moving. Walker writes:

After about an hour of tripping over uneven sidewalks and feeling like I was walking through soup, I happened upon a shopping mall, Senayan City. I went inside, grabbed a lemonade, sat down on a bench and opened my map. It turns out, after an hour-plus of walking, I had moved about one inch on this giant map (Walker, 2009, p.7).

What this passage does tell though, is that maps don't necessarily aid a pedestrian in Jakarta: and thus we need other modes of knowing Jakarta. And secondly, despite the environmental problems caused by malls, they can provide a respite to oppressive weather conditions allowing moments of 'escape' from a reality of Jakarta. The question of 'which is the real Jakarta?' (Ajidarma, 2008, pp.239-243) is applicable in this instance: the Jakarta of shopping malls and plazas or the streets with uneven pavements? Seno, typically, does not attempt to answer the question 'what is the real Jakarta?' Instead, he argues against the imagining that there is a 'real' Jakarta. He argues this by showing the variety of 'real Jakartas'. To make a definite statement of what the 'real' Jakarta is, in the end, an act of exclusion.

Flânerie, however, is something that need not be limited to the figure of a pedestrian. If we think more about what it means to practise flânerie, rather than delineating who a flâneur is, the definitions of flânerie may become broader. It is, I argue, a way of reading, a way of interpreting and a way of engaging with a

broad range of phenomena. Flânerie can equally be performed at computer screen - browsing from blog to blog, chatting, watching, making, or in a taxi - going nowhere looking out and hearing the sounds of the taxi drivers communicating with one another or as an intellectual - moving from specialist to popular forums. To practice flânerie means to escape a definition, to refuse to be pinned down.

Kentut Kosmopolitan: Urban Movements

He was happy to be in his car. Sitting in the back, on one side, he smoked a cigar. The car moved smoothly, the day had become dark and the lights on the side of the road had been turned on. The air had started to cool. To calm his thoughts, his eyes looked left and right out the window (Pane, 2004, p.19).

So, I have tried to construct the 'acrobat ideology' based on the report from my own eyes. They do not perform their acrobatics in a self-aware manner, but they have to be acrobatic in order to exist (Ajidarma, 2008, p.60).

The two quotes above indicate different modes of engaging with the street. They suggest two kinds of urban citizen. The first, as appears in Pane's 1938 novel *Belenggu*, is someone who is in a privileged position. His mode of being 'keeps a distance' or detachment between how he encounters the street and what he must experience. Karno enjoys a distance between 'private' and 'public' by virtue of the vehicle which he occupies. It moves along the streets and it is easy for him to see others, while he himself cannot necessarily clearly be seen by those he sees. The car affords Karno a degree of separation. Being removed from the action of the

street, with its street traders, stalls, miscellaneous passersby, Karno becomes a kind of spectator who enjoys the 'performances' of others.

The case of Karno is juxtaposed against Seno's observation (taken from his essay, "*The Motorcycle People*") to show how Seno's own act of viewing sees 'non-performers' in terms of performance (Ajidarma, 2008, pp.59-62). Actions performed for their function are judged in terms of aesthetics. In this case, Seno's questioning poses a problem as it harks back to Richard Sennett's idea of 'expression' and the kinds of 'expression...the human being [is] capable of in social relations'. Sennett asks: 'when a man pays a stranger a compliment...does he act expressively in the way a stage actor acts?' (Sennett, 2002, p.6). The different ways in which urban environments are negotiated are seen in Karno's movement through the city, Seno's example of 'the motorcycle people' and Sennett's questioning of 'expression'.

Analysing the enforcement and negotiation of boundaries between what is 'private' and 'public' is a means for understanding a society or culture. A culture or society can be measured, judged, critiqued or understood by the way it negotiates the concepts of 'public' and 'private'. However, these two words are not best understood as 'concepts' with either fixed or vague definitions, but instead should be seen as becoming evident through practices or performance. Privacy is performed in one way in one particular place, and in another way somewhere else. Sennett claims that the downfall of the Roman Empire developed during a time when the post-Augustan Romans became increasingly sceptical towards their public life. Romans questioned the values of 'the formal obligations' expected in public life (Sennett, 2002, p.3).

The notion of 'public' is aligned with outwardness, action and others. 'Privacy' on the other hand, can be related to inwardness, reflection and isolation. Being in public requires a negotiation of values with others: something is expressed in manners of speaking, dressing, eating etc. Privacy, it is presumed, is

the space for oneself: where one needs to do less negotiating. The connected notions of privacy are intimately linked to conceptions of the human animal as being 'individuals': self-contained, unique, autonomous and someone who has certain inalienable rights. Zygmunt Bauman quotes de Tocqueville, who argued that 'the individual is the citizen's worst enemy' (Bauman, 2008b, p.107). This dichotomy can be applied to the concepts of 'public' and 'private': a citizen privileges his or her subjectivity as being a part of a 'public'; the individual on the other hand, asserts his or her right to his or her 'private' domain at the expense of the public.

Cities are characterised, in part, by a competition for street space. It is a contestation between a public living on the one hand and a negotiation of the boundaries of 'private' and 'privacy'. The city is a place of rhythms: work, eating, recreation and transport usage. The city has daily, weekly, monthly and yearly rhythms. And in recent times in Jakarta, one of the beats in this rhythm is that of the flood. This pattern has been invoked in an advertisement for *Sampoerna A Mild* cigarettes, in their question: *banjir kok jadi tradis?*⁷³ The target audience of these advertisements are young and educated urban citizens who are able to pass a critical eye over the predicaments faced by their city (Jakarta).

The cigarette advertisements of Sampoerna, Djarum Super, Gudang Garam, LA Lights etc, are a part of the daily life of Jakartans, and Indonesians more generally throughout the archipelago. The advertisements play a role in constructing notions of escape, masculinity, exclusivity and adventure. Seno's essays on urban life – those published in *djakarta! The City Life Magazine* – can be read as competing with other ways and methods of imagining the city and urban life. Cigarette advertisements that appear in the physical space of Jakarta (as well as throughout magazines read by Jakartans) present a counter discourse to that of Seno's essays. Seno's essays, rather than portraying the city as a site

⁷³ Why have floods become a tradition?

of turmoil and difficulty and as a place from which to escape, explore the manner in which the city is lived and given meaning to. Yet, both Seno's essays and the vast array of cigarette advertisements throughout Jakarta form a part of daily urban life and are consumed as products of contemporary popular culture.

It is also possible to make a comparison between the ways in which Jakarta is re-created through such medias as the aforementioned *djakarta*, *Kompas*, *Republika* and *The Jakarta Post*. For perhaps a more antagonistic view of urban life, one could also consider conservative Islamic magazines such as *Sabili*, which assert that Jakarta (as well as other Indonesian cities) is a place of moral decay, lawlessness and irreverence.

The ways in which methods of public transport are used throughout Jakarta and other densely populated urban environments are an important aspect of the negotiation of urban space. Each method of moving through the city has its own attendant ways of looking, socialising and interacting with public space. At the same time, each kind of transport has its own economy: both in terms of time as well as cost. The most expensive modes of transport are not always the quickest. Many of Seno's writings address issues related to public transport. This is seen in his short stories such as "*Seorang Wanita di Halte Bis*"⁷⁴ (1993, pp.91-99), "*Taxi Blues*" (1999, pp.39-51) or "*Becak Terakhir di Dunia (atawa Rambo)*"⁷⁵ (1993, pp.51-61). Throughout *Kentut Kosmopolitan*, Seno frequently notes the behaviour of Jakarta's urban citizens as they make use of or disregard certain kinds of public transport.

Marco Kusumawijaya has stated that the private car is the least ethical mode of transport within Jakarta. This is due to the space that it takes up – for the movement of only one person – and the discomfort it causes for others by virtue of the pollution it creates. From any time spent in Jakarta it is immediately apparent that the city is overwhelmed with an abundance of private vehicles. In

⁷⁴ A Woman at a Bus Stop

⁷⁵ The Last Becak in the World (or Rambo)

policies similar to those that seek to limit the population growth of Jakarta, the city government of Jakarta and its police frequently assert (yet fail to implement) policies to restrict the Jakartan roads to cars only with Jakarta-registered number plates. The requirement to have three or more passengers in one vehicle at certain times of the day along certain streets is also overcome – with varying degrees of success – by the emergence of '*ojek orang*'. These are people who, for a small tip, make themselves available as passengers in vehicles that pass through the 'three in one' streets of Jakarta. From my fieldwork in Jakarta in November 2008, it seems as if more and more '*ojek orang*' are women who are wearing a *jilbab* (head scarf) and carrying a baby with them. It is possible that the *jilbab* is used as a symbol of respect and trustworthiness, while the appropriation of a baby may be used to evoke a sense of sympathy from prospective clients.

Richard Sennett also views the 'private automobile' in a negative manner. He sees it as being removed from city life, while at the same time seeking to conquer city life. In *The Fall of Public Man*, Sennett argues that:

One does not use one's car to see the city; the automobile is not a vehicle for touring...The car instead gives freedom of movement; one can travel uninhibited by formal stops, as in the subway, or elevated to pedestrian movement, in making a journey from place A to place B. the city street acquires, then, a peculiar function – to permit motion; if it regulates motion too much, by lights, one-ways, and the like, motorists become nervous or angry (2002, p.14).

Sennett's awareness of the 'fall of public man' foresees many recent ideas that seek to reclaim the streets as places for pedestrians and less orderly modes of interaction (such as *bemos*, *becaks*, *ojeks*). On the other hand, the urban policies of city governments in Jakarta continue to develop measures that aim to broaden streets and to facilitate the ease of vehicular traffic.

Public space is that where individuals can engage with 'the other' on an equal footing. In January 2009 *Kompas* newspaper reported a recent practice in Jakarta of changing office hours in order to make workers use their cars at earlier hours so that the traffic jams are not so severe (*Kompas*). The car mediates the space of the city. The air-conditioned space of the car becomes yet another 'non-space' (Bull, 2000). Sennett argues as follows: 'we take unrestricted motion of the individual to be an absolute right, and the effect on public space, especially the space of the urban street, is that the space becomes meaningless or even maddening unless it can be subordinated to free movement' (Sennett, 2002, p.14). Cars are a means of overcoming 'the constraints of geography'. Geography, as such is something that is to be overcome rather than to be aware of and to be engaged with.

A kind of disorder is present when city users act, move and exist beyond the imaginations, controls and reaches of urban planners and law enforcers. 'Disorder' is that which is imagined as an ideal state – or rather, process – in Richard Sennett's book, *The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity and City Life* (1971). In this text, Sennett argues against the overwhelming totalising tendencies of urban planning. He argues that much urban planning leaves no space for agency from urban subjects. Sennett writes that 'man' is subordinated to becoming a part of a 'machine' whose purpose is to create a coherence. Thus, this machine must eliminate the parts that create 'conflict and pain'. The problem with this is that the experience and lives of the agents involved in this city – imagined-as-machine – are 'taken to be less important than the creation of community that is conflict free' (Sennett, 1971, p.97). Furthermore, Sennett indicts planning of cities for in the plans 'there is no provision for the fact of history, for the unintended, for the contradictory, for the unknown' (1971, p.99). Christopher Silver's history on the planning of Jakarta (*Planning the Megacity* – written 30 years later than Sennett's) is an example of the text that Sennett

criticised. Silver writes his history of 'planning Jakarta' with a focused criticism of how Jakarta was planned, but without applying the lessons that have been garnered from the 'unintended...the contradictory...the unknown'.

One of the manifestations of disorder is the phenomenon of the *ojek* and the profession of being a *tukang ojek*. The word '*tukang*' refers to a 'skilled labourer or craftsman' as well as 'one who has the bad habit of doing something' (Echols & Shadily, 1990, p.590). Examples of the crafts performed by *tukang* include a *tukang besi* (blacksmith), the *tukang khitan* (circumciser) and the ignoble *tukang jambret* (purse snatcher). Those with bad habits can be identified as being *tukang bohong* (liars), *tukang bonceng* (spongers) or a *tukang ngacau* (trouble maker) among other examples.

In my sense of *tukang ojek*, '*tukang*' carries elements of both definitions as provided by Echols and Shadily. A *tukang ojek* is a craftsman in the sense that he has skilled and specialist knowledge of his profession. He has skills that can only be refined through practice (and indeed, performance). These are the skills of memorising the streets of his locality (generally unmapped and often irregularly numbered), being able to ride a motorcycle through streets with all sorts of motorised and non-motorised traffic, and being able to determine which roads should be used at which times. Unlike the typical 'craftsman' though, the *tukang ojek* operates outside: a locality becomes his workshop, his motorbike, memory and intuition his only tools⁷⁶. On the other hand, the more negative qualities possibly associated with the *tukang ojek* is that such a person performs such a job either because he cannot find a job in the formal sector or indeed because there are too few available. (The number of *tukang ojek* that line Jakarta's streets could be the closest and most immediate indicator of the rate of

⁷⁶ See Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), p.19: 'the craftsman summons an immediate image. Peering through a window into a carpenter's shop, you see inside an elderly man surrounded by his apprentices and his tools. Order reigns within, parts of chairs are clamped neatly together, the fresh smell of wood shavings fills the room, the carpenter bends over his bench to make a fine incision for marquetry. The shop is menaced by a furniture factory down the road.'

unemployment in Indonesia.) It is also necessary to remember that the user of the services provided by *tukang ojek*s also requires a certain amount of skill. He or she needs to know when is the best time to use one (speed over comfort), where to use one (is the *tukang ojek* trustworthy?) and what other options of transport are available.

Seno reflects on the position of the *tukang ojek* in his essay "*Ojek Sudirman-Thamrin*" (2008, pp.230-234), which he wrote while in Paris. The essay starts with another bland observation: 'There are no *ojeks* in Paris' (Ajidarma, 2008, p.230). Paris is also used as a point of comparison in an earlier essay, "*Kota Tanpa Tukang Parkir*", that is, "*A City without Parking Officials*" (Ajidarma, 2008, pp.175-178). What is significant for the narrator in this case is that those who are marginalised through lack of work and thus seek informal work as 'parking officials' re-enforce the identification of middle class car owners who identify their 'self-respect' with the lack-of-scratches along the bumper-bars of their vehicles. Both the *tukang ojek* and the *tukang parkir* play important roles in the traffic infrastructure of Jakarta. The narrator with his postcolonial gaze sees Paris not only for what it has, but what it lacks. As such the narrator privileges his supposedly marginal and peripheral perspective over that of an established metropolitan 'centre'. The narrator sees Parisians as urban citizens who are under the hegemony of the ideology that it is 'good to walk'. Thus people eat, kiss and read while walking. But, in Jakarta, *ojeks* exist because 'people need them'. They exist without propaganda and promotion. The priority of the *tukang ojek* is to make enough food to be able to eat, while the priority of the user is to reach his or her destination as quickly as possible. For the narrator, 'this is the ideology of *ojek* discourse' (Ajidarma, 2008, p.233).⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Ojek ada karena ada yang membutuhkannya. Begitu pula dengan segala gejala yang tumbuh dari bawah: tanpa propaganda dan tanpa pengomporan. Kepentingan tukang ojek hanyalah makan untuk hari ini; kepentingan pengguna ojek adalah sampai tujuan secepat-cepatnya. Itulah ideologi dalam wacana ojek.

Seno is clearly evident as the narrator in this story. He mentions his weekly writing of a serial for the Semarang-based newspaper, *Suara Merdeka*. The narrator is reminded of the *tukang ojek* of two of Jakarta's main roads, Thamrin and Sudirman, through the representation of a map. This map of a small part of Jakarta is on the author's wall and is designed as a guide to show where the *ojeks* of Thamrin and Sudirman are located. The narrator describes *ojeks* as being part of 'what is seen in Jakarta but is not noted down' (Ajidarma, 2008, p.230). Such a map is a significant intervention into the standard street-mapping of Jakarta as described in Cairns (2006). It would also provide a complement to the experience of being in Jakarta and thus more negotiable to newcomers and outsiders. The ambivalence of the *ojek* is outlined by Seno as follows:

In reality the presence of *ojeks* is something special. Taking an *ojek* can be expensive, so, in some cases one is better off taking a taxi. So, *ojeks* are not always only a kind of transport for the lower classes, but also a means of transport that is efficient, quick, precise and sharp –exactly what is needed by the metropolitan citizens who need everything to be done quickly (Ajidarma, 2008, p.232).⁷⁸

Ojeks, and the service provided by *ojeks*, are a kind of informal public transport: users negotiate the price in accordance with the distance travelled and the destination. *Ojek* drivers are largely from rural areas and are unemployed: having the facility of a motorbike allows an *ojek* driver the possibility of a daily source of income. *Ojek* drivers have their own knowledge of the city: a knowledge that doesn't depend on maps but extends to the alleys and *kampungs* – areas that have been targeted by Jakarta's governors, such as Sutiyoso.

The availability and presence of the service of an *ojek*, is significant as it allows for an intimate knowing of urban space. *Ojek* drivers are able to move

⁷⁸ Dalam kenyataannya, ojek itu cukup mewah juga ada. Ia bisa saja mahal, sehingga kita "mending naik taksi" dalam jarak tertentu. Jadi ojek itu bukan sepenuhnya terempati sebagai sarana transportasi kelas bawah, melainkan justru sebagai sarana transportasi mangkus dan sangkil, cepat dan tepat, tajam dan menusuk, yang sangat dibutuhkan olah ke-serba-cepat-an metropolitan.

through the city in a quick, flexible and nimble manner. *Ojek* drivers are able to avoid the 'rules' that are established in the ordering of public space. *Ojek* drivers and their passengers maintain a degree of sensorial engagement with the city: they maintain contact with the air, sounds and textures of Jakartan urban life. Moreover, *ojek* drivers – largely members of the displaced urban-poor - provide a service that is essential to the lives of members of the middle classes and upwardly mobile Jakartans.

Space and Place, Cityscape and Cityspace

Kentut Kosmopolitan addresses problems of space. Seno, in this case as essayist, interprets the way in which different members of urban communities use and appropriate public space. Space, in the words of Lefebvre, is subject to the processes of 'production'. 'Space' is created through processes of practice, representation, and signification (Schmid, 2008, pp.36-37). The first of these aspects refers to the 'material dimensions of social activity and interaction'. The second refers to representations of space 'which give an image and thus also define a space'. The third, that of 'spaces of representation', 'concerns the symbolic dimension of space...[which may be a] divine power, the logos, the state, masculine or feminine principle, and so on' (Schmid, 2008, pp.36-37). In a Jakarta shaped largely by New Order and post-New Order urban policies that favoured elites and those that benefited from 'development', Seno interrogates the methods by which ordinary citizens re-negotiate their public space, whether it be 'civic' or otherwise. Inhabitants of the city, who have their houses destroyed for the building of a toll-road, for example, re-claim the space of the incomplete toll-road by using it as a space for play, socialisation and relaxation.

The New Order (*Orde Baru*) government of Suharto (1966-1998) developed and practised an ideology of formalising, limiting and controlling public

space. 'Order' in the government-speak of the Suharto governments could cover meanings such as *ketertiban*, *pengaturan*, *pembersihan* and *pembasmian*. That is, elements of urban society had to be 'neatened up', 'made to fall into line', 'cleaned up' and 'wiped out'. For example, footpaths and traffic needed to become orderly, the roads need to be cleared of 'two-wheeled vehicles' and prostitutes who operated in undesignated areas needed to be wiped out (that is, moved on to the 'designated areas'). Merlyna Lim describes the efforts of Ali Sadikin during the 1970s to change the image of Jakarta by building new roads, bridges, schools and hospitals. But, he, "also took cruel and much criticized measures to eliminate the "eyesore" of street peddlers and *becak* from central areas and declared Jakarta as a closed city to immigrants" (Lim, 2008, p.217).

Lim shows that the infrastructure of new roads and bridges creates a displacement of traffic and citizens who require roads that can be used in flexible ways by various means of transport. The removal of *becaks* from Jakarta's cityscape is also parodied in Seno's short story, "*Becak Terakhir di Dunia (atawa Rambo)*" (Ajidarma, 1993, pp.51-61). Seno creates a dialogue with contemporary political discourse on who has 'rights' to the city and urban space. Sadikin's policies have been continued and strengthened through the governorship of Sutiyoso in the 1990s and 2000s.

Lim's overview emphasises the conflation of 'cleaning up the city' (ridding it of unwanted things like *becak* drivers) and providing newer and better facilities for personal health. Lim goes on to write that:

While cleaning the city from *becak* can be seen as one of some ways to provide more space for modern public transportation, it can also be read as a way to cleanse Jakarta from any symbol of backwardness and poverty. Operating *becak* had come to be regarded as a dead-end occupation for males in the same way that prostitution has been viewed for females in Indonesia...The "Free from *Becak*" operation continued to be

a main issue in each development phase of Jakarta and became a part of Suharto's politics of marginalization during the New Order era (Lim, 2008, p.217).

It is still common to find *becak* on the outskirts of Jakarta. Furthermore, contemporary reports in *Kompas* and other newspapers also frequently state how current city administrations have enforced new measures to prevent domestic migrants moving from the city. The failure of the government is evidenced by the lack of other jobs available for urban men. The *becaks* may have been wiped out but *ojek* services continue to proliferate. The *ojek*, at least for the time being, seem to be tolerated as a more 'city-friendly' means of transport. As far as I am aware, there are yet to be campaigns to wipe out *ojek* services. This is despite the fact that they operate in a similar manner to that of the formerly despised *becak*. The *ojek* operates as an informal kind of employment for urban men. The 'tukang *ojek*' – those who take passengers by motorcycle – whom I have met and socialised with throughout my past three visits to Jakarta⁷⁹ frequently tell me of their frustration at having to work as *ojek* drivers. These drivers recognise that they are member of the 'urban fringe' and feel disempowered by the lack of economic stability.

Urban experience is fragmentary and the manner in which Seno approaches urban experience is also fragmented. This element of Seno's writing reflects his postmodernist tendency to regard reality as fragmented rather than as something unified, coherent and total.

The city and urban life in general, Sennett argues, provides a necessary condition for an 'adult experience of freedom' (2000, p.71). He argues that to be lost amongst a crowd and to feel isolated in a crowd, allows for 'hybridity'. This is defined as being 'a mixture of social elements beyond any single definition of self'

⁷⁹ I was in Jakarta from July 2005 to January 2006, April-May 2007 and November 2008. During those times I used an *ojek* service in Bendungan Hilir almost daily. As a consequence I established friendships and mutual trust with these *ojekkers*.

(Sennett, 2000, p.70). Elsewhere, Rudofsky argues for a kind of European-style street-life in opposition to the disregard for streets and under-appreciation of streets in North American culture. In the U.S., Rudofsky finds that 'the streets of this country simply have too many unpleasant connotations to be popular – filth, soot, stench, an absence of shade and shelter; hold-ups, murder, riots, parades, traffic lights ordering one to Stop, Wait, and Walk' (1969, p.16). A similar case could and is often made against the cities of Indonesia and Jakarta in particular.

Conclusion

The essays of *Kentut Kosmopolitan* explore Jakarta's cityscape, space and urban condition. The essays negotiate the meanings of urban life in Indonesia. The flâneur and the practice of flânerie is a vital part of *Kentut Kosmopolitan*. Seno shows that the flâneur is a flexible figure who is able to assume different roles. Moreover, the flâneur is present in contemporary Jakarta, just as he was in late nineteenth century Paris, as well as early twentieth century Java. These essays are the fruits of flânerie as practiced by Seno Gumira Ajidarma. He moves through the spaces of Jakarta in an attempt to interpret and understand what he sees around him. In this manner Seno fulfils the more established and standard role of the flâneur.

Seno does this through documenting the lives of urban citizens who are often a part of the informal economy. Often, these people are outside the formal networks of governmental bureaucracy: they might not have legitimate access to land, work or residency within Jakarta. Yet, as is shown in numerous essays, they play a vital role in the functioning of the city. To borrow a term from *The Endless City* project, the essays of *Kentut Kosmopolitan* also engage with concepts of 'city-ness'. This is evident in the essays' frequent questioning of the dichotomy

between the key problems of public and private, periphery and centre, local and national identities, modernity and traditionality. These are notions, issues and problems that are central to Indonesia's understanding of itself – whether it be stated openly in the discourses on national identity or whether it is done through the semiotics of advertising and cultural artefacts. Sassen's definition of city-ness proposes an understanding of 'the city' as something that exists on a sliding scale, rather than being an 'either-or' proposition (Burdett & Sudjic, 2007, p.484). The city and cityness is something that exists in varying ways and as something in transition. As I have shown in this chapter, Seno's essays in *Kentut Kosmopolitan* explore cityness rather than provide specific definitions on what 'the city' is.

Chapter Five: A Listening Flâneur: *Jazz, Parfum dan Insiden*

This chapter further explores the figure of the flâneur and the concept of flânerie.

As in the previous chapter, the context for the primary text, in this case, *Jazz, Parfum dan Insiden* (Ajidarma, 1996a), is Jakarta. Unlike *Kentut Kosmopolitan* (Ajidarma, 2008), however, the setting of the text is not stated explicitly.

Readers, instead, are simply introduced to the text with the knowledge that it is a 'metropolitan' novel (Ajidarma, 1996a, back cover). The aspects of the urban space that are described throughout the novel make the city unmistakably Jakarta: high-rise buildings, wide asphalted roads, urban infrastructure and cosmopolitan culture. 'Jakarta' emerges through the representation of skyscrapers, jazz clubs, anonymous and fleeting sexual encounters and the centrality and significance of the narrator's activities. From the narrator's position as a journalist, writer and flâneur, the novel merges into a three-part journey throughout Jakarta - the exemplary Indonesian urban space.

The previous chapter showed how the writings on Jakarta in *Kentut Kosmopolitan* presented an alternative perspective on the contemporary discourses concerning Indonesian urban space and Jakarta in particular. That is, *Kentut Kosmopolitan* presented an alternative political and cultural perspective, thus marking an intervention in current discourse. In this chapter, we will also see a degree of intervention and criticism of late New Order politics in Indonesia. In the case of *Jazz, Parfum dan Insiden*, the narrator questions practices of the telling of history, explores the history and implications of jazz as a musical genre and investigates the possibilities of knowing the city through listening, reading and the various perfumes worn by his lovers. Throughout the novel, jazz appears as music that has a liberating function and that expresses the voices of the repressed (Bodden, 2002; Fuller, 2008).

Flânerie appears in three ways throughout the novel. At each moment, the acts of engaging with jazz, women and violence perpetrated by the Indonesian military against East Timorese presents a perspective on the city and urban Indonesia. The novel asserts links between seemingly disparate social and cultural and political elements. The connections the author makes serve to show the fragmentary nature of urban experience. As such these three 'lenses' mediate the city. The narrator – Seno himself – listens to jazz in the private setting of his office through his headphones and then later in nightclubs. He has affairs with women: he gets to 'know' them first through the perfumes that they wear. Thirdly, the narrator reads eyewitness reports of the massacres that took place in Indonesia-occupied East Timor. Like other writings by Seno Gumira Ajidarma, this text is a combination of essayist exploration, poetic reflection and fragmentary reporting. Through the narrator's various acts of flânerie – listening, smelling and reading – a specific kind of flânerie is created throughout the novel. These acts of flânerie, like those in the previous chapter and the two following chapters, are political acts, which seek to re-negotiate urban space and contemporary Indonesian political and cultural ideologies.

The urban environment occupied by the narrator of *Jazz, Parfum dan Insiden* is one of contrasting elements: nature, the built environment and inhabitants of the city. The narrator finds himself both at a distance from and close to nature and other occupants of the city. The narrator states the various possibilities of presence and absence, proximity and also of knowing. The narrator states: 'life is ordered. One is lucky to have time for a slice of sunset. For memories, for shadows playing around in the head. Life is just a shadow. An illusion'⁸⁰ (Ajidarma, 1996a, p.6). The urban context he occupies provides the opportunity for a kind of dialogue on what it means to occupy urban space and

⁸⁰ Masih untung ada sepotong waktu untuk sepotong senja. Untuk sepotong kenangan, untuk sepotong bayangan yang bermain-main di kepala. Hidup barangkali memang hanya suatu bayangan. Suatu ilusi.

what the elements of urban space are. 'Sunset' (*senja*) is the starting point for the narrator's engagement with nature and time: 'why can't sunset be forever?'⁸¹ (Ajidarma, 1996a, p.2) It is the golden rays of the sunset that shine upon the letter the narrator is writing that links his own narrative with that of the urban space and time of day. The non-place of the office becomes a 'space' through the narrator's awareness and engagement with the presence of the sunset. The city becomes a space in which sunset plays a key role. Nature is not something that is removed and only associated with the rural and distant. The city is, however, a space in which the narrator cannot see the sun, but can only engage with its traces: the signs of it being present. The narrator states, 'where is the sun? I don't see it. ... Only its rays, flashing when sunset arrives, reflecting off the walls of the buildings'⁸² (Ajidarma, 1996a, p.4).

From his office window, the narrator sees 'life flowing on the streets'. He sees that everyone is talking. People talk with each other, their drivers, and the people that are beside them. But he also sees the isolated and privatised urban practices spoken of in the writings of Sennett (2002) and Bauman (2008b). The narrator writes: 'People talk with others [...] They talk using their mobile phones, breaking through space, heading towards the ends of the earth'⁸³ (Ajidarma, 1996a, pp.4-5). Communication with others is mediated through the telephone: the inhabitants of the city, in this novel, rarely meet and talk, face to face. This continues the assertions of writers such as Wirth and Engels amongst others of cities as being disruptive to communal interaction. On the other hand, the narrator is able to meet and interact directly with those whom he meets at a place of specialist and common interest, the jazz club.

⁸¹ Mengapa senja tidak bisa abadi?

⁸² Di manakah matahari? Aku tak melihatnya. ... Hanya cahayanya, berkelebat ketika senja tiba, saling memantul di dinding-dinding gedung.

⁸³ Kehidupan mengalir di jalanan. Setiap orang berbicara kepada orang lain. Mereka bicara kepada sopirnya. Mereka bicara kepada teman di sebelahnya. Mereka berbicara melalui *hand-phone* menembus ruang menuju ujung dunia.

The narrator of *Jazz, Parfum dan Insiden* investigates the histories of jazz through textbooks on jazz and through the origins and meanings of jazz songs. This narrator's listening takes place in a specific socio-cultural context, a context framed by urban life and political repression. For the narrator, jazz acts as a vehicle through which to escape his daily life and also to understand the complexities of the socio-cultural conditions of his context. Jazz – and particular jazz tracks – serve as a metaphor for political resistance from a different time and place, i.e. 1960s USA, which can be applied to the narrator's own context. The narrator uses jazz and particular jazz tracks to investigate the meaning of his situation and the questions he is asking about events taking place around him. The act of listening to jazz becomes a political act, for it provides the narrator with an opportunity to become more critical of the socio-cultural conditions that surround him. That is, the narrator interprets 'jazz' as being a 'music of liberation'. The narrator interprets jazz as representing the voices, dreams and ideologies of an oppressed minority. The narrator writes,

It is not important what jazz is, but that we listen to its music. Feelings which are spread by it. The emotions it shouts. The screams it makes....jazz's reality is, freedom of the soul (Ajidarma, 1996a, pp.16-17).⁸⁴

Musicologist Christopher Small argues that 'music' is not best understood as a noun with its own distinct qualities, but rather, should be considered a verb: something that is created through doing. Small argues that *musicking* is a process of performing, listening and giving value to something as music. As such, it is not the sonic properties of particular sounds that define something as 'music' but the ways in which members of a society give value to particular acts (Small, 1998). Small's analysis presents many different examples of how music is used

⁸⁴ Sehingga, tidak penting jazz itu apa, yang penting kita dengar saja musiknya. Rasa yang ditularkannya. Emosi yang diteriakkannya. Jeritan yang dilengkingkannya...Itulah hakikat jazz: pembebasan jiwa.

and enacted in daily life. He gives examples of listening to opera while doing the housework or attending a classical music concert in a grand auditorium in the central part of a major city. Sennett, a sociologist of urban life, also investigates the meanings of listening and the performance of music in his text *The Fall of Public Man* (Sennett, 2002). For Sennett, the developments and changes in manners of listening to music in public in the nineteenth century were representative of broader changes in the ways in which people interacted in public. More recently, Bull (2007) writes of how the iPod, a personal music player, is used by individuals to negotiate, manage and mediate their urban experience. The work of these three scholars can be used to understand the performance of listening that takes place throughout *Jazz, Parfum dan Insiden*, as the narrator's listening is a cultural act: how the narrator listens, what the narrator listens to, where the narrator does his listening imply particular socio-cultural values. An understanding of these values and meanings provides an insight into the text *Jazz, Parfum dan Insiden* and how urban space and listening are given meaning.

The narrator identifies his first concentrated listening of jazz as taking place at a friend's warehouse. The warehouse was dirty; it was lit by a dim light and was furnished only with basic furniture and a basic cassette player. The narrator identifies jazz with life. He asks: 'Life, like jazz, is full of improvisations. There are many events that we have to overcome. We don't know where this life will take us⁸⁵' (Ajidarma, 1996a, p.21). The jazz to which the narrator listens – that of John Coltrane – becomes a metaphor for the life experiences of the narrator. Listening is located in a particular urban context: a dirty warehouse 'on the side of a road'. Listening to jazz thus takes place in a space in a re-appropriated and private space. The narrator is introduced to jazz through his friend who lives in the warehouse. He asks his friend, 'what kind of music is this?

⁸⁵ Kehidupan, seperti jazz, memang penuh improvisasi. Banyak peristiwa tak terduga yang harus selalu kita atasi. Kita tak pernah tahu ke mana hidup ini akan membawa kita pergi.

Why is it strange?⁸⁶ (Ajidarma, 1996a, p.20) The narrator arrives at his friend's living quarters late at night, after he has become too tired of 'following along the late night'⁸⁷ (Ajidarma, 1996a, p.20). The living quarters of his friend become, at once, both a place of refuge from the loneliness that the narrator experiences in the city, and a place to experience something new.

The narrator occupies a different context from that of the music he and his friend are listening to. It comes to them as not only as a music of another era – the 1960s – but also from a different culture. These elements of 'difference' are no barrier to interpretation, appreciation and enjoyment of the music. Despite being on the margins of the city they live in, the two listeners – the narrator and his friend – are able to engage with and consume cultural products of different cultures. They assert their cosmopolitanism and intellectuality by consuming music unavailable to those who are in less privileged positions. The material circumstances of these two listeners may be less than promising, however they are mobile, flexible and adept at interacting with cultural products from beyond their own time and space. Their act of listening is one of sharing – between the two of them – but also an act of private consumption. The listeners benefit from the technologies of recorded music, although the technology is simple and compromised, which the narrator acknowledges. The recordings are not valued for their hi-fidelity, but instead, for the sounds that the jazz represents. Through their use of jazz cassettes and the cassette player, the listeners are able to become more and more familiar with the music through repeated listenings. The jazz that the narrator listens to may be improvised, but the listener himself re-listens to the same piece, and with each listening becomes more and more familiar with the music. The listener's interaction with the music serves as a metaphor for city inhabitants who repeatedly experience their environs in similar but changing and evolving situations.

⁸⁶ Musik apa ini, kok aneh?

⁸⁷ Aku selalu datang ke sana bila sudah capek menyusuri larut malam.

Elsewhere, the narrator interacts with a musician who is practicing the saxophone in a public urban space. Unlike the listening act in the warehouse, the chapter "*Jazz Tengah Malam*" – Middle of the Night Jazz - (Ajidarma, 1996a, pp.43-50) starts from a private practice in public space. The saxophonist who is rehearsing is doing so in an improvised space, not one designed for musical performance. It is, however, appropriated as a musical space. The narrator describes the situation, 'the night was full of stars, but too many lights interrupted the view. A man was playing the saxophone on the footpath beneath yellowish mercury lights'⁸⁸ (Ajidarma, 1996a, p.43). The narrator reacts to the distance he feels between himself and the musician by imagining asking questions about who he is and where he has come from. The narrator, however, cannot answer these questions. Instead he knows him by the sounds he makes through his saxophone:

listen to the sound that comes from that saxophone, listen to the sound of night, listening to the groaning and shouting, sometimes it is mumbling, a scream, and then it changes to resemble restrained whispering (Ajidarma, 1996a, p.43).⁸⁹

The narrator's listening to jazz relates directly to his presence in the city. He imagines moving through time and space based on the sounds of the saxophone that he has heard in the opening passage. This initial act of listening forms the basis of further reflections throughout the chapter. He imagines he flies into the sky and then through stars. Through listening to jazz, the narrator is able to leave the city behind: he writes, 'imagining myself speeding through the galaxy, leaving the shining city behind me'⁹⁰ (Ajidarma, 1996a, p.44). Jazz mediates the narrator's experience of urban life. Jazz makes the city knowable in a new

⁸⁸ Malam penuh bintang, tapi terlalu banyak cahaya listrik menghalangi pandangan. Seorang lelaki meniup saxophone di trotoir dalam siraman cahaya lampu merkuri yang kekuningan.

⁸⁹ Dengarlah suara yang keluar dari tiupan saxophone itu, dengarlah suara-suara malam, dengarlah suara rintih dan jeritan, kadang seperti gumam, lantas jadi lengkingan, yang segera berubah mirip bisikan tertahan.

⁹⁰ Membayangkan diriku melesat ke angkasa raya meninggalkan gemerlap kota yang semu.

manner. From atop a building that gives him a broad perspective on the city, he is able to see what is going on in the different parts of the city. He sees a small open door, with people going in and out of it; he sees cigarette smoke being blown out of the door and he hears the sound of a Charles Mingus composition, *Meditation (For a Pair of Wire Cutters)*. Mingus's music momentarily becomes a part of the urban landscape of Jakarta. Trends in global culture are a part of local Jakarta. In such instances, the urban landscape is connected with global cultures.

Listening to jazz, from the top of a tall building, gives the narrator an opportunity to think about jazz and its meaning. He is not restrained by the context he occupies. He states that although he is just a 'normal worker' whose time is kept busy with doing chores for others, all he wants to do is to go to a library and read books on jazz. In this case, the narrator realises a dichotomy: that of experiencing jazz through listening as opposed to learning about it through texts. The history of jazz is mediated through texts in the latter, while in the former it is mediated through his experience of the city. The narrator asks, 'do I need to have a PhD to understand jazz? Isn't it enough just to be able to listen to it closely?'⁹¹ (Ajidarma, 1996a, p.49). The narrator, however, has already given meaning to jazz through his assertions that it is the 'soul which is talking, which is moving and which is saying unspoken words'⁹² (Ajidarma, 1996a, p.49). The narrator interprets jazz as a vehicle for expressing what words cannot. Jazz, for the narrator, is a means of understanding the 'soul' of the musician who plays it and this can be understood, comprehended and enjoyed by those who have knowledge of it – whether that knowledge is gained through reading jazz histories, or through listening to the jazz canon.

The act of flânerie is typically identified with a visual understanding of urban life. This chapter on listening and the next chapter on hearing, however,

⁹¹ Apakah aku harus menjadi seorang doktor untuk memahaminya? Tidakkah aku cukup mendengarkannya baik-baik saja?

⁹² Jiwa yang bicara, jiwa yang bergoyang, dan kata tak terucapkan.

show that a flâneur encounters urban experience through a variety of senses and degrees of attention. Through listening, the narrator in *Jazz, Parfum dan Insiden* is able to move – in his imagination – through a range of urban spaces. These spaces include the dirty warehouse of his friend and fellow jazz-listener, the footpath where the narrator encounters a jazz saxophonist, the top of a multi-storey building from which he can also hear the sounds of live jazz music being played. The narrator, in this case, is mobile: he moves freely through his urban context. This is a freedom that parallels the freedom with which the improvising jazz musicians play. Just as their music is not bound by routine chord progressions and traditional harmonic structures, so the narrator is able to imagine himself moving from one space to another. Listening to jazz – *in the way he does* – enables a particular encounter with urban space. This act of listening becomes a kind of flânerie, for it prioritises simultaneous detachment and engagement, a distance between subject and object. It involves a movement towards an 'other' – the jazz that is consumed, but is also foreign and distant.

The narrator's listening is also performed through the use of a personal stereo. In this case it is a (Sony) Walkman, a technology now superseded by the Discman, MP3 player and more recently and most ubiquitously, the Apple iPod. Like iPod, the Walkman is a tool that allows for an individual to privately consume music. This act of consumption creates a 'mediated isolation' (Bull, 2007, p.4) and cuts the listener off from the space that he or she occupies. The denial of the space and sounds around the personal stereo user turns those spaces around him or her into 'non-spaces'. That is, as Bull argues regarding iPods, 'we have overpowering resources to construct urban spaces to our liking as we move through them, enclosed in our pleasurable and privatised sound bubbles' (2007, p.5). In *Jazz, Parfum dan Insiden*, the act of using headphones complements other acts of listening: listening in the warehouse, listening on the street and listening to jazz coming from an underground jazz club. In all of these instances,

listening is a relatively private encounter with music. For the narrator, however, it is at its most private, and most disruptive, in the case of listening to music through the headphones of his Walkman.

The narrator of *Jazz, Parfum dan Insiden* is reading reports of violence in East Timor. His reading of these reports takes place simultaneously with his listening to jazz music through his Walkman. The narrator states, 'I put on my walkman. Chick Corea was immediately heard. I continued reading that journalist's report'⁹³ (Ajidarma, 1996a, p.29). After reading several paragraphs of the journalist's report, the narrator removes his headphones and goes to the bathroom to wash his face. Upon returning to his desk to continue reading, the narrator makes a decision regarding which cassette he will listen to. He writes:

I put on my walkman. I replace the cassette. Firstly, it's Thelonious Monk. Then, I immediately change that with Keith Jarrett. And, then finally, I take a different Chick Corea cassette'⁹⁴ (Ajidarma, 1996a, p.30).

Listening through his Walkman removes the narrator from the social space which he occupies: that of an office, late at night, in which one or two people are still typing.⁹⁵ The office is a space only for listening to jazz and reading reports of violence. The narrator is separated from these others who are typing by virtue of his headphones, which cut him off from their noises and his act of reading, which takes them out of his view. The narrator is thrice removed from the urban space in which he is located: firstly by the space of his office in the high-rise building, secondly through the headphones through which he listens to jazz and thirdly through the reports of violence which locate him in the 'peripheral' former Indonesian province of East Timor. The narrator is disconnected from his context: a disconnection that allows him to engage with cultural, political and natural phenomena – the music, the incident and the sunset.

⁹³ Aku memasang *walkman*. Segera terdengar Chick Corea. Kuteruskan membaca laporan wartawati itu.

⁹⁴ Kupasang lagi walkman. Kasetnya kuganti. Mula-mula Thelonious Monk. Lantas ganti lagi dengan Keith Jarrett. Akhirnya kuambil Chick Corea yang lain.

⁹⁵ Kantor sudah sepi. Satu dua orang masih mengetik.

A 'dialogue' is created by the narrator's reading of the (female) journalist's⁹⁶ report and his own reflections on what jazz is. This creates a kind of duality of voices, which appears throughout the chapters dealing with the 'incident'. These chapters, in turn, are part of a three-part dialogue between the discourses on jazz, perfumes and the incident. The narrator is reading fragmentary reports of the violence and in turn providing fragmentary readings and interpretations of the history of jazz. This fragmentariness not only reflects the structure of jazz itself, but also reflects the fragmentary nature of the postmodern condition and that of cosmopolitan and postmodern cities. Jazz, unlike western classical music, follows a 'lateral' structure, as opposed to the linearity of, say, a symphony. This laterality allows for easy interruptions: whether they be in the form of breaks or solos, or, in the case of *Jazz, Parfum dan Insiden*, reflections on the meanings of jazz amongst a reading of eyewitness reports on the 'incident' in East Timor.

The dialogue that appears throughout these chapters on the incident is an example of flânerie as reading. The narrator's detachment from the reports he reads allows for occasional reflections on other matters. He engages with the incident, while at the same time being removed from it, just as he uses listening to his Walkman as a means to mediate the experience of reading the texts and to engage further with them and his own context. While listening to Chick Corea, the narrator comments that Chick Corea has played several times in Jakarta, but that he has not yet seen him perform.⁹⁷ The narrator links the distinct 'voices' of the chapter through asking 'what kind of song would Chick Corea create if he had heard this story?'⁹⁸ (Ajidarma, 1996a, p.34). While reading and listening simultaneously, the narrator finds himself in an atmosphere that for him is unlike the exclusive and seductive atmosphere of a jazz nightclub: 'I don't smell any

⁹⁶ The journalist is referred to as a *wartawati*. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the journalists who were sent to East Timor from *Jakarta Jakarta* were women.

⁹⁷ Sudah beberapa kali Chick Corea main di Jakarta, tapi aku belum pernah nonton.

⁹⁸ Lagu apa yang diciptakan Chick Corea kalau mendengar cerita ini?

perfume. I smell the stench of blood⁹⁹ (Ajidarma, 1996a, p.34). This flânerie is not a pleasant act. And the narrator is able to escape his situation by stopping reading and taking off his Walkman. He looks out of his office window and sees 'the night outside the window'. He observes the city: 'the city-lights flash in the fog. It's very quiet'¹⁰⁰ (Ajidarma, 1996a, p.35). His ambivalent flâneuristic engagement with reports of violence and the meanings of jazz have allowed him to find comfort in his isolation within the city. Being comfortable in the city, in an urban environment, is based on the ability to detach oneself from what is happening in the immediate context. Being comfortable means being able to take a distance from the violence and presence of the other.

Jazz provides a media through which the violence of the Santa Cruz massacre is remembered, and the context which the narrator occupies is forgotten. Listening to jazz late at night in central Jakarta performs a double movement: it is both an act of empathy with the suffering of the victims at Santa Cruz and of disavowal of the immediate problems around the narrator.

The city at night (*malam*) is also presented as being a vehicle through which to link the elements of violence on the one hand and jazz music on the other. An exploration on the biography and career of Miles Davis is linked to the killings of unarmed people through the coincidental timing of Davis's own death. The narrator places Davis's death in the sequential historical context of being '48 days before the shooting of unarmed people occurred'¹⁰¹ (Ajidarma, 1996a, p.71). The narrator states that the both the shooters, the unarmed people who were shot and Miles Davis were all unknown to each other. Through 'the night', however, the narrator is able to 'know' them all: 'Miles Davis didn't know them. I know them all – by virtue of the night'¹⁰² (Ajidarma, 1996a, p.71). The narrator who performs his reading and listening during the solitude and quietness of an

⁹⁹ Aku tidak mencium bau parfum, aku mencium bau amis darah.

¹⁰⁰ Cahaya lampu-lampu kota berpendar dalam kabut. Sunyi sekali.

¹⁰¹ Harinya 48 hari sebelum penembakan orang-orang tidak bersenjata itu terjadi.

¹⁰² Miles Davis juga tidak mengenal mereka. Aku mengenal mereka semua – melalui malam.

office in a multi-storey building in an urban context is able to access the diverging historical narratives of the life of a pioneering jazz musician and, at the same time, narratives of eyewitnesses who saw the shooting of unarmed people. In the city and at night, the narrator is the central point for the intersection of these narratives. It is a position made available to him through his cosmopolitanism and through the privacy he gains at night and through shutting out his environment through the use of headphones, which close off an aural engagement with his surroundings. The city at night is a facilitator for flâneuristic exploration. It offers the narrator time and space to himself to broaden and use his mobility, which allows him to engage with a range of media and narratives.

The flâneur, as outlined in earlier sections of this thesis, is an urban stroller, an outsider who moves through urban landscapes and crowds, and someone who is present yet detached from the goings on around him. The Benjaminian flâneur is an outsider amongst the crowds; he is an observer of urban life rather than a participant. He is a figure who moves effortlessly from one arcade to the next. The flâneur sees commodities for sale in the arcades, yet does not commit to owning or purchasing the objects. The flâneur, in this sense, is all show: his existence and presence is one of performance. He is a figure who sees, observes and watches and simultaneously likes to be seen, watched and observed.

Featherstone (1998), on the other hand, proposes a different kind of imagining of what it means to be a flâneur and other ways of practising flânerie. Featherstone proposes the possibility of 'virtual flânerie', which is made possible through the Internet. He writes also of new developments in modes of seeing that developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: from the diorama, to the cinema, to the video and DVD and of course to the Internet. These technologies brought with them their own manner of looking. Texts – whether they are moving images, written texts or visual works – have become consumable in a

fragmentary and non-linear manner. Featherstone writes that this lends itself to the presence of 'juxtaposition or montage' in novels and films¹⁰³ (1998, p.920). Texts become a kind of urban environment in which the 'user' can jump from text to text and create his or her own unity or logic.

The headphones used by the narrator in *Jazz, Parfum dan Insiden* not only act a means to block out the city and the noises of his office, but also provide a vehicle for engaging with other cultural artefacts – in this case jazz from the United States. This music becomes another element with which the narrator as flâneur can engage, and then abandon at his own whim. The music to which he listens creates a counterpoint to that of the text: violence in East Timor on one level juxtaposed against 'a music of liberation' on another level and the context of the office at yet another level. This degree of juxtaposition and contrasting contexts reflects the fragmentariness and multi-layered-ness of everyday urban life. Within this context, it is a flâneur who interprets the meanings of the cultural products with which he engages in different ways. The listener, narrator, flâneur exercises his mobility – while remaining in his office – through listening, reading and interpreting various texts. This act asserts his own identity as a creator of meaning. The narrator as flâneur is a meaning-making agent, who is able to make sense of his world. His engagements with texts question the manner in which meaning is asserted and how narrations of violence are re-told. Through the narrator's engagement with written and auditory texts, he presents an alternative manner of interpretation: one that extends both the concept of flânerie and the identity of the flâneur.

The telephone is present throughout the text, as a device with both connective and disruptive functions. The telephone is mainly an office-phone. Mobile phones, however, are sometimes present. Mobiles, though, are the domains of others. The telephone of the narrator connects him with an office-

¹⁰³ For example, George Perec, *Life a user's manual* (2008), or in terms of films, see the works of Michael Haneke, such as *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance* and *Code Unknown*.

worker in a neighbouring building, while on other occasions it interrupts and disrupts his readings of reports on the shootings of unarmed people, as well as his listening to jazz standards. The telephone, for the narrator, is something to be managed: to answer it is to engage in a conversation with a distant other, while to ignore it is to maintain one's engagement with one's surroundings. The narrator states, 'the sunrays of sunset penetrated the glass windows of the building, warming my hands. The telephone rang. But, let it be. The telephone will always ring again. But, sunset always passes too quickly'¹⁰⁴ (Ajidarma, 1996a, p.2). Within the city, the sunset is something to be appreciated and enjoyed. On the other hand, a ringing telephone in the city is just another disturbance. Here, the telephone and its noise are reduced to being a disruptive experience. The telephone, however, is engaged with subjectively: for when the telephone keeps ringing, it becomes 'noisy' and is answered in order to reduce its disruption: 'the phone kept ringing. After a while it got too noisy. I picked it up'¹⁰⁵ (Ajidarma, 1996a, p.2). The only way to silence the disturbance of the telephone is to answer it.

The telephone links the narrator with others with whom he has social contact. Their telephone calls also disrupt his space, yet they function to remind him of his activities beyond reading the reports of violence. The narrator's reading of a report is interrupted by a telephone call from a woman – who works in a nearby office building – who invites him to watch a jazz concert in another part of the city. She asks whether they still are going to watch the jazz performance or not. The narrator answers: 'I was taken aback. It was like being thrown into a different world. Of course I was. Why not? But I still had time to catch a glimpse of the report'¹⁰⁶ (Ajidarma, 1996a, p.14). This statement by the narrator shows the dislocative function of both reading and the telephone call. This serves as a

¹⁰⁴ Cahaya senja menembus kaca gedung, membuat tanganku terasa hangat. Telepon berdering, tapi biarlah telepon selalu berdering kembali, namun senja selalu berakhir bagaimana begitu cepat.

¹⁰⁵ Telepon berdering terus. Lama-lama bising juga. Kuangkat.

¹⁰⁶ Aku tersentak, seperti terlempar ke sebuah dunia lain. Tentu saja jadi. Kenapa tidak? Tapi sempat kulirik sekilas sambungan laporan itu.

metaphor for the postmodern urban condition of fragmentation. This dislocation is also found in contemporary iPod use, where iPod users state that they view their surroundings 'as if they are a movie' and that the people around them are 'not really real' (Bull, 2007). For the narrator in *Jazz, Parfum dan Insiden*, when he is reading, what he reads is the only thing that is real.

Conclusion

This chapter has continued the exploration of the literary imagining of the figure of the flâneur and the practice of flânerie in a contemporary Indonesian novel. *Jazz, Parfum dan Insiden* reflects a continual negotiation and contestation of the values and practices of making sense of daily urban life. Seno's novel presents a characterisation of how people can manage the complexities of their lives within a contemporary Indonesian urban context. The novel is both 'of its time' in that it reflects a particular cultural and historical milieu in contemporary Indonesian history, and also critically engages with the socio-cultural politics of the era. The novel connects cases specific to Indonesia with more general themes of suffering and individual identity. Seno's text presents the flâneur as a figure who consumes a wide variety of texts and source material and who is able to move effortlessly from one media to the other. This figure is a 'rootless, displaced subject' (Bull, 2007, p.39) who interprets the activities of the 'other'. Rootlessness allows the narrator of *Jazz, Parfum dan Insiden* to interpret the subjectivities of both the 1960s jazz culture and the eyewitness reports on the shootings of unarmed civilians. Rather than being a debilitating condition, rootlessness allows the cosmopolitan subject of twentieth century Jakarta to engage with cultures and traditions beyond his own and to engage with the narratives, perspectives and subjectivities of societies peripheral to 1990s New Order ideology.

The next chapter also deals with auditory experience. It addresses the sounds of urban space. While this chapter has looked at how 'listening', 'reading' and 'smelling' are a part of flâneuristic practice, the next chapter looks at how a *hearing* of sounds performs a different kind of flânerie. The narrator who performs the act of hearing of the texts examined in the next chapter shows that through an interpretation of sounds one is able to draw conclusions regarding the value and significance of particular sounds within the urban contexts. These sounds do not have meanings inherent to themselves, but they are sounds that are valued in a particular way. An interpretation of the values of sounds and the manner in which they are used further complements the explorations of the earlier chapters, which address the attributes of Indonesian urban life. While this chapter has shown that listening, reading and smelling can be social and political interventions, the next chapter shows that hearing the ambient sounds of Indonesian urban space also facilitates a critical knowing of a particular socio-cultural space.

**Chapter Six: Listening to the City: "*Bunyi Hujan di atas Genting*",
"*Penjaga Malam dan Tiang Listrik*" and "*Dilarang Menyanyi di Kamar
Mandi*"**

For twenty-five centuries, Western knowledge has tried to look upon the world. It has failed to understand that the world is not for the beholding. It is for hearing. It is not legible, but audible (Attali, 1985, p.3).

The sound of the scoop hitting the water in the tub was loud and suggestive of enthusiasm. But this not what the Pak RT was waiting for. Nor was he waiting for the sound of soap being scrubbed up against a wet body. A sound that could be interpreted in many different ways (Ajidarma, 2006, p.92).¹⁰⁷

In the previous chapter I linked the narrator's act of listening to jazz in the city to the act of flânerie. I argued that the narrator, through his negotiation of urban space, was able to broaden the manner in which a flâneur engages with city. The chapter showed how a flâneur and the concept of flânerie can be understood in numerous ways. In the novel *Jazz, Parfum dan Insiden* (Ajidarma, 1996a), jazz - as a music that emerged in urban spaces in the United States - was appropriated into the urban space of contemporary Jakarta. Jazz was shown to be something universal - for it is understood and interpreted across cultures - and particular, for it was representative of a certain moment in the history of the United States. Jazz also was imagined as a vehicle for a critical attitude towards state policies, while at the same time it was invested with 'universal humanist' ideals. Jazz was

¹⁰⁷ Bunyi gayung menghajar air bak mandi terdengar mantap dan penuh semangat. Namun yang dinanti-nantikan Pak RT bukan itu. Bukan pula bunyi gesekan sabun ke tubuh yang basah, yang sangat terbuka untuk ditafsirkan sebarang-bebasnya.

imagined as being able to convey the suffering of oppressed and marginalised communities.

In this chapter, I explore how the sounds of urban daily life are a part of the ordering and disordering of urban space. That is, the writing of imagined auditory space is a way of knowing, interpreting and 'reading' urban space. I draw on the work of Schafer (1977), Colombijn (2007), Attali (1985) and Atkinson (2007) to locate the function of urban sounds in selected stories by Seno Gumira Ajidarma. I argue that through these stories, sound provides a way of understanding urban space. Sounds are given particular meanings and are used as a means to give value to urban space. At times the sounds in the stories are ordering, and at others they are disordering. At times, sounds strengthen dominant ideologies and at other times they challenge these ideologies. Throughout this chapter, I will show how reference to sound is another means by which Seno creates a sense of urban space.

This chapter focuses on three stories: "*Bunyi Hujan di Atas Genting*"¹⁰⁸ (from here on "*Bunyi Hujan*") (Ajidarma, 2007c, pp.15-24), "*Penjaga Malam dan Tiang Listrik*"¹⁰⁹ (from here on "*Penjaga Malam*") (Ajidarma, 2004b, pp.175-180) and "*Dilarang Menyanyi di Kamar Mandi*"¹¹⁰ (from here on "*Dilarang Menyanyi*") (Ajidarma, 2006). Each story was written during a different stage of Seno's career as a writer and each story was published in a different collection.¹¹¹ The three stories will be set in context against three main ideas, namely the presence and pervasiveness of surveillance and 'state terrorism' (Heryanto, 2006); the significance of sound as a means of knowing a culture and society (Schafer, 1977); and the issue of time (Sennett, 1990, pp.169-201).

¹⁰⁸ The Sound of Rain on Roof Tiles

¹⁰⁹ The Night Watchman and the Electricity Pole

¹¹⁰ No Singing in the Bathroom

¹¹¹ In order of their writing: *Bunyi Hujan di atas Genting*, July 15, 1985; *Dilarang Menyanyi di Kamar Mandi*, December 29, 1990 and *Penjaga Malam dan Tiang Listrik*, November 15, 2002.

Seno and State Terrorism: *Petrus*, Mysterious Shootings

The stories in this chapter continue Seno's exploration of state terrorism. "*Bunyi Hujan*" alludes particularly to the *petrus* (*penembak misterius*/mysterious shooters) campaign of the 1980s. The *petrus* phenomenon has been introduced in both the introduction to this thesis and earlier in this chapter. Kusno writes that the campaign of fear, as orchestrated through the *petrus* campaign, is indicative of other attempts by the New Order to maintain 'order' and 'security'. Kusno writes that the supposed threat of communism had lost much of its veracity some 20 years after the attempted coup in 1965. As such 'communism' became a threat that could stand for a number of ideologies or movements, regardless of their communist aspirations (Kusno, 2003a, p.3). The state, Kusno argues, also becomes inseparable from the identity that was meant to be feared by the populace. Kusno writes,

What is important for us here is not only that the existence of this series of domestic "phantoms" is inseparable from the politics of the state but that the state has made its appearance in and through the phantoms it created.

And,

In a strange way, the state and the phantoms (it created) appeared interchangeably at anytime, anywhere, and everywhere both in reality and in imagination (Kusno, 2003a, p.3).

Siegel includes a quote from *Pos Kota* describing the reactions of a man who found one of the murdered gangsters: '[the man] terrified, ran to the nearest police post panting out of breath reported what he had seen' (1998b, p.104). The irony in the man's running to the police need not be stated¹¹². Seno's story also is

¹¹² This incident is, however, repeated in a literary way in Seno's story "Clara" which I discuss in the next chapter. As a rape victim, Clara informs a policeman of her experience. The policeman proceed to interrogate her in a way so as to deny her claim to the truth of her experience.

consistent with the journalistic accounts of the ambivalence or positive attitude taken towards the murders. Siegel notes how the *petrus* campaign was compared to the 1965 anti-communist murders. Siegel quotes a *Tempo* article, which includes a comment from a member of the public, 'Junaidi', who makes the following statement:

Frankly, the people of Yogya feel grateful for the steps the garrison has taken. "In short, wipe them out, like the PKI ... once before," Junaidi hopes (Siegel, 1998b, p.104).

Literary imaginings of the *petrus* campaign and the attendant fear it was supposed to create, provide a broader context for the presence of state violence within New Order Indonesia and complement the studies of Kusno (2003a), Siegel (1998b) and Heryanto (2006), among others.

In "*Bunyi Hujan*" the death of a supposed criminal is an occasion for a kind of macabre festival. The public are willing participants in celebrating the *spectacle* of death as initiated by the state.

Sawitri feels that her neighbours are used to the tattooed corpses. Moreover, she feels that they are happy to see a tattooed corpse sprawled out at the mouth of the alley every time the rain stops and the yellowish mercury lights shine upon the corpse. From her home at the end of the alley, Sawitri can hear what her neighbours talk about. While crowding around the corpse and maybe before it has completely stopped raining, the children shout 'hooray! Hooray!'¹¹³ (Ajidarma, 2007c, p.19).

¹¹³ Sawitri merasa tetangga-tetangganya sudah terbiasa dengan mayat-mayat bertato itu. Malahan ia merasa tetangga-tetangganya itu bergembira setiap kali melihat mayat bertato tergeletak di mulut gang setiap kali hujan reda dan mayat itu disemprot cahaya lampu merkuri yang kekuning-kuningan. Dari dalam rumahnya yang terletak di sudut gang itu Sawitri mendengar apa saja yang mereka percakapkan. Mereka berteriak-teriak sambil mengerumuni mayat yang tergeletak itu meskipun kadang-kadang hujan belum benar-benar selesai dan anak-anak berteriak hore-hore.

Sounds of the City: Varying Concepts and Studies of Sound

Jakarta is a city of diverse sounds. The sounds are a part of the city's qualities. To understand Jakarta necessitates an attempt to understand the semantics of its sounds. A clap is not just a clap. Two hand claps are used as signals to others: to a friend who might be passing on the other side of the street, or to get the attention of a taxi or *ojek* driver. A car horn means one thing when the button is pressed twice quickly and another thing when the sound emerges in one long sound. A *ting ting* on a metal bowl may mean noodles, while a slow rhythm played on a hollow wooden tube could mean some kind of sate. Those familiar with their locality become hungry when they hear certain sounds and remain indifferent to other sounds, knowing that they don't like those flavours. Each sound has its own taste. For example, sound is a part of the technology of food delivery. In urban streets, there is a common sight of a man pushing his food cart and portable cooking machine – one hears the whistling of steam, perhaps a banging on a pot, or his own voice calling out, advertising the food he is hawking. This is opposed to the man on a three-wheeled bicycle wearing the uniform of a multinational ice-cream company while its theme music is played out from a tinny loudspeaker.

Christopher Silver (2008) acknowledges the presence of these sounds by virtue of their function in commercial transactions. Generally, however, his journey into and throughout *his* Jakarta has been mute. That is, Jakarta is imagined through its planning and design – he gives little attention to the aural qualities of Jakarta. Sound is not drawn upon as a means of knowing the city. This ignoring of the sounds present on any bus trip or walk throughout Jakarta cuts off the reader (a participant) from a vital aspect of Jakarta's environment. We are not made aware of the variety in spoken sounds, those of minivans, *becaks*, passersby, and of course, street musicians who practice on the street.

The sounds of the *satpam* - security guards - are evidence of crime or, rather, the fear of it and the need to control it. In *Planning the Megacity*, Silver (2008) locates the urban sounds of Jakarta in their relation to the economy and surveillance. Throughout this chapter, Seno re-creates urban environments in which sounds are both subject to surveillance and a means of surveillance. In "*Penjaga Malam dan Tiang Listrik*" sound is a vehicle through which an area is kept under surveillance. Sound is also an essential element to the sense of space and place; it is a way of mediating place and of knowing the customs of a particular place.

In *The Tuning of the World* (1977), Schafer introduced several key terms and concepts for an understanding of the soundscape of the world. As with Jacques Attali's later book *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (1985), Schafer's text conveys the thesis that an understanding of the world is best gained through listening to it, rather than seeing it. Unlike Attali, Schafer emphasises the hearing of ambient sounds, rather than an analytical understanding of 'music'. Schafer is not concerned with 'music', but with how changes in technology alter a region's soundscape. This term itself is something Schafer claims he should have patented: it is a term that is now essential to any discussions of sound-art and field-recording. It is as uncontroversial as its sister-term, 'landscape'. Schafer, a Canadian scholar and composer, started his research on the soundscape of Vancouver as result of his distaste for the 'more raucous aspects of Vancouver's rapidly changing soundscape'. A sound that appears in a soundscape is not necessarily beautiful or offensive. Meanings are applied to it by those who hear it. And thus, the sound of wind or rain or a particular mode of transport has varying connotations according to who hears it and in what contexts. In simplest terms, the sound of rain may well be welcome relief from a drought, or further perpetuation of a flood. A jet fighter flying over the city of Melbourne, for example, for the purpose of showing off the nation's military's power, would be

interpreted differently if it flew over a different city in a time of war, firing upon the inhabitants below.

Cities are explored through sound in the work of artists such as Heinz Weber and Catherine Clover. Weber's recordings of Hamburg and Clover's of London, Hong Kong and Melbourne show the specific auditory qualities of each place. They address acoustic qualities and natural elements that remain part of an environment specifically made by human beings for human beings. Sound recordings offer a complementary media to that of writing and visual documentary of urban societies. Just as these sounds uncover elements of urban life, so too can they further existing ideas of urban societies in their representations. Sound is an ambivalent element: it can represent both confrontational and conformist ideologies. The work of contemporary artists and scholars and writers, such as Clover, Weber and Colombijn and Nordholt and Steijlen in the Indonesian context, is part of an increasing focus on sound in the arts and in literature. Seno's literary works are part of this 'auditory turn'.

The sounds of Indonesia are varied and plural. An understanding of the sounds is necessary for a successful understanding of urban and indeed rural space. Sounds have particular meanings in Indonesia and how one interprets them is a complement to one's understanding of visual signs as well as that of spoken language. A rapid tapping of a coin on a pole inside a bus indicates to the driver that one would like to get off the bus. A *tock-tock-tock* from a passing cart indicates such-and-such a dish, while a *ting-ting-ting* on a metal plate indicates something else. The call to prayer suggests Islam is dominant, the variety of tones in calls to prayer and the slightly different times at which they are announced suggests the plurality of human voices and organisation. Freek Colombijn is one of the few scholars of Indonesian studies who have paid any particular attention to a city's soundscape. For his 2007 essay, *Toot Toot! Vroom Vroom!* Colombijn draws on Schafer's landmark text. Importantly, Colombijn also

mentions the subjectivity of his position as an outsider trying to investigate the soundscape of an other's environment (he is a Dutchman writing about Indonesia). For Colombijn, particular settings were very noisy; however, for the people he talked with and interviewed, they often wouldn't consider such noises (did they *hear* them?), or were not annoyed by them.

Hi-fi and lo-fi Soundscapes

Schafer uses the concept of 'hi-fi' and 'lo-fi' soundscapes. The hi-fi soundscape is that in which sounds can be clearly heard. Typically, such a soundscape is more likely to be found (experienced) in the countryside than in an urban setting. Jakarta late at night, however, can indeed represent a 'hi-fi' soundscape. At such a moment, an individual speeding taxi or private vehicle may be heard, rather than becoming part of the general din as it may do in busier times of the day. A hi-fi soundscape is privileged particularly for spiritual events: it is common to see signs out the front of mosques that inform passers-by that they should not use their horns at times of prayer. The making of noise on Fridays and during the time of the congregational prayer has been cited as the cause of inter-communal violence. Mosques themselves, of course, are a source of public noise. An *adzan* comes out of it, and at other times, so does preaching and recitation: such a noise-act spreads the blessing of the religion into the community. Noises - whether they are secular car-horns or sounds of frivolity - represent a challenge to the solemnity of the mosque interior.

Hearing is a means of understanding space. It also offers up the possibility of considering the negotiation of 'space' and 'non-places'. A non-place is created through uniform and featureless planning and design. Typically, non-spaces are identified with airports, car-parks, freeways and shopping malls. Non-spaces are places where *otherness* is neutralised; they are spaces in which an individual is

able to function on his or her own terms and desires without disruption, interruption or interference from others or from environmental conditions (which are also an 'other'). As such non-place is somewhere that is controlled and that is used in a pre-determined manner. The presence or absence of particular sounds are also a part of the creation of non-place, just as they are of space. The sounds of non-place play a homogenising and dominating role: they originate from a centre and move outwards towards a periphery. Non-place sound environments speak of uneven relations of power. In extreme cases, this leads to censorship and the banning of particular sounds. It is in these moments – when laws are either introduced or enforced – that the act of negotiation is abandoned¹¹⁴. Both figures of authority that appear in "*Dilarang Menyanyi*" and "*Penjaga Malam*" assert a particular sound environment on the community of which they are a part. This, I argue, has the effect of pushing spaces towards 'non-place'. That is, in "*Dilarang Menyanyi*", the sound of singing is forbidden, while in "*Penjaga Malam*", an electricity pole must be struck a certain number of times at particular times of the night.

Marc Augé defines 'place' by what is 'relational, historical and concerned with identity'. On the other hand, he hypothesises:

a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place. The hypothesis...is that super-modernity produces non-places, meaning spaces which are not themselves anthropological places...where transit points and temporary abodes are proliferating (Auge quoted in Bull, 2007, p.15).

In Augé's definition, the spaces of "*Dilarang Menyanyi*" and "*Penjaga Malam*" are not 'non-places' *per se*. They are, however, spaces with sound-environments that show traces of unequal power relations. In "*Dilarang Menyanyi*", for example, a sound – singing – is silenced and 'smoothed over'. In "*Penjaga Malam*", on the

¹¹⁴ This is explored in some recent lectures by University of Melbourne based anthropologist Ghassan Hage: <http://www.themonthly.com.au/taxonomy/term/378>

other hand, the auditory representation of time as performed by the nightwatchman also homogenises and makes space uniform.

'Indonesian' Soundscapes?

Colombijn introduces four ways of categorising the sounds of Indonesian cities: sounds of the street, sounds of power, sounds of modernity and sounds of intimacy (2007, p.257). There is the potential for much crossover between these categories. A vehicle, for instance, emits a 'sound of the street', a sound of power (its sound is threatening to a pedestrian, for example; it is used by the powerful), and is indeed a 'modern sound'. Also, the interior of a vehicle is an 'intimate' space, as it separates oneself from the public who exist outside, beyond the windows. 'The street' is by no means a uniform or generic space. As with any city, Jakarta's streets are highly varied: from roads such as Jl. Sudirman, the toll-way that runs around the periphery of Jakarta, to alleys (*gang*) that are only reachable on foot, or a slowly-driven motorcycle. The *adzan* - one of Indonesia's most ubiquitous sounds - is at once a sound of power as it represents the religious hegemony of Islam within Indonesia, as well as being a sign of diversity. The sound of the *adzan* is always varied and representative of the vocal qualities of the person making the *adzan*, not to mention the kind of equipment that is used to reproduce the sound of the voice. Despite the aural and political hegemony of Islam, the *adzan* itself is varied and thus becomes a sound not only of power, but also of plurality.

Just as Colombijn investigates sounds through his own experiences as an anthropologist, it is also possible to explore 'urban sounds' through the reading of literary works. This makes use of a neglected and important source of urban documentation. The sounds used in literary texts show how authors conceptualise sound. Not only this, they provide a lasting documentation of something that is

by its very nature temporal. Individual sounds have particular meanings and thus understanding how these sounds are given meaning provides an understanding of how a particular society is ordered. Seno Gumira Ajidarma has given much attention to soundscapes in his short stories and novels. He has used sound as a means of problematising notions of - among others - fear ("*Bunyi Hujan di atas Genting*"), power ("*Dilarang Menyanyi di Kamar Mandi*") and time ("*Penjaga Malam dan Tiang Listrik*").

A literary-sound analysis thus provides a new route into an understanding of Indonesia's urban fabric. This analysis draws on the studies of not only the aforementioned scholars - Schafer, and Colombijn - but also Atkinson (2007), Dick (2002), Nas (2003), and Mrázek (2004) among others. In line with Attali's invitation to apprehend the world through listening, scholars will also discover new dimensions of an urban society through *listening* to written texts. As Atkinson writes, 'sound provides an often-ignored element of our conceptualisation of the urban fabric' (Atkinson, 2007, p.1905). By engaging a study of 'literary geography' this chapter explores the way in which different sounds and different approaches to listening can lead to a greater understanding of the Indonesian urban fabric. This reading draws on studies of Indonesian cities 'as physical places' (to use Franco Moretti's term) (Johnson, 2000, p.199).

Listening in Seno's stories

These three stories are examples of how Seno has documented Indonesian urban life through looking at how sound is present and given meaning to in an urban environment. These stories indicate Seno's ability to represent and comment upon prevailing social and urban conditions. This representation of urban society is mediated in each of the stories through a narrator, who is at a distance from Seno himself. Seno's commentary on urban life is mediated through the narrator

in these stories, whereas in *Jazz*, *Parfum dan Insiden* and the essays of Kentut Kosmopolitan the voice of the author is that of Seno.

This chapter presents three cases of listening - listening as a community activity, listening as a private activity and listening as a domestic practice. In *Bunyi Hujan* an urban *kampung* acts together to form an audience to the state terror of the New Order. The state terror is perpetuated through the form of murdered accused gangsters thrown onto the street. One of the story's victims of state violence, Sawitri, listens in isolation, in the privacy of her domestic space, for the sounds that may or may not indicate that her partner will be found on a street near where she lives. It is the sound of rain beginning to fall that troubles her. The lack of the sound of rain falling - signifying its end - is what appeals to the urban *kampung* population. For after the rain has finished, they will be able to partake in the state sponsored spectacle of death. The sound of rain is terror for Sawitri, the sound of silence (the absence of rain) is joy for the *kampung's* residents.

The different practices of listening are also clearly defined in the story "*Dilarang Menyanyi*". The author presents a conflict in the ways in which meaning is applied to the sounds emanating from a bathroom. The high-density of urban *kampung* life presents a problem in the soundscape of a particular setting. The private act of bathing becomes a public act of terror when accompanied by erotic singing. Singing threatens order and thus it must be suppressed. The head of the *kampung*, initially, refuses to give meaning to the sounds of the woman singing. For him (and again, only initially) the sounds form a part of the background din. The high density of population creates a lo-fi soundscape where sounds mix and overlap. For the women of the *kampung*, however, the singing is a clear and individual sound which is able to be isolated from the general din. The representative head *hears* a *general* soundscape, while the women - alert to whatever threatens their peace and security - *listen* for *particular* sounds. The

kampung women, who are disturbed by the sounds, inform the representative of the *kampung* that the sounds of the *kampung* must be ordered. An irony appears, though, when it is the women who accuse the representative head of 'being too busy organising the *kampung*' so as to not know the meaning of particular sounds:

'What's up with you Pak RT? Don't be so busy organising the *kampung*.

Make some time to watch some porno films, just for a break, so you know what is going on in the outside world.'

'What's the connection between my role as RT and watching porno films?'

'So that you know why those sounds are a threat to the stability of the *kampung*.' (Ajidarma, 2006, pp.94-95).¹¹⁵

"*Penjaga Malam dan Tiang Listrik*" also interrogates the practice of listening. Again, a dichotomy is established. In this case, it is that between the night watchman and the people of the local community who form his 'audience'. The night watchman deliberately 'plays' the sound of time for an audience who hear the sounds as part of the urban background noise. The sound of a rock being struck against an electricity pole is used for its striking aesthetic qualities: a high-pitched sound in a hi-fi soundscape. The sound made by the night watchman contrasts with the other sounds he hears throughout his 'soundwalk' made in the middle of the night (sounds of lovemaking, the blues and crying), which are all of a low frequency. In the case of "*Dilarang Menyanyi*", it is the aesthetic qualities of the singing – that it sounds erotic – that is the cause of the communal disturbance. The disturbance arises only because the way in which the sounds are interpreted, not because of the mere act of singing. While in "*Penjaga Malam*", the aesthetics of the way in which time is articulated form only a functional part of the way in which order is maintained and created.

¹¹⁵ "Pak RT ini bagaimana sih? Makanya jangan terlalu sibuk mengurus kampung. Sese kali nonton BF kek, untuk selingan, supaya tahu dunia luar."
"Saya, Ketua RT, harus nonton BF, apa hubungannya?"

The awareness of sound in the stories studied in this chapter are a kind of rejection of the act of 'sounding out the city' as argued by Bull (2000, 2007). Instead of shutting out the sounds of the city, characters in these stories use sound to make sense of urban space. Through the use of personal stereos, users are able to 'successfully prioritise their own experience, personally, interpersonally and geographically' (Bull, 2000, p.9). The sound walk performed by the night watchman, however, also allows him to negotiate urban space and manage his own experience of it. Through his hearing of particular sounds the night watchman is able to know that 'night is passing as night should' (Ajidarma, 2004b, p.176). Use of a personal stereo, whether Walkman or iPod, on the other hand, cuts off the user from these sounds; denying the personal stereo user a means to engage and interact with their urban environment. For Bull, the iPod is the latest technology in the 'Western narrative of increasing mobility and privatisation' (Bull, 2007, p.2). The censorial act of silencing 'singing in the bathroom' in "*Dilarang Menyanyi*" and 'sounding time' as the night watchman does in "*Penjaga Malam*" are acts that deny the possibility for a personal and individual soundscape.

Sound also presents a key to a mapping of an urban environment. Sounds that are considered to be erotic are banned for they contribute to the disturbance of family life. The condition in which Sawitri interprets rain as a sound of terror, however, indicates a difference in interpretation between members of a community, rather than a variety of sounds. The reach of the sounds made by the night watchman delineates a community that is under surveillance and that is protected by a particular structure of security. Mapping an area through sound provides an alternative to mapping a society through its streets, parks and grand buildings. It also allows for a more sensorial understanding of space. It allows for an understanding of what transgresses physical boundaries. Reading urban space *through* sound as represented in literature allows for a broader understanding of

how sound is interpreted and how it relates to particular ideologies. Mapping space through sound thus continues the work of Cairns in his chapter in *Urban Space and Cityscapes* (2006) as well as that of Atkinson in 'Ecology of Sound' (2007).

Sound and State Terrorism: "*Bunyi Hujan di Atas Genting*", The Sound of Rain on Roof Tiles

Seno's stories often deal with the matter of 'state terrorism'. As seen in the previous chapter, the violence perpetrated in East Timor was dealt with in an ambivalent manner: the narrator (Seno) was able to use jazz both as a means to empathise with the victims of the Santa Cruz massacre as well as to escape into an anonymous urban environment. Furthermore, by reading the reports of eye-witness accounts in far-off, distant and 'other' East Timor, the narrator was able to remove himself from the conflicts, sufferings and state violence committed within the urban environment of which the narrator was a part. Seno's stories are of a time when state terrorism was perpetuated by the New Order government led by Suharto. This has been shown in the scholarship of academics such as Heryanto (2006), Siegel (1998b), Cribb (1990) and Bouchier and Hadiz (2003) among others.¹¹⁶ Heryanto defines state terrorism as follows:

[it is] a series of state-sponsored campaigns that induce intense and widespread fear over a large population, involving the following five aspects: The fear is derived from severely violent actions conducted by state agents or their proxies; these actions are directed against selected individual citizens (primary victims); these individuals are selected as representatives of one or more social groups (target population), which are often publicly identified; the victimization of the selected individuals,

¹¹⁶ Seno's stories such as *Telpon dari Aceh*, the collection *Saksi Mata* and *Jakarta 2039* are other stories that address the practice, varieties and implications of state violence.

their representative status and the motives for the violence are publicly exposed in order to spread fear and uncertainty among the wider target group against whom similar violence can take place in an unpredictable future; consequently the general population reproduces and elaborates the image of violence and intense fear among themselves (2006, p.19).

The stories studied in this chapter show examples of how fear is reproduced by the 'general population'. This 'reproduction of fear' is enforced through the presence of sound in "*Penjaga Malam*", the eradication of a destabilizing and threatening sound in "*Dilarang Menyanyi*" and the identification of the sound of rain with the omnipresent power of the state in "*Bunyi Hujan*". In these stories, characters adopt the ideology of the state and perpetuate it further and thus give up an avenue for resistance. Sound, as such, is not a neutral element of daily urban life, but can be both a means to enforce established ideologies, or in other instances to resist the power of the state. The stories by Seno addressed in this chapter provide an opportunity for understanding the way in which sound is interpreted in contemporary urban societies. As such, this chapter explores the intersection of sound, urban life and political meanings.

The first story to be discussed is "*Bunyi Hujan di Atas Genting*" – one of the stories in the collection *Penembak Misterius*¹¹⁷ (Ajidarma, 2007c). The stories in this collection are, arguably, some of Seno's most critical and political writings. These stories show the most *typical* qualities of his writings: an awareness of the ambient qualities of a scene (sound, visuals), tension (through understatement), addressing violence (political or otherwise), and in some cases an ironic sense of humour. The subtlety with which Seno writes his stories also indicates his skills at the craft of short story writing.

¹¹⁷ Sigit Santosa has translated the story and it appears in the collection, *The Mysterious Marksman* (2002c). This story was written on July 15, 1985 and was published in *Kompas* roughly two weeks later in the edition of July 28 of the same year.

The story consists of one main character: a woman, Sawitri, who is waiting for the return of her partner. She lives in a poorly constructed 'house' (*rumah*; but it is most likely not a separate building) at the end of a narrow alley.

The importance of fear in this story is signalled at its very beginning. But 'fear' does not have a self-evident meaning. However, the opening paragraph - as quoted below - places Sawitri within the context of 'fear'. The story contains several kinds of 'fear'. And, Sawitri's fear that her partner has been killed is one of these fears. Other fears include the fear of the state towards the petty criminals (or *gali*), the fear of the petty criminals towards the state, and the fear of the community of being accused of being a petty criminal (Kusno, 2003a, pp.3-4). The story starts as follows:

"Tell me a story about fear", said Alina to the storyteller. So the storyteller told her about Sawitri.

Every time it stops raining, a tattooed corpse can be found, lying face up at the mouth of the alley. That is the reason why Sawitri fears the sound of rain falling on the roof¹¹⁸ (Ajidarma, 2007c, p.15).

Sawitri fears sound: for her it is the sound that makes her remember her missing partner and that he has become a victim of the *petrus* campaign. Without the sound of rain she waits for him to return home. But when it rains she has become accustomed to seeing a corpse laid out in the rain. The corpses she sees are often associates of her husband. As such, Sawitri is associated with the victims and with the fear that is caused by the sound of rain. The sound of rain, rather than being a metaphor for death, is the sound of fear.

"*Bunyi Hujan*" has a narrow focus. Yet, at the same time, the story needs to be understood in a broad social context. The story invites readers to relate its characters, action and setting to conditions beyond the text. The journalistic bent

¹¹⁸ "Ceritakanlah padaku tentang ketakutan," kata Alina pada juru cerita itu. Maka juru cerita itu pun bercerita tentang Sawitri. Setiap kali hujan mereda, pada mulut gang itu tergeletaklah mayat bertato. Itulah sebabnya Sawitri selalu merasa gemetar setiap kali mendengar bunyi hujan mulai menitik di atas genting.

of much of Seno's 'fiction' relates his stories back to the realities of contemporary Indonesia. This is one of the typical characteristics of *sastra koran* or newspaper literature; a genre of which Seno's writing is a part.

Sawitri's waiting is a result of the absence of her partner, Pamuji. Pamuji has only one name and, aside from not being indicative of a Javanese rank, it is also not an Islamic name, which would at least attest to some degree of religiosity. Violence is perpetrated against members of a particular social group – i.e. the *galis*, and gangsters, and is perpetrated by the state. Instead of being viewed as criminals, this story presents the *galis* as victims of the state's violence. Sawitri is waiting for Pamuji for she knows that he is a criminal and she knows that he may well be a target of the *penembak misterius* ('mysterious killings', also abbreviated to *petrus*) campaign. Sawitri longs for Pamuji, as he is tattooed, and, being tattooed during the time of campaign – it was believed – was enough to make one a target of the police.¹¹⁹ According to Siegel, a *gali's* tattoo 'identified them as criminals; they were condemned simply by having incisions on their skin rather than because of the specific crimes they were judged to have committed' (1998b, p.111). Of the *petrus* campaign, Siegel notes:

[the] *gali*¹²⁰ were for the most part petty criminals, members of gangs.

Many of them had worked for the government party, Golkar, during the elections the previous year, then were discharged to go back to their old ways. Most *gali* bore tattoos (Siegel, 1998b, p.104).

Every time it rains, a corpse can be found at the end of the alley on which Sawitri lives. When she opens her front window, leans out and looks to the right, Sawitri can see the corpse. She notices that every time she does so, the corpse is looking in her direction. Sawitri recognizes some of Pamuji's friends. If the head of the corpse is already covered by the time she looks out the window, she goes

¹¹⁹ While living in Medan in 2000-2001, during a time in which I used the city's buses a couple of times a day, it was usual to see drivers with scars across their arms where they had once had tattoos. It became a matter of urgency to have them removed in, no doubt, sometimes vain attempts at having oneself removed from hit lists.

¹²⁰ A tough-guy, gangster, hitman

down into the crowd and uncovers either the cloth covering its head, or its body, to see whether or not the corpse has a tattoo that will indicate to her whether or not it is Pamuji. She says that she only needs to see a tiny fraction of the tattoo to be able to identify the corpse as Pamuji or not.

The description of the manner in which the corpses are disposed of is also consistent with the journalistic reports that were published during the time of the *petrus* campaign. Sawitri describes seeing corpses dumped in the middle of the street. She describes how she hears 'the sound of an explosion'¹²¹ – perhaps that of a gunshot. She describes how people gather around the corpse and create a kind of spectacle. She describes the happiness that each new corpse brings for some members of the *kampung* – including Sawitri's neighbours. The campaign, a kind of 'shock tactic', was a reaction to the dramatic increase in urban crime during the early to mid-1980s, which was apparently attributed to the massive influx of rural dwellers to urban societies, around the same time as a drop in oil prices that led to more severe economic conditions. President Suharto himself acknowledged the existence of the *petrus* campaign, stating that it was a necessary method to instil a feeling of 'safety' amongst urban communities. Through the trope of 'the sound of rain on the roof', Seno explores how a specific member of one such urban community experiences fear.

Sawitri does not fear the death of Pamuji for she knows that he is smart enough as a gangster to either evade the police or to fight back against them. Despite the fear felt by Sawitri herself, she imbues Pamuji with a sense of courage. She imagines that he is capable of avoiding the death squads, but is not fearful of them. Rather than fearing Pamuji's death, Sawitri instead fears the sound of rain, a sound that is seemingly innocent, but which for her is the sound of death. It is the sound of death *becoming*. The sound of rain threatens to turn 'a fear of a potential death' into knowledge of Pamuji's death.

¹²¹ Semacam letupan.

Sawitri fears rain. She fears the looming presence of the state of Indonesia impinging upon her private life. Rain is uncontrollable. It is a natural phenomenon. But in this case, the sound of rain has become a sound of the state. The sound of rain indicates the centripetal power of the state to reach into areas that are a part of the private domain. The sound of rain indicates the degree of invasion made by the state to pervade the private. This was an ideology that dictated that some people, some citizens of the Republic of Indonesia, were dispensable, in the name of security. This ideology privileges the public above the private and allows no room for negotiation. The irregularity of rain, its naturalness, characterises Sawitri's fear as something both natural and uncontrollable. Sawitri is rendered powerless in her ability to control her fear of finding Pamuji's corpse in a crowded street. Sound – the sound of rain falling on roof tiles – thus becomes a means of oppression. Sawitri reproduces the fear that is created by the state through the adoption of a simulacrum of state terrorism.

Sawitri's waiting is a theme that is also explored or expressed in some of Seno's other stories: "*Seorang Wanita di Halte Bis*"¹²² (2007c, pp.93-102) and "*Seorang Wanita yang Menunggu Telpn Berdering*"¹²³ (2002e, pp.32-39). On the other hand, collective waiting is described in "*Loket*"¹²⁴ (2007c, pp.155-170). This characterisation of women is somewhat negative as they seem to be waiting for indefinite periods of time. In the case of *Seorang Wanita di Halte Bis*, it is a man who offers to help the woman find an alternative mode of transport. Nonetheless, his offer of help is rejected and thus suggests the woman's independence. Danerek has written that Seno's 'female characters are unconventional and strong' (Danerek, 2006, p.32). Seno's occasional characterisation of women as disempowered and passive beings could be further researched in other

¹²² A Woman at a Bus Stop

¹²³ A Woman Waiting for a Telephone Call

¹²⁴ The Ticket Counter

scholarship and contrasts with Seno's more common representation of women as empowered characters.

The sound of rain plays a rhetorical role in "*Bunyi Hujan*"; it is a part of the creation of tension and the denouement of the story. This story is one example where Seno uses sound as a means to establish a notion of 'fear' and to argue that meanings attributed to sound are variable and depend on one's perspective of listening. Sound in this story is identified with the fear of the state. The sound of rain becomes a sound of the state and represents the state's infiltration into all aspects of its citizen's lives.

The absence of Pamuji's corpse coexists with Sawitri's fear of the rain. The state, on the other hand, could be said to fear not criminality as such, but rather, tattoos. Thus, the state did not combat crime but instead adopted the criminal tactics of the petty criminals themselves in order to eliminate tattoos. The tattoos themselves became concrete embodiments, or, truths of criminality. This perspective leads us to the domain of hyperreality, a condition consistent with the postmodernist notion of the non-referentiality of signs. The world of the hyperreal is a world 'devoid of things' (Simon & Barker, 2002, p.140). And, in this case, the things that are absent are Pamuji's corpse (which Sawitri fears but doesn't fear) and the criminality of the petty criminals (which the state fears, but suppresses through the elimination of tattoos). As argued elsewhere by Heryanto, the New Order government employed the ideology of the hyperreal as a means to practice its 'state terrorism' (Heryanto, 2006). And, as Kusno points out, the hyperreal was also used in the case of fearing the petty criminals (Kusno, 2003a, p.3). Through the example of "*Bunyi Hujan*" I have showed how this intersection between noise, fear and notions of criminality relates to contemporary urban social conditions in Indonesia. The investing of particular sounds with particular emotions (fear, for example) plays a part in the reproduction of state terrorism as outlined by Heryanto.

Sound walks and surveillance: "*Penjaga Malam dan Tiang Listrik*", The
Nightwatchman and the Electricity Pole

"*Penjaga Malam dan Tiang Listrik*" (from here on abbreviated to *Penjaga Malam*) is a more recent publication, included in the collection "*Aku Kesepian, Sayang.*" "*Datanglah, Menjelang Kematian.*" (2004b) The story was written in November 2002 and published in *Koran Tempo*.¹²⁵ "*Penjaga Malam*" is set in an urban housing complex. While not necessarily a gated community, night watchmen guard the complex. Night watchmen are a standard part of Indonesian urban and rural communities. They are often seen playing chess, talking on walkie-talkies, drinking tea and mixing with passers-by. They, like the sellers of street food, the *ojek* drivers and the traders who sell their wares in a cart, form a vital part of the street scene. That is, they are an essential part of the feeling of liveliness on the street. The mere presence of the security guards – known as *satpam*¹²⁶ – and the night watchmen creates a feeling of security.

Abidin Kusno writes of the *gardu* (gatehouse) – i.e. the place where night watchmen are based as a place where

(mostly) men gather to conduct night patrols or watches and engage in leisure activities such as gambling and gossiping...those who conduct the night watch are armed with hand weapons...their key instrument, however, is the *kentongan*, a hollowed-out tree branch with an opening line down the middle that produces a sound when it is struck with a stick (2010, p.224).

The night watchmen and the security guards are a part of the act of surveillance, part of an effort to establish knowledge about the goings on of a

¹²⁵ February 16, 2003. Seno wrote the story while in Pondok Aren, a southern Jakartan suburb where many of his stories and essays are written.

¹²⁶ Satuan Petugas Keamanan. Security Unit.

particular community. The night watchman acts as a kind of mobile CCTV camera. But, different from a CCTV camera, the night watchman is at one and the same time the 'seer' and the 'interpreter'.

"*Penjaga Malam*" is the story of one evening at a housing complex. The main elements of the story are the night watchman, the housing complex, and a third party – someone who comes to disturb the night watchman. The story begins with a reflection on the role of the night watchman: his purpose is to make sure that night becomes all that night can become (Ajidarma, 2004b, p.176)¹²⁷. Night must be like *night*. Night must have the attributes of night. The night watchman creates his own definition of what a night is: night must be dark so that thieves may carry out their thieving, night must be dark so that shadows can move around without being seen in the moonlight. Night must be dark so that it tests the loyalty of lovers.

The night watchman, in this instance, shows characteristics of being a flâneur. He moves through the neighbourhood slowly, listening to the aural qualities of the environment around him. This night watchman-as-flâneur, however, has relinquished his neutrality and indifference, and instead performs his flânerie in order to subject others to his surveillance. He listens for sounds that challenge his ideas about whether the night is passing as night should.

The night watchman understands the night through sounds. Without sounds he cannot affirm that night is acting as a night should. In a few moments before midnight, the night watchman leaves his post. Moving through the housing complex he hears the sound of blues music, he hears the sounds of lovemaking, he hears the sound of crying. Night is passing as it should. The authority of the night watchman to impose his authority on the aural environment of the housing complex is contested by the presence of a disguised and shadowy figure. This

¹²⁷ Menjaga malam, agar malam tetap menjadi malam seperti yang paling dimungkinkan oleh malam.

figure claims that his presence is to obstruct the night watchman¹²⁸. The conflict of the story is based around which character will represent time and order through sound. The night watchman enforces a literal understanding of time. He asserts that midnight is midnight through the striking of an electricity pole twelve times. He asserts that one a.m. is one a.m. through striking an electricity pole once. Upon being obstructed, the night watchman reacts violently. The reason for this is that he lacks the vocabulary to express time in a non-literal way. But, not only this, he lacks the flexibility to perform the signal for one a.m. at a time slightly after the 'real' one a.m.

This reading of time, I argue, is consistent with the conception of time in the ideology of New Order. (The story itself, however, is from the post-New Order era.) The era of the Suharto government was exemplified by both hyper-modernity and hyper-reality. The hyper-modernity was evident through the New Order's programs of development and representations of Indonesia's nation and culture. The hyper-reality of the New Order government is evident in its efforts at enforcing its reading of history: the non-real becomes more real than the real. This Baudrillardian hyper-reality has been developed in the writing of Heryanto¹²⁹ and Simon and Barker¹³⁰. In the case of "*Penjaga Malam*", we see a situation and representation of time, where multiple realities are denied legitimacy. This is a reading of time as uniform and homogenous. This reading of time does not allow for the existence of different readings of history, different imaginings and different modes of existing. This counters the more general condition of plurality that characterises urban life in Indonesia and Jakarta in particular. I argue that Seno's stories have sought to highlight the plurality of Indonesian urban life and experience. As is shown elsewhere in the scholarly work of Colombijn (2007),

¹²⁸ He says, 'I'm here to get in your way, O-Night Watchman.' 'Aku ada di sini memang untuk menghalangimu, wahai penjaga malam' (Ajidarma, 2004b, p.178).

¹²⁹ Ariel Heryanto, *State Terrorism and Political Identity in Indonesia: Fatally Belonging*, New York: Routledge, 2006.

¹³⁰ Bart Simon and Joshua Barker, "Imagining the New Order Nation: Materiality and Hyperreality in Indonesia", *Culture, Theory and Critique*, 2002 (43), 2, pp.139-153.

Nordholt and Steijlen (2007), sound plays a role in the imagining of urban space and the reading of urban environments. As outlined above, sound also plays a role in the reproduction of state fear: it is incorporated into surveillance as well as being representative of state power.

Disturbing Order: "*Dilarang Menyanyi di Kamar Mandi*", No Singing in the Bathroom

"*Dilarang Menyanyi di Kamar Mandi*" was written in 1991, published in *Suara Pembaruan* in the same year and then became the title story of a collection published in 1995 by Subentra Citra Pustaka. The book was re-published in April 2006 by Galang Press. It has become one of Seno's more famous short stories. It is ironic, critical and humorous. It provides a commentary on social relations in a typical urban setting. The story contains familiar characters: housewives, cheating husbands, a confused and ambivalent Pak RT (local neighbourhood representative) and a woman of extraordinary sensuality. Like the two other stories discussed in this section, this story forms a vital part of understanding Seno's writing on urban conditions on account of its close attention to the aural environment. Partly due to its relative length – it is about three times longer than "*Penjaga Malam*", and about a third longer than "*Bunyi Hujan*" – "*Dilarang Menyanyi*" provides several different insights into how Seno understands sound and noise and how sound and noise play a crucial role in his rhetorical structuring of a story, as well as how sounds are imagined to play roles in shaping and threatening the morals of a community.

In this story, the presence and roles of sound and noise function at a number of different levels. Firstly, we see literally that noise is a disturbance. Conversely in the case of "*Penjaga Malam*", the literal noise is a means of enforcing order. The sound of the unseen woman singing from the bathroom of

Ibu Saleha's boarding house emits a centripetal noise, which disturbs the harmony of the community. That she is unseen and that the sounds of a woman bathing while singing disturbs a community indicates the power of sound. The appearance and sensuality of the bather/singer becomes more erotic for the fact that she is unseen: those who hear her singing use their imaginations to satisfy their fantasies. The men of the *kampung*, in their imaginations, conclude that the sounds they hear are the sounds of a woman bathing, but, cannot help to be transported into thinking of 'erotic scenes'¹³¹. In this case sound becomes less literal owing to its detachment from its source. This is also reminiscent of the power of the spoken, uttered word throughout the New Order era. In the case of Rendra – a (late) prominent poet and critic of the New Order government – large crowds would gather to hear him speak, to hear him verbalise his otherwise static and dormant poetry. In the process of making them audible, large crowds would gather and these crowds would be interpreted as being a threat to security. The verbalising of his poetry needed to be suppressed. Rendra's printed poems did not pose the same threat. Seno's writing after the New Order era continues to be a criticism of some of the policies and ideologies of the New Order.

The other level at which attention to sound is incorporated into the narration is through its description at the level of ambient noise. This is a quality of many of Seno's stories, but the degree to which Seno focuses on noise is of particular importance in this story, as in the two other stories of this section. The narrator uses descriptions of sound to create a degree of tension, to slow down the speed of what is being described. By describing sounds, the narrator creates a kind of cinematic experience. In the opening scene of the story, where the Pak RT has been asked to be an ear-witness to the woman's erotic and thus dangerous singing, the narrator privileges hearing as the key sense to understanding the scene. The passage reads:

¹³¹ Adegan-adegan erotis.

The Pak RT saw faces full of desire. They were ready and not willing to wait any longer. It was as if they were waiting for the most amazing show in the world. Then, everything suddenly became silent. The sound of the door closing was heard clearly. There was the hum of electricity, the sound of clothes, and the soft sound of singing in a voice, which was definitely that of a woman. Then, *splash-splash-splash*. It seemed as if she was bathing with great gusto. The sound of the scoop hitting the water tub was loud. But this not what the Pak RT was waiting for. Nor was he waiting for the sound of soap being scrubbed up against a wet body. A sound that could be interpreted in many different ways (Ajidarma, 2006, p.92).¹³²

What we see then, in "*Dilarang Menyanyi*", is a prescient awareness of the censorious tendencies amongst some sectors of Indonesian society. The story also presents a shifting power structure. The story emphasises numerous characters with their different positions of authority. At different moments in the story each character – or set of characters – exemplify and play out different roles of power. We see the power of a voice in turning men into victims of their uncontrollable sexual desire; we see the power of the housewives in forcing the hand of the Pak RT; we see the power of the singing and desire-arousing woman in provoking taboo thoughts within the mind of the Pak RT; we see the power of the singing woman to embarrass both the Pak RT and Ibu Saleha. This story thus is an insightful investigation, critique and subtle observation of the different relations that operate in Indonesian urban societies. Sound, in the case of the woman's singing is an interruption to the forces of order that the Pak RT hopes to enforce upon the *kampung*. Singing becomes symbolic of disorder and disharmony. Silence – or the absence of particular sounds – is a part of

¹³² Pak RT melihat wajah-wajah yang bergairah, bagaikan siap dan tak sabar lagi mengikuti permainan yang seolah-olah paling mengasyikkan di dunia. Lantas segalanya jadi begitu hening. Bunyi pintu yang ditutup terdengar jelas. Begitu pula bunyi resleting itu, bunyi gesekan kain-kain busana itu, dandang-dandang kecil itu, yang jelas suara wanita. Lantas byar-byur-byur-byur. Wanita itu rupanya mandi dengan dahsyat sekali. Bunyi gayung menghajar bak mandi terdengar mantab dan penuh semangat. Namun yang dinanti-nantikan Pak RT bukan itu. Bukan pula bunyi gesekan sabun ke tubuh yang basah, yang sangat terbuka untuk ditafsirkan sebebaskan-bebasnya.

maintaining the kind of 'order' in which the rights of individuals are subordinated for the benefit of a broader population.

The power of the woman's singing is evident in the following passage:

The Pak RT was waiting to hear the woman's voice. And her gentle humming soon turned into a gentle singing. A voice, which was not so sweet, but was able to invoke images full of desire. Her voice was husky. Who knows what the people behind the wall thought of when they heard the sound of her husky voice. They looked as if they had forgotten about where they were. It seemed as if the woman's singing had created another world and they were very happy to be there. Only the security guard remained unaffected (Ajidarma, 2006, pp.92-93).¹³³

This quotation appears at the beginning of the story and it presents the Pak RT as someone who is both unaffected by the desire-arousing singing, as well as someone who is aloof from his community yet also attentive to them. The story presents changes in the Pak RT's position. He moves from someone who defends the woman's right to sing to being ambivalent about her supposedly erotic singing to in the end enforcing a general ban on singing while showering. This, again, presents an ominous reading of attempts at restricting an individual's freedom of expression and participation in society. Sound is a part of the negotiation of societal relations.

¹³³ Yang ditunggu Pak RT adalah suara wanita itu. Dan memang dendang kecil itu segera menjadi nyanyian yang mungkin tidak teralu merdu tapi ternyata merangsang khayalan menggairahkan. Suara wanita itu serak-serk basah, entah apa pula yang dibayangkan orang-orang dibalik tembok dengan suara yang serak-serak basah itu. Wajah mereka seperti orang lupa dengan keadaan sekelilingnya. Agaknya nyanyian wanita itu telah menciptakan sebuah dunia di kepala mereka dan mereka sungguh-sungguh senang berada disana. Hanya hansip yang masih sadar.

Conclusion

The stories discussed in this chapter are connected by the theme of surveillance. The stories all privilege sound as a means of understanding issues of surveillance and of criminality. Surveillance is needed to maintain security, a security that is disturbed by criminals. Earlier in this thesis we saw that the narrator's knowledge of events in East Timor was compromised by the intervention and presence of a security-enforcing agent who deemed that some information was too likely to cause a disturbance and thus the offending words were censored. This intervention of a state force was contrasted with the freedom and liberty of the saxophonist and jazz musicians. The pulse of *Jazz, Parfum dan Insiden* is indeed pushed along by the narrator's realisation of his own desire to know what has been experienced by the people of East Timor, while at the same time he is enchanted and exulted by listening to music that is the fruit of a people who were oppressed.

In these stories we have security and sound operating at three different levels. Sound is an agent of disturbance. This is evident in "*Dilarang Menyanyi*". It disturbs through its power to arouse the men who fall within earshot of the noises - imagined as erotic - coming from behind the walls of a bathroom. Secondly, sound is used as a means of enforcing strict, linear and concrete time. In "*Penjaga Malam*", the sound created by banging a stone on an electricity pole maintains order. In the words of the narrator, the purpose of the night watchman is to make sure that 'night becomes all that it should become' (Ajidarma, 2004b, p.176). Order is maintained through the sounding of time: a breakdown between time and its representation is a breakdown in order. Thirdly, there is the *sound* of fear: *rain*. Rain becomes noise because it disturbs the tranquillity of Sawitri's comfortable ignorance of the fate of Pamuji. Rain is a signal of the possibility that she might suddenly gain knowledge about whether or not Pamuji has been killed.

In the eyes of the state though, Pamuji himself is a kind of disturbance. For he disturbs the silence, the peace, the order of the secure, safe and developing Indonesia as imagined by the New Order government.

This chapter has shown that 'hearing' and 'sound' are markers of urban space. The sounds of others are interpreted as being disruptive, while at the same time, other sounds such as the call to prayer (*adzan*) are used to homogenise space. Sound is used by those who are in power and those who are marginalised. As stories such as "*Dilarang Menyanyi di Kamar Mandi*" show, the categories of 'powerful' and 'powerless' are dynamic, contextual and changing. A flâneur's act of hearing place complements the act of flânerie, which primarily relies on visual stimulus. Hearing allows for another way of knowing the city and urban space. As has been shown by scholars such as Schafer and Colombijn it is a way of knowing that has generally been ignored in studies of urban history. The selected stories that have been discussed in this chapter show that Seno's writing of urban societies provides space for auditory culture and the manner in which flânerie encompasses the act of hearing. In the next chapter, the discussion of flânerie moves towards a flânerie of seeing. "Streets of Violence" deals with the concept of 'the flâneur' and the practice of flânerie.

Chapter Seven: Streets of Violence: "*Jakarta Suatu Ketika*", "*Clara atawa Wanita yang diperkosa*" and "*Jakarta 2039: 40 Tahun 9 Bulan Setelah 13-14 Mei 1998*"

The sky was grey above Jakarta. Smoke billowed out everywhere. I stood at the top of a building, looking around, from one moment to the next, a new plume of black smoke would emerge like a cloud of rage (Ajidarma, 1999, p.55).¹³⁴

I asked someone, an *ojek* driver, yeah, to explore the city. On the 14th, 15th, May. [...] If you read my story, "*Jakarta, Suatu Ketika*", yeah, it is like a report.¹³⁵

In this chapter I draw on three short stories by Seno Gumira Ajidarma: "*Jakarta, Suatu Ketika*", "*Clara atawa Wanita yang diperkosa*"¹³⁶ (Ajidarma, 1999, pp.69-79) and "*Jakarta 2039: 40 Tahun 9 Bulan Setelah 13-14 Mei 1998*"¹³⁷ (Ajidarma, 2001). These stories engage with the practices of photography and flânerie, with the social construction of Chineseness and with the mediation of urban life through various methods of narration. The act of taking photographs in the urban landscape draws on the practice of flânerie, and, the urbanness of Jakarta is negotiated through ideas of Chineseness and identity. The stories studied in this chapter, through their foregrounding of urban space, violence and movement throughout the city, also provide a 'literary moment' for an interrogation of the manner in which cityscapes are imagined. Throughout this chapter, I draw on the theoretical works of scholars who have interrogated the ways in which the events

¹³⁴ Langit kelabu di atas Jakarta. Asap kebakaran membubung di mana-mana. Aku berdiri di puncak sebuah gedung, memandang berkeliling, dari saat-saat meletup asap hitam yang baru, membubung dan membubung bagaikan gumpalan dengam.

¹³⁵ Personal communication with Seno Gumira Ajidarma, Bakoel Koffie, Cikini, Jakarta, November, 2008.

¹³⁶ The title of the story in the contents page is "*Clara atawa Wanita yang Diperkosa*" (Clara, or the Woman who was Raped), while the story is simply titled "*Clara*" on page 69 of the book.

¹³⁷ These titles are: "*Jakarta, at a Certain Point in Time*", "*Clara: or the woman who was raped*", and "*Jakarta 2039: 40 Years, 9 months after 13-14th May, 1998*".

of May 1998 have been remembered – particularly the writings of Strassler (2005) and Kusno (2003b). To frame the use and appropriation of photography, I draw on John Berger and Jean Mohr (1982), Susan Sontag (1977, 2003) and Seno's book, *Kisah Mata: Perbincangan tentang Ada*¹³⁸ (2002b). Sontag's writing on 'the photographer' informs the kind of flânerie that is practised in "*Jakarta, Suatu Ketika*" (1977). This chapter concludes with statements regarding the manner in which 'Jakarta' is imagined as a city in a state of crisis and how the city of Jakarta is mediated through acts of personal confession ("*Clara: atawa Wanita yang diperkosa*") and the use of the camera and photography ("*Jakarta, Suatu Ketika*" and "*Jakarta 2039*").

Throughout the three stories the urban environment is represented as a site of danger, violence and transgression. Cities - in general - instead of being imagined as places of protection and prosperity have become associated "more with danger than with safety" (Nan Ellin quoted in Bauman, 2008a, p.65). Bauman writes, "friends – and also enemies, and above all the elusive and mysterious strangers who veer threateningly between the two extremes – now mix and rub shoulders on the city streets. The war against insecurity, and particularly against dangers and risks to personal safety is now waged inside the city, and inside the city the battlefields are set and front lines are drawn" (Bauman, 2008a, p.65). A taxi driver, caught up in the events of the May riots, describes how he used money to escape from a dangerous situation:

The roads were blocked. And people were ordered to stop. It was the *preman* who were doing it. I turned around immediately. I did a u-turn on the toll road. I threw my money out the window and they took it. I opened the window, just like this [he opens the window]. I said, 'I'm sorry, I'm sorry'. I'm just going home, trying to find a safe place.' I threw the money out the window for the *preman*. I was trying to stay safe. And then I drove

¹³⁸ Eye Story: A Discussion of Presence

straight back to the base. I thanked God for my safety. All of the cars were being set on fire. Burnt, looted, tortured. All sorts of things were done to women.¹³⁹

The events described in the three stories relate to the time around the resignation of President Suharto on 21st May, 1998. This period, identified with the '*reformasi*' movement, has been described vividly in van Dijk's book, *A Country in Despair* (2001). *The Last Days of President Suharto* (Aspinall, Feith, & Klinken, 1999) also offers an insight into the political machinations that provided the context for the negotiations amongst powerful figures close to the president of the New Order government. Siegel (1998a) addresses the experiences of students during the protests that occurred in the weeks prior to Suharto's resignation. He identifies the key participants of the riots and protests as the students, the *massa*¹⁴⁰ and the law enforcement agents. He writes of how different people caught up in violence made up their own narratives of fear and danger during the events of May 1998 (Siegel, 1998a, pp.78-83).

Seno's three texts also contribute to the discourses on the violence of this time, which was simultaneously a climax of student demands, the demise of an authoritarian regime and an historical turning point. Seno's texts also engage with the negotiation of Chinese identity within mainstream discourse. This negotiation draws on and is related to Indonesia's urban conditions. 'Chineseness' was imagined spatially and thus some areas of Jakarta were targeted for being 'Chinese'. People who considered themselves not to be 'Chinese' wrote graffiti on their property claiming that they were not 'Chinese' as a means to avoid being targeted during the riots. The stories also present various imaginings of class conflict, violence and interaction. These are aspects of public discourse which, throughout the New Order, were closely monitored, and subject to tight

¹³⁹ Personal communication with Agus Supriyadi, taxi driver (Jakarta Metro), 4.11.08, 5pm, between Soekarno-Hatta Airport and Central Jakarta. The original discussion was in Indonesian.

¹⁴⁰ The masses, a mob.

surveillance. The appearance of these themes in these three stories by Seno shows a renewed effort at negotiating the boundaries of what is available for consumption in the mass media. Seno's texts, I argue, offer a perspective that complements other forms of discourse¹⁴¹ that have sought to document, analyse and remember the events that took place within the urban context of Jakarta in May 1998. These three texts also participate in the dialogue on 'remembering' and 'forgetting' the events of May 1998. They do so in a particular way: that is, the events of May 1998 in Jakarta are mediated through the lens of a camera, a confession to a policeman, and the technology of a video camera. The confession is performed within a domestic setting in an apartment in Jakarta; the policeman operates within the anonymity afforded by the city of Jakarta.

These three stories offer a moment to consider the 'politics of representation' in Seno's stories. I earlier alluded to this issue in Chapter Four (see page 73), in relation to Seno's essays that are compiled in *Kentut Kosmopolitan*. Throughout Seno's short stories in this chapter, a common subject is that of the ethnic Chinese of Indonesia and Jakarta in particular. Like the local gangsters (*gali*), urban poor, East Timorese, Chinese Indonesians are part of the 'internal others' of New Order Indonesia. That is they were subject to a social and political 'construction' (or subjectification) as being similar but 'different' from – in this case – *pribumi* or 'indigenous' Indonesians.

Seno's 'politics of writing' are part of an effort to reach a middle-class readership that can in turn imagine themselves as the flâneurs of Seno's essays, novels and short stories. These are flâneurs who are critical of the social and political circumstances in which they find themselves. Nonetheless, their imagining involves a forgetting or indifference to their own privileged position that

¹⁴¹ For example, *Laporan Tim Gabungan Pencari Fakta Peristiwa Tanggal 13-15 Mei, 1998*, (Joint Fact Finding Team Report on the Events of 13-15th May, 1998), <http://semangqipeduli.com/tqpf/laporan.html>. And scholarly texts such as Abidin Kusno, "Glodok on Our Minds: Chinese Culture and the Forgetting of the May Riots" (Kusno, 2010), Siegel's "Early Thoughts on the Violence of May 13 and 14, 1998 in Jakarta", (Siegel, 1998a), Purdey's, *Anti-Chinese Violence in Indonesia, 1996-1999* (Purdey, 2006).

allows them to consider Chinese, East Timorese and local gangsters as 'internal others'. The flâneurs of these short stories are figures that free to move through spaces in which they themselves are not victimised or threatened.

The city in Indonesia, and Jakarta in particular, was a key site of the *reformasi* movement. Jakarta, as the capital of Indonesia, was one of the urban areas where protest movements were garnered into calling for the resignation of President Suharto. In the days after Suharto's resignation, Seno wrote a sceptical account in his column in *Jakarta Jakarta* of the 'changes' that had supposedly been brought about by the student-led *reformasi* movement: '*reformasi* was moved by the still idealistic students, but power is still fought over by the politicians... how many hundreds of years does it take to change the mentality of a people?' (Ajidarma, 2002f, p.225). Jakarta, Medan and Solo, among other cities, were locations where violence was perpetrated against citizens who were subjected to the process of 'othering' throughout the construction and imagination of the Indonesian nation. This 'othering' was perpetuated through state policies, mass media and popular culture. It was at such moments that the nationalist claims of 'unity in diversity' unravelled. The demise of Suharto and the somewhat more gradual decline of New Order ideology have seen the emergence of stronger claims being made from the peripheries of the Indonesian nation. For example, one of the landmark moments in post-*reformasi* Indonesia was the separation of the province of East Timor, by which it became the nation of Timor-Leste. Voices that had been silenced throughout the 32-year long reign of Suharto emerged stridently: new boundaries of negotiation were drawn in defining elements of Indonesian nationhood. Radical Islamic groups such as *Laskar Jihad* (Jihad Army) and *Front Pembela Islam* (Defenders of Islam Front) emerged, along with Islamic political movements that promoted 'ethics' and 'morals' – such as the *Partai Keadilan* (Justice Party).

Elements of Chinese-Indonesian culture were also practised more openly: schools opened where Mandarin could be taught, Chinese New Year was declared a national holiday. In post-1998 popular culture, Chinese-Indonesians and elements of Chinese-Indonesian cultural practice became visible. Works of literature also showed traces of the re-negotiation of Chineseness and Chinese identity in Indonesia. Allen (2003) and Tickell (2009) have explored developments in Chinese-Indonesian identity after Suharto's resignation. Tickell writes that throughout the New Order era, 'Indonesian Chinese were compelled to take indigenised names, prevented from openly and publicly observing Chinese religious and cultural rituals' (2009, p.274). The 'assimilationist' policies of the New Order towards Chinese, required a 'public absence' that made any expressions of Chineseness 'illegitimate' in Indonesian public life (Tickell, 2009, p.274). Suryadinata also writes of the 'assimilationist' flavour of Indonesian educational policies in which reducing the use of Chinese language 'was a major objective' (Suryadinata, 2009, p.374). Allen writes that after Suharto's resignation, there was a 'space-clearing which suddenly provided opportunities for Chinese-Indonesians...to openly discuss their experiences as an oppressed minority' (Allen, 2003, p.385). Part of this process of 'space clearing' has allowed for the possibility to deconstruct the common phrasing of '*masalah Cina*¹⁴²', which was a construct of New Order ideology (Allen, 2003, p.388). Seno's stories, "*Clara*" and "*Jakarta 2039*" are a part of this negotiation of Chineseness. The stories also move the discourse in a direction away from an imagining of 'Chinese Indonesians' as a fixed and knowable 'other'.

Seno's stories, "*Clara*" and "*Jakarta 2039*" use Chineseness as an element of the narrative: the notion of Chineseness is problematised throughout these two stories. Allen argues that Seno, in reference to his two stories "*Clara*" and "*Jakarta 2039*", is perhaps the author 'who has most forcefully expressed outrage

¹⁴² 'The Chinese problem'

at the brutality of May 1998' (Allen, 2003, p.396). Allen writes that the 'May tragedy' is a cornerstone of writing about Chinese identity in the time after Suharto's resignation (2003, p.394). For Allen, the significance of the story lies in its manner of narration: 'the story's chilling tone is made even more emphatic by the fact that Clara's story is related by the boorish police officer who takes her statement, because she is in such a state of shock that she is unable to speak coherently' (Allen, 2003, p.396).

These stories take place in the city of Jakarta and thus the city is again identified as being a place of intense change, the negotiation of identity and the exchange of ideas, cultures and practices. The city in literature is a site where the elements of 'change' and 'continuity' can be explored. Jakarta, as the site of intense political meaning and symbolisation (Kusno, 2000; Permanasari, 2007), is given meaning to through literary works. The city is significant in the May tragedy for, as Tickell points out, 'for many Indonesians there was a dawning sense that barbaric tactics used on the East Timorese were now being used uncomfortably close to home' (Tickell, 2009, p.279). Jakarta – and the urban sphere – became once more a site for state violence, just as it had been throughout the 'mysterious shootings' of the mid-1980s. As such, the brutal violence meted out against members of separatist movements in the provinces of East Timor and Aceh suddenly gain a relevance to elites in Jakarta. This dichotomy between 'periphery' and 'centre' is discussed earlier in Chapter Five – where the narrator 'remembers' violence in East Timor, while 'forgetting' violence that is occurring in the very centre of Indonesia – i.e. Jakarta.

Many Chinese Indonesian communities are found within urban Indonesia. In the case of Jakarta, 'Kota' (meaning 'city') is identified not only with 'old Jakarta', but also with 'cheap' electronics found in stores owned by Chinese Indonesians. *Being* Chinese Indonesian is thus a part of Indonesian urbanness. Thus there is a link between analysing 'Chineseness' and analysing the

'urbaness' of Indonesia and Indonesian language urban fiction. Some of the earliest works of 'Indonesian literature' – that identified by Salmon as 'literature in Malay by the Chinese of Indonesia' – is largely an urban literature (Salmon, 1985). Kota, in the northern part of Jakarta, was one of the areas most visibly devastated by the riots and sexual violence that occurred on the 13th and 14th May, 1998.

Kusno has written of how the violence of the 'May tragedy' is remembered through the new buildings that are being built in the north of Jakarta. According to Kusno, the new spaces built in Glodok (northern Jakarta) seek to both avoid and represent the 'trauma' caused by the gang rapes and violence of 1998. The new Glodok Plaza, 'shows itself as cheerful and inviting...the structure of the old building that carries the trace of violence is buried under layers of new materials and, ultimately, by electronic accessories' (Kusno, 2010, p.108). This process, enables 'a play of remembering and forgetting that contributes to the efforts of ethnic Chinese to retrospectively cope with the violent events in the midst of a changing political environment' (Kusno, 2003b, p.154).

"Clara" is the second of two stories that are placed in the "Ketika" ("During") section of *Iblis Tidak Pernah Mati*. The first story is "Jakarta, Suatu Ketika", which will be discussed below. *Iblis Tidak Pernah Mati* is divided into four sections: "Sebelum" ("Before"), "Ketika" ("During"), "Sesudah" ("After"), and "Selamanya" ("Forever"). This sequencing of time alludes to changes in the social and political conditions of Indonesia during the *reformasi* era. The stories – to varying degrees – deal with prevailing social conditions before, during and after the demise of the Suharto government. As the publisher of the book writes, a typical feature of Seno's writing is his 'taking of sides with those who are abused, insulted and oppressed'¹⁴³ (Ajidarma, 1999, p.1). The two stories of the "Ketika"

¹⁴³ Juga pemihakan pada mereka yang dihinakan, direndahkan, dan ditindas.

section – "*Jakarta, Suatu Ketika*" and "*Clara*" – are the most confronting stories in terms of the way they address contemporary socio-political issues.

"*Clara*" ends with the statement, 'Jakarta, 26 Juni 1998' (Ajidarma, 1999, p.79). As stated earlier, this dating and locating of the place in which the story or essay is written is a typical feature of many stories by Seno. This statement referring to both time and place also acts as a rhetorical device to make claims to the actuality of the written document. The statement makes a claim to the author's *being there* and his own proximity to the events that are being described in the narrative. The sexual violence directed towards Chinese Indonesians during May 1998 was and remains a controversial and somewhat taboo subject in post-Suharto Indonesia. Some sections within Indonesian society doubted the veracity of reports of rape and some groups did not want the rapes to be reported and those guilty to be held accountable. Allen writes that the office of *Jakarta Jakarta*, where Seno was working at the time, was 'stormed with protests' for re-printing an article from *The New York Times* that contained a personal confession from a rape victim (Allen, 2003, p.396). Allen writes that it was Seno's disgust with the reactions to allegations of rape that prompted him to write "*Clara*" (2003, p.396). Seno's persistence in revealing taboo narratives on Jakarta present an alternative discourse on Jakarta that counters government sponsored campaigns to promote Jakarta as safe, clean and socially stable.

"*Clara*" engages with the manner in which the notion of "Chineseness" is constructed and also the ways in which stories of violence are narrated. Elsewhere I have discussed the matter of 'narration' as being part of Seno's postmodernist literary practice (Fuller, 2004). "*Clara*", however, further perpetuates a common stereotype of Chinese Indonesians. Clara, the victim of the rape, is rich, she has 'slant eyes' and drives a BMW. Tickell writes that as Chinese Indonesians are expected to be richer than *pribumi* (native) Indonesians, it 'provides an implicit justification for racism, discrimination and...violence

towards the Sino-Indonesian population' (Tickell, 2009, p.275). The policeman – who is one of the two narrators in "*Clara*" – states his 'interest' in Clara, partly based on her physical attractiveness and also her presumed wealth: 'She must be a rich woman. After all, she drives a BMW. A female executive'¹⁴⁴ (Ajidarma, 1999, p.77). Her mode of transport through Jakarta suggests her wealth – a cliché of Chinese Indonesians within Jakarta. The policeman continues, 'I watched her walking. In the light, her legs shone. She was truly beautiful and attractive, even though her hair was dyed red. I also felt the desire to rape her'¹⁴⁵ (Ajidarma, 1999, p.78). Clara is distinctive for her physical appearance: she is both known as a 'Chinese' and unknown. This shows an ambivalence in the imagined relations between '*pribumi*' Indonesians on the one hand and Chinese Indonesians on the other. The imagined gap in wealth is a source of jealousy and hatred, while at the same time it is a source of attraction and desire. Furthermore, Clara's presumed wealth is also represented in the physical attribute of her white shoulders: 'I have particular sentiments towards rich people. Especially if they are Chinese. I hate them so much. Yeah. Her dress slipped down, and her white shoulders became visible' (Ajidarma, 1999, p.78). Simultaneously, stereotypes of 'native' Indonesians are enhanced. The texts, whether as a result of authorial intention or not, serve to reproduce some stereotypes of Chineseness. In this case it is of the corrupt policeman. He confesses: 'I also want to be rich. But even though I have received bribes all the time, I still have not been able to become rich' (Ajidarma, 1999, pp.77-78).

Clara's report of the rape, of which she is a victim, occurs on a toll road on her way home to her parent's house. The rape of Clara and the violence against Chinese Indonesians becomes a source of trauma for Jakartans and shapes a narrative of the city's history. Their actions are framed against the social and

¹⁴⁴ Pastilah dia seorang wanita yang kaya. Mobilnya saja BMW. Seorang wanita eksekutif.

¹⁴⁵ Kulihat dia melangkah ke sana. Dalam cahaya lampu, lekuk tubuhnya menerawang. Dia sungguh-sungguh cantik dan menarik, meskipun rambutnya dicat warna merah. Rasanya aku juga ingin memperkosanya.

cultural conditions of an urban society. That is, it is violence that is particularly urban. The violence of May 1998 differs from other violent episodes in contemporary Indonesia history that were in 'regional' –i.e. in islands and areas far from the capital Jakarta - and rural Indonesia. These include the anti-communist mass killings of 1965-66, the ninja killings in east Java and the civil war in the Moluccas post-1998. Although Clara's mother advises her not to drive home, she speeds along a toll road in the hope that she will arrive home quickly. The non-place of a toll road is presumed to be a safe place. Clara narrates as follows:

I took the toll road so that I would arrive home quickly...I stepped hard on the accelerator. It was as if my BMW was flying. To the left and right of me, the flames lit up the night sky. The toll road was empty. My BMW was travelling at 120kmph. I would be home in 10 minutes (Ajidarma, 1999, p.71).¹⁴⁶

Clara sees before her a group of men. She thinks to herself that this is strange because pedestrians are not allowed to be on the toll road: nonetheless she doesn't want to crash into them. She stops her car suddenly. At this point, the men order her to open her window. They shout 'Chinese!' as if 'they have discovered a diamond. Her front windscreen is smashed. Clara then asks herself, "Is it true that these people hate Chinese so much? Yes I am of Chinese descent, but what have I done wrong to being born Chinese?"¹⁴⁷' (Ajidarma, 1999, p.72). In this instance, the non-placeness of the toll road does not provide a kind of 'sanctuary' from the areas that surround it. That is, the people who live nearby occupy the toll road. A non-place becomes a *space*, with all its threatening dimensions. A non-place, in which the other and otherness has been removed, suddenly becomes occupied by 'the other'. The non-place in which obstacles are

¹⁴⁶ Saya melaju lewat jalan tol supaya cepat sampai di rumah...Saya tancap gas. BMW melaju seperti terbang. Di kiri kanan jalan terlihat api menerangi malam. Jalan tol itu sepi. BMW terbang sampai 120 kilometer per jam. Hanya dalam sepuluh menit saya akan segera tiba di rumah.

¹⁴⁷ Aduh, benarkah sebegitu bencinnya orang-orang ini kepada Cina? Saya memang keturunan Cina, tapi apa salah saya dengan lahir sebagai Cina?

removed, has suddenly become a space in which various agents directly interfere with the smoothness and speed of a toll-road. In this non-place, Clara is an 'other' in the eyes of the men who confront her on the toll road, while they too are 'othered' by her: they become a 'they' who simply 'hate' Chinese 'so much'. Clara also essentialises her own 'Chinese' identity to simply be an accident of matter of birth. She states: 'I'm just a Chinese woman born in Jakarta and who has been involved in business since a young age' (Ajidarma, 1999, p.76). Klinken describes the perpetrators of the violence during the May riots as follows: '[they] are the urban poor who have had no political representation in the New Order...they are anti-Chinese...they are alienated by the entire modern economy. They take it out ... on the inaccessible symbols of the new rich' (Klinken, 1999, p.52).

Jakarta during May 1998 as represented in the story of "Clara" provides little space for the flâneur and for flânerie. Clara, in her BMW, has her experience of the city mediated by the vehicle that she drives. As Bull has argued, a car provides both 'mobilisation and privatisation' (Bull, 2007, p.2). Clara's desired mobility and privacy are necessary for her safety. Her status as an 'other' – 'Cina', in the words of gang of men who surround her in Seno's short story – positions her as figure who does not belong in the context in which she exists. The urban space of Jakarta *at this moment in time* allows no space for the other. The other in "Clara" is a threat that needs to be rendered powerless, either through sexual violence or through silencing. Clara has her mediation of the city disrupted by the gang that confronts her on the toll road. Her mediation of the city is performed in two ways: by travelling in the 'non-space' of her car and by moving through the non-place of a toll road.

Clara occupies the space of a rich and upwardly mobile woman: she is able to move through Jakarta in the mediated space of a BMW. She is also able to travel and is familiar with the cities of Singapore, Hong Kong, and Sydney. She

has her passport with her at all times because of her travelling for business. On the other hand, the urban poor – the men who rape her on the toll road – are 'stuck' in their social cultural position. They are immobile and unc cosmopolitan. They clasp onto fixed identities of ethnicity and seek to subordinate and neutralise 'the other'. In this case, the 'other' is Clara, a '*Cina*': someone who doesn't have a religion, someone who is rich, and someone who has (pre-marital) sexual relations with her boyfriend. A mother, who is the first person to come to Clara's aid, reinforces the fixed positions of '*Cina*' and '*pribumi*'. This mother says to her, 'forgive our children...they really hate Chinese'¹⁴⁸ (Ajidarma, 1999, p.76). The mother asserts the naturalness of the situation: that Chinese ('*Cina*') are objects of hatred from 'our children' – that is '*pribumi*' Indonesians. The cityscape that is imagined in "Clara" offers little space for engagement and negotiation with the other. And, as such, there is no hope for the existence of a flâneur and for the practice of flânerie.

Throughout "Clara" we see the spaces of the toll road and the home become places of death, violence and rape. Clara is told by her mother, "don't come home" and that her family is already trapped inside the family home (Ajidarma, 1999, p.70). These places are trespassed by the urban poor who take control of the city and dominate its space. The city becomes a cityscape of sexual violence, transgression and trespass. It is *a certain point in time* when the urban poor and those who are stuck in fixed ways of thinking are able to determine the fate of the upwardly mobile, rich and cosmopolitan inhabitants of the city. This is part of the 'worst nightmare of the New Order': it is a city of disorder. But it is a city whose violence assumes spatial characteristics: the 'safe-haven' non-places of toll roads, shopping malls and gated communities are trespassed by the very communities whom the architects of these elements of contemporary urban life have sought to exclude.

¹⁴⁸ "Maafkan anak-anak kami...mereka memang benci dengan Cina."

The sexual violence of May 1998 committed against Chinese Indonesians is one of the narratives of 1998: it runs parallel with other dominant narratives of '*reformasi*' and the martyrdom of the murdered Tri Sakti students¹⁴⁹. The sexual violence of 1998 was a culmination of the systematic New Order practices of making absent and rendering powerless Chinese Indonesians within Indonesian societies. It also was a continuation of the state violence that characterised the New Order government led by Suharto. This state violence was perpetuated by the government, yet also appropriated by the general population (Heryanto, 2006) within the urban context of Jakarta. "*Clara*" occupies an ambivalent position in the imagining of the events of May 1998. On the one hand, it shows the complicity of the police in covering up the rapes perpetrated against Chinese Indonesians, yet, at the same time, it also maintains common elements of the othering of Chinese Indonesians. While trying to highlight the manner in which othering and the objectification of Chinese Indonesians is a part of structure of meaning that facilitates sexual violence against Chinese Indonesians, the characterisation of Clara in the short story also reproduces established clichés on the identity of Chinese Indonesians. The manner in which Chineseness is imagined is shown to be a social and cultural construct.

The story "*Jakarta, Suatu Ketika*" presents a different perspective on the events of May 1998. As with "*Clara*", "*Jakarta, Suatu Ketika*" also calls into question the manner in which knowledge of history is constructed (Fuller, 2004). Jakarta, at this point in time, is represented through a dual narrative structure. As such, this text has similarities with the dual-narrative structure of "*Clara*", and with the tripartite structure of the novel *Jazz, Parfum dan Insiden* (Ajidarma, 1996a). Seno, through the very form of his stories, novels and other literary texts, asserts that experience and knowledge is something that is gained in a

¹⁴⁹ During a protest by students at Tri Sakti University, four students were killed after being shot with live ammunition. The students were instructed not to take their protest beyond the boundaries of the campus, nonetheless, the students were fired upon while they were still within the campus limits. The shooting of the students was one of the pivotal events leading up to the resignation of President Suharto.

fragmentary manner and that experience and knowledge is something that is contingent, compromised and constructed. Urban space and societies are experienced in this manner. Density, speed, noise, signs are consumed and given meaning to in a rapid and fragmentary manner. Moving through and being part of urban life, the flâneur interprets urban life, in the manner of interpreting a performance or cultural artefact. Or, as historian of Paris Colin Jones writes, 'the flâneur did not just revel in the city; he also sought to understand it' (Jones, 2004, p.320). Seno's flâneur and acts of flânerie seek to understand the city through a dispassionate documenting of Jakartan urban life.

"*Jakarta, Suatu Ketika*" presents a dichotomy of Jakartan urban space that is divided between the public street and the domestic (and private) sphere of the house. Like "*Clara*", "*Jakarta, Suatu Ketika*" also emphasises differences of class and gaps in wealth. The city again is subject to being mediated, just as Clara attempted to mediate her presence within the city through her use of the vehicle. In this case, a photographer mediates his experience of the city through the use of his camera. This photographer, I argue below, is a kind of flâneur who creates a manner of flânerie particular to the 'certain point in time' at which Seno seeks to describe in this story. It is a moment when the flâneur claims a space for a particular gaze performed towards the 'other' and to the urban environment he occupies. Once more, however, this reclaiming of space for the flâneur is not necessarily an ethical moment; instead it shows us (again) that to be a flâneur and to practice flânerie is to engage in a constant dialectic between 'engagement and disavowal'¹⁵⁰.

"*Jakarta, Suatu Ketika*" was written on the 20th May, 1998 (Ajidarma, 1999, p.67) - the day before Suharto's resignation. This story, again, shows the underside and violence that occurred during this transitional period in Indonesian political and social history. The story is told from two different perspectives: the

¹⁵⁰ This phrasing is borrowed from Henk Maier in his book, *We are playing relatives* (2004).

first is that of a photographer who takes photographs of the riots, looting and violence taking place around him, and secondly, the perspective of a young girl whose home is ransacked as part of the looting. Seno describes his experience of writing this story as follows:

I asked someone, an *ojek* driver – yeah? – to explore the city. On the 14th, 15th, May. When it happened on the 12th and 13th I don't bring my camera. I only see. But after that I take it and I take pictures of all the buildings that...included in my book, *Kisah Mata*...If you read my story, *Jakarta Suatu Ketika*- yeah? – it is like a report. And I remember that the story, I hitch-hiked Sori Siregar's car.¹⁵¹

"*Jakarta, Suatu Ketika*" story represents Jakarta in a time of crisis: it is a cityscape of violence and looting. The streets lose their function as spaces for 'moving people' – as spaces of passage – and instead, become sites of action and destruction. As in "*Clara*", the home is subject to trespass by the urban poor who loot the property of others. This story involves an appropriation of the flâneur who sees in a particular way and who uses the act of taking photographs to serve his flâneuristic aims. At the same time, the imagined Jakartan cityscape shows that at this certain point in time Jakarta was a cityscape that threatened the presence of the flâneur. The flâneur in this story, nonetheless, through taking on the role of 'photographer' and 'documenter' is able to provide a detached perspective on Jakarta in a time of crisis.

Through taking photographs of 'Jakarta', the photographer mediates his experience of the city. This flâneur, like earlier flâneurs, directs a particular gaze onto the cityscape around him – this time, the lens of a camera frames the gaze. Through the camera, this flâneur is able to locate scenes that, to him, are representative of events in Jakarta at this *certain point in time*. The camera creates a distance between the photographer and his subject. It also implies a

¹⁵¹ Personal communication with Seno Gumira Ajidarma, Bakoel Koffie, Cikini, Jakarta, November, 2008.

hierarchy: the photographer takes photographs of those who are engaging in something unusual – something spectacular, something worthy of being recorded, historicised and turned into a representation of a historical moment. By taking a photograph of an event, the photographer makes the event his or her own; it is an act of claiming knowledge of an event. In regards to the experience of tourists and photography Sontag writes that 'most tourists feel compelled to put the camera between themselves and whatever is remarkable that they encounter. Unsure of other responses, they take a picture. This...gives shape to experience: stop, take a photograph, move on' (1977, p.10). Michael Haneke, a filmmaker whose films interrogate the manner in which the camera constructs reality, also speaks of how the act of taking photographs serves to claim the photographed scene as reality itself.¹⁵²

Taking a photograph is a means to establishing a distance between what one sees and the self. Taking a photograph mediates experience, packages and confines it to something safe and discrete. Through the story of "*Jakarta, Suatu Ketika*", the narrator engages in a dialogue between the reality that he sees before him and the reality that he seeks to capture through the lens of his camera. The narrator describes his efforts as follows: 'With my tele-lens I try to capture the smoke moving in anger. People watch from rooftops. Yeah. Something like this doesn't happen every day'¹⁵³ (Ajidarma, 1999, p.55). The narrator has gained his perspective on the city by standing on the 'top of a building'¹⁵⁴ (Ajidarma, 1999, p.55). As in *Jazz, Parfum dan Insiden* (Ajidarma, 1996a), this distance from the streets below allows him a detached and more general perspective on events that are taking place throughout the city. The narrator sees that in the sky above Jakarta there are clouds of smoke forming everywhere. He sees that people are screaming in fear. He sees that cars are

¹⁵² Serge Toubiana's interview with Michael Haneke can be found at:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbeWO1XndME>

¹⁵³ Dengan lensa tele aku berusaha menggapai asap yang bergolak seperti kemarahan itu. Orang-orang menonton di atas atap. *Yeah*. Tidak setiap hari terjadi peristiwa seperti ini.

¹⁵⁴ Aku berdiri di puncak sebuah gedung, memandang berkeliling.

heading southwards 'in a panic'; and that cars, motorcycles and people are running southwards, flowing like a flood¹⁵⁵ (Ajidarma, 1999, p.55). From his distance at the top of a building, the narrator has no reason to fear the events taking place below. His camera, simultaneously, is able to 'package' and represent events into discrete photographs.

The story asserts particular kinds of movement throughout the space of the city. These are a result of the conditions brought about by the riots. As seen in the paragraph above, the narrator sees that people, whether running, driving a car or using a motorcycle, are moving from the north to the south. Incidentally, this trajectory reflects the history of Jakartan urban development: the south was considered a 'safe' place in the early history of Batavia. It was considered a place with cleaner air that would provide sanctuary from the fetid and swampy conditions of northern and coastal Batavia (Abeyasekere, 1989). The narrator sees people 'flowing like a flood' – (*mengalir seperti banjir*) from the north to the south. The distance the narrator has gained from atop a building allows him to see a general pattern of human movement. Yet, at the same time, those he sees lose their individuality. While the narrator maintains his personal and unique perspective on events, others are projected as a mass grouping of human beings. The people, who are running from north to south, are described as '*orang-orang*' – 'people', in juxtaposition to them, are the *massa*, or, the masses. It is the *massa* who are performing the burning and looting. An unidentified person shouts, 'the masses are ahead ... They're burning cars! They're burning everything!' (Ajidarma, 1999, p.55)¹⁵⁶

'To return' ('*kembali*') becomes synonymous with both safety and the search for safety. For example, it is a person who shouts 'go back! Go back! The masses are ahead!' (Ajidarma, 1999, p.55) It is not possible for the people to

¹⁵⁵ The original text is as follows: Orang-orang berteriak dan berlari dengan wajah ketakutan. Mobil-mobil berbalik ke selatan dengan panik, dari utara mobil, sepedamotor, dan orang-orang yang berlari mengalir seperti banjir.

¹⁵⁶ "Massa di depan!...Mereka membakar mobil! Mereka membakar apa saja!"

negotiate, confront or engage in a dialogue with the masses. As in "Clara", we once more see the absence of 'negotiation' and completeness of mutual othering. The narrator returns his car to his home¹⁵⁷ so that it does not become a victim of the masses festival of burning¹⁵⁸. The narrator however, 'departs once more' in a taxi with a driver 'who truly has guts'¹⁵⁹ (Ajidarma, 1999, p.55). The narrator once more refers to natural movement of water: the taxi driver 'drives against the current' (Ajidarma, 1999, p.55). Jakarta at a certain moment in time is a time when movement becomes flowing and natural. It is a time when taxi drivers who drive against the 'current' are to be valued and sought out; it is a time when using cars that symbolise wealth is a source of danger rather than of prestige.

By 'leaving again' the photographer-narrator once again perceives the city as a place that is consumed through the act of looking. The narrator performs his flânerie through taking photographs from the taxi in which he travels. These photographs are both close-ups and long shots of the event taking place on the streets of Jakarta. The photographer asks questions about what is happening, but cannot answer them. His experience of this cityscape is fragmentary and disjointed. This narrative of *fragmentariness* appears throughout Seno's short stories, novels and essays: it is a primary characteristic of the qualities of urban life that he conveys in his works. This time, the fragmentary nature of urban experience is asserted through the use of the narrator's act of photographing the riots. He photographs a young man shouting, with his fist raised; a woman running in a panic and not wearing shoes; high school students who have hijacked a bus; cars being burned by the masses; burning buildings and smashed glass (Ajidarma, 1999, pp.56-57). The narrator can continue to take photographs so long as the taxi continues to move freely through the city. It is at the point when the taxi is confronted by the masses that the narrator's freedom of being a

¹⁵⁷ Aku telah mengembalikan mobil ke rumah. (Ajidarma, 1999, p.55)

¹⁵⁸ Here I adapt a quotation from van Dijk who quotes a source which described the riots as a 'party for the people'.

¹⁵⁹ Aku telah mengembalikan mobil ke rumah, berangkat lagi naik taksi, dengan sopir yang sungguh-sungguh punya nyali.

flâneur becomes problematic. It is at this moment that the narrator must decide whether to continue being a flâneur or to exit the taxi in order to escape the masses: 'at an intersection there was a crowd and people were shouting. The taxi couldn't pass through. What must I do?'¹⁶⁰ (Ajidarma, 1999, p.57). Instead of an answer, the story switches narrative. The reader is not informed of what the narrator does.

"*Jakarta 2039: 40 Tahun 9 Bulan Setelah 13-14 Mei 1998*"¹⁶¹ is a narrative of the events of May 1998. As with "*Clara*" it tells the story of a rape victim. In "*Jakarta 2039*" the events of May 1998 are told from three perspectives: that of the rape victim, that of the rapist and that of the child who was born as a result of the rape. This story was originally published in *Matra*, Millennium Edition, December 1999. It has also been re-published as a comic with drawings by Yogyakarta based comic graphic artist, Asnar Zacky.¹⁶² The comic book form alludes to Seno's interest in Indonesian comics as well as contemporary graphic novels, such as those by Joe Sacco¹⁶³. In conversations I have had with Seno he has told me that he had it published as a comic in order to make it as widely read as possible and to reach an audience who might otherwise not read one of his compilations of short stories. Seno also emphasised the importance of the telling and remembering of the events of May 1998.

"*Jakarta 2039*" is a three-part collection of inter-twining narratives that start from a simultaneous remembering and questioning of events 40 years previous. The three narrators of "*Jakarta 2039*" state respectively 'it turns out, I'm the child born from a rape', 'where are you my child?' and 'child, your father is a rapist' (Ajidarma, 2001, inside front cover). The written text appears in speech bubbles that appear throughout the Jakartan landscape. The first

¹⁶⁰ Di berbagai pojok terlihat kerumunan dan orang-orang meneriakkan yel. Taksi tidak bisa lewat. Apa yang harus kulakukan?

¹⁶¹ The story was written on 27th October 1999, the comic was completed on 27th October, 2000.

¹⁶² Zacky has also worked with Seno in at least two other publications: *Sukab Intel Melayu: Misteri Harta Centini* (Ajidarma & Zacky, 2002) and *Matinya Seorang Penari Telanjang* (Ajidarma, 2000b).

¹⁶³ See for example his essay, "Ali Oncom: Dunia Orang Miskin atawa Sastra Gambar Koran Urban".

narration is by the woman who was born as a result of a rape. From an apartment block in Jakarta, she narrates her story to a video camera that records her story. She narrates how she has traced her origins. She is informed by an 'old woman' that she was born as a result of a gang rape that occurred sometime during 13-14th May, 1998. The text appears over a drawing of the streets of Glodok: smoke is issuing from buildings; men are destroying whatever they can find. She states that, on her 40th birthday – the day of her narration – she feels as if she has been re-born with a 'curse'¹⁶⁴ (Ajidarma, 2001, p.24).

The second narrative is that of the mother – the victim of a gang rape in May 1998. She remembers her daughter after seeing the face of two criminals passing by her window¹⁶⁵. She narrates her story to her personal computer. She states how she has tried to forget the rape of which she was a victim 40 years earlier: 'memory' for her is a kind of curse. She states: 'why do human beings have a memory? ... I haven't been able to forget that I have been raped like that, oppressed, insulted, abused' (Ajidarma, 2001, p.35). She remembers the faces of the men who raped her. To escape the memory of her rape, she travels through mountain ranges, goes diving and sailing; she goes 'far overseas'¹⁶⁶ (Ajidarma, 2001, p.39). The places to which she travels are part of the natural landscape: mountains, deserts and the sea. Her 'escape' and efforts at forgetting involve a movement away from the urban environment and particularly Jakarta itself. This narration is concluded when the narrator turns off her computer. She looks off vaguely into the distance and 'outside the window, a siren is heard softly – it is a sound of danger'¹⁶⁷ (Ajidarma, 2001, p.50). So far we have seen that the narratives of the child and her mother are mediated through the technologies of a video camera and personal computer. We have also seen that the urban context is given particular values of 'danger' and 'anonymity'.

¹⁶⁴ Ini hari ulangtahunku yang ke 40. Aku merasa lahir kembali dengan sebuah kutukan.

¹⁶⁵ The two criminals are tied together and being transported through Jakarta by a helicopter.

¹⁶⁶ Setelah itu aku telah pergi jauh...jauh ke luar negeri.

¹⁶⁷ Dan segalanya lenyap dari layar monitor. Wanita itu tersandar di kursi, memandang ke kejauhan di luar jendela di mana sayup-sayup terdengar sirene tanda bahaya.

The third narrative of "*Jakarta 2039*" is that of one of the rapists. This man is on his 'death-bed' and tells his story to his daughter (Ajidarma, 2001, pp.51-73). His narration concludes with his death. The man is someone who worked as a heavy labourer: Zacky's drawings show scenes of Sunda Kelapa and of buildings being constructed. These are two typical images of contemporary Jakarta – the traditional ships transporting wood from Sulawesi and the bamboo scaffolding used on modern buildings, central to the image of Jakarta as the leading site of '*pembangunan*' (development). The father closes his eyes and narrates the events of 13-14th May, 1998. He tells his daughter of how he committed a rape during the riots. He describes the riots: 'they were carrying jerry cans filled with petrol, pouring it out and lighting flammable goods. There was a panic. Some people were giving orders' (Ajidarma, 2001, p.59). And, in describing a rape scene: 'a woman was screaming. In between the ruins which were still smoking, a group of men surrounded two women, like wolves surrounding a corpse'¹⁶⁸ (Ajidarma, 2001, p.62). Soon after, the narrator himself commits a rape against a woman he comes across by chance. The narrator, after raping the woman, leaves the scene without looking back (Ajidarma, 2001, p.67). The rapist is not accountable for his actions, as the city in a state of crisis allows him to remain unnoticed and effectively anonymous.

Through these three narratives particular claims are made regarding urban life, Jakarta and the state of Jakarta in May 1998. That is, urban life in Jakarta posed a threat to those imagined as having a Chinese identity, Jakarta was unsafe for the daily habits of urban life and citizens of Jakarta 'knew' each other by their class and supposed ethnicity. Despite the intimate connections between the three narrators of "*Jakarta 2039*" they remain isolated and unconnected from one another. The daughter of the rape victim and the rape victim herself narrate

¹⁶⁸ Suara wanita menjerit-jerit terdengar di balik tembok. Di antara puing yang masih mengepulkan asap, segerombolan orang mengerumuni dua wanita seperti anjing-anjing buduk mengerumuni bangkai.

their stories through the contemporary digital media of a video camera and a personal computer. This act asserts their own isolation: they are alone in their confessions and in their struggle to come to terms with their identities. Forty years is not enough to separate the victim from her suffering. The child born from this rape also cannot come to terms with her identity for she knows the circumstances of her conception. The rapist himself eases his conscience by confessing to his own daughter of his crime 40 years earlier. The urban context does not allow closure, nor for acknowledged interaction between the perpetrators and victims of the sexual violence.

This three-part narrative of rape also asserts the particularity of the Jakartan cityscape as being a part of the sexual violence and rioting of 13-14th May, 1998. The images of the text draw on iconic architectural aspects of Jakarta. These include the urban *kampungs* of Jakarta, the public sculptures of the Sukarno era and aspects of Suharto-led development, such as the raised toll-roads and skyscrapers. Significantly also, within the state of disorder as is seemingly evident throughout the riots, the rapist – the third narrator – also tells of how the riots were organised. Instead of being spontaneous outbursts of anger from the urban poor, these riots were to some extent the results of instructions from unnamed figures. The rape, however, committed by the third narrator, is a result of his own desires and impulse. The city as appears in "Jakarta 2039" is one in which the textures, sights and sounds of urban life cannot be enjoyed in a flâneuristic manner. Indeed, what is evident is that the victim of the rape removes herself from urban life in order to overcome her trauma of being raped. The urban context of Jakarta enhances the memory of the events of 1998 for each of the narrators. As such, for these three narrators, there are no possibilities for flânerie: each scene, location and context already has its own fixed meaning. There is no possibility for detachment.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have shown the way in which Seno's stories on Jakarta 1998 represent Jakarta in a particular manner. These stories engage with the practices of photography and flânerie, with the social construction of Chineseness and with the mediation of urban life through various methods of narration. The riots of Jakarta 1998 were 'spatialised', that is, they occurred in particular areas of Jakarta and they spread throughout the city in a manner that was, in varying ways, coerced and subject to the orders from a military commander. The stories in this chapter show the failure of Jakarta to provide a space that is safe for all of its citizens. The stories, to a degree, perpetuate the narrative that the riots of 1998 were enacted by the urban poor who wanted to take their anger out on members of the middle classes and on the symbols of the economic system of which they were not a part. The stories analysed in this section show the failure of the urban society imagined throughout the New Order era. The stories, however, do not present an alternative urban landscape nor do they show how other kinds of social interaction would provide an alternative to the systems of 'othering' that were central to New Order ideologies.

Conclusion

Indonesia has experienced an intense period of urbanisation over the past 30-40 years. The New Order era, led by President Suharto, implemented policies that dramatically shaped and reshaped Indonesian cities and urban societies. Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, was the centre of political and cultural meaning: it was at the very heart of the national imagination. Jakarta also was the site of important social, political and cultural moments in recent Indonesian history. The riots of May 1998 were one of the significant events that focussed attention on the social dynamics and meanings of urban space and cityscapes within Indonesia. Through his many and varied writings published both during and after the New Order era, Seno Gumira Ajidarma has affirmed the role of the writer, essayist and re-imagined flâneur as being central to the interpretation, contestation and negotiation of daily urban life in Indonesia in general and Jakarta in particular.

'Literature' and 'fiction' relates to urban life in numerous ways. As has been demonstrated in this thesis, literary works are a means to an imagining of urban space and urban social relations. Moreover, modern Indonesian literature has undergone an intense period of urbanisation – just as Indonesian society in general has. That is, urbanisation of a society in general is reflected and reproduced in cultural production. The literary imagining of urban life has been central to the trajectory of modern Indonesian literature and Seno's writings have developed this tradition. Seno's work can be seen in relation to the work of writers such as Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Armijn Pane, Mochtar Lubis as well as Idrus, Firman Muntaco and Misbach Yusa Biran – that is, writers who have often been concerned with a sense of urban place. Seno's writings have also contributed to the discourse on urban studies in Indonesia, complementing the writings of scholars such as Kusno, Mrázek, Colombijn, Nas and Dick.

Throughout this thesis, I have argued that the figure of the flâneur and the practice of flânerie are central to an interpretation of the writings of Seno Gumira Ajidarma. Moreover, the application of a 'theory' of the flâneur and of flânerie provides an opportunity for a re-evaluation, re-questioning and re-interpreting of Indonesian cities and urban space. I have shown that not only is the flâneur a figure that moves beyond nineteenth century Paris; the flâneur is flexible, adaptable and dynamic. As well as this, I have shown that the practice of flânerie is not limited to a method of visual consumption. Flânerie is practiced through listening, hearing, smelling and reading. Significantly, the practice of flânerie is also an act that questions and interrogates positions of authority and hegemony.

Seno's stories and essays have played a significant role in the documentation of social and urban change in Indonesia. Seno's oeuvre is of interest to – amongst others – scholars of urban studies, Indonesian literature, world literature; area studies scholars and scholars of postcolonial societies. More importantly, though, Seno's writings have been widely and broadly consumed through various kinds of media in Indonesia: his works appear in daily newspapers, magazines and he also participates in scholarly forums and discussions, both on his own work and regarding the work of others.

As a writer, Seno has negotiated the boundaries between being 'popular' and being 'specialist'. His work, drawing on contemporary theoretical debates has appeared in mainstream and popular periodicals. As such, it represents a breaking down of entrenched dichotomies of 'high culture' and 'low culture'. Seno, on the other hand, has also managed to forge a career as a professional writer. That is, as a *tukang* – a craftsman – he has 'cleared a space' for himself, where he has regular columns in periodicals and publishes serial novels in daily newspapers. Seno has shown through the multiple roles he plays as a 'writer' that

to be a writer is a flexible and multiform role. He refuses to be pinned down to a particular clichéd position, function and role.

Indonesia, as a nation, continues to be shaped by the life of its cities. The success of Indonesian cities – Jakarta in particular – is central to the political, cultural and economic success of Indonesia. The turmoil that engulfed Jakarta during the economic crisis of 1998 was soon reflected in various regional crises throughout Indonesia. Some of the policies of the Suharto-led New Order government such as creating a 'closed' city, destroying the homes of urban poor, creating the non-places of shopping malls and gated communities are increasingly criticised by urban studies scholars, urban activists, writers and intellectuals – that is, by anyone who has a stake in the future of Jakarta and Indonesian cities in general. Seno's short stories, novels and essays – which he has produced over a 30 year period – are an example of the ways in which urban experience is questioned and interpreted. As such they are a key to charting some aspects of the social change that Indonesia has experienced during that time.

Appendix One

Contents page of *Kentut Kosmopolitan* (Ajidarma, 2008, p.v)

Fart List

Author's Note: Just a kind of conversation

1. Civilisation or culture?
2. Jakarta as a text
3. Business cards
4. The Story of Mister Cepek or the Bumpy Road
5. SMS or Haiku
6. Mr. Jampang and Masculinity
7. Flying
8. Attendance
9. Cosmopolitan Fart
10. Becoming Old in Jakarta
11. Homo Tsunamensis
12. Coffee (1)
13. Coffee (2)
14. *Bakpao*
15. The Motorcycle People (title originally in English)
16. Toll Road
17. Hearing Money
18. Toll Road Poem
19. *Udel Bodong*
20. Media, + &

21. The Fashion System (title originally in English)
22. Debt Collector (title originally in English)
23. Economy Class
24. Dawn
25. Acehnese Noodles
26. The Hospital Waiters
27. Great Intermission
28. Fish Flu! Vegetable Flu! Air Flu!
29. A Visa for America
30. Human Toilet
31. Still to do with the Toilet
32. Gambir Meditations
33. Bosses United
34. Tsunamilogi and Earthquake-iora
35. Politics of Clothes
36. Utopia of the Past
37. Dangers of an Illusion
38. Blackout
39. Hot
40. Empty Jakarta
41. Not food or drink from outside
42. A City without Parking Officials
43. The Fall of Masculinity
44. Sensuality and Construction
45. Against Homogenisation
46. Disaster Standard
47. After the Flood
48. Jakarta-Bandung, Bandung-Jakarta

49. City of Signs
50. Daily Serial
51. Really Cool Terms
52. Colonisation of Meaning
53. Jakarta and Space
54. The *Ojeks* of Sudirman and Thamrin
55. Metros are Cool
56. The Real Jakarta?
57. Berhala
58. Eiffel de Limboto
59. My Friend
60. The Rainy Season has Arrived
61. Jaguar and Pancasila
62. Life in the Head
63. New Man
64. Don't believe the Mass Media (too much)
65. The Hominid's Guru

Biography of publication

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