

afterwards. This contradiction between what people believe and what people know is one of the things I have come to understand makes killing possible. The perpetrators I've worked with will go through extraordinary intellectual contortions to justify and celebrate what they did no matter what they knew to be facts. For example, Amir Hasan (who appears in *Snake River*) killed his teachers' college friend, Subandi, the religious instructor from the mosque and the man who sang the call to prayer. He knew Subandi to be the most religious man in the village, but he was also in the PKI. Hasan rarely bothered with the mosque, but when he did he would without fail meet Subandi there. Still, Hasan could kill Subandi because Subandi was 'anti god'. I do not think Hasan believed, at the time anyway, that Subandi's religiosity was just a guise. He knew Subandi was religious, but he was whipped up, and whipped himself up, into believing the contrary. People are ready to disregard knowledge – especially when it serves their interest, when they stand to gain money, power, their victim's land or wife or livestock. They can believe things they know are false, and with just as much conviction or passion as they might feel toward believers that they know are true.

**** Comment from JO:** I'm not convinced that this boasting is unique to Medan. In 1998, the flamboyant Brigadier General Herman Sarens Soediro said 'Like in the old days, when only seven communists kidnapped [army generals] and wanted to change Pancasila, I ran over a hundred men with a tank. I was protected by the imperative to ensure the survival of the state's sovereignty and protection of the population. Why should I be scared? I don't care.' (AKSI, 2, 100, 13–19 October 1998; translated by J. Oppenheimer).

***** Comment from JO:** One might also mention some of Sarbupri's successes. During the hyperinflation of the early 1960s, Sarbupri was famous for securing its workers payment in the basic essentials ('*tatuh*' in Sumatran plantation lingo). These included high quality rice, salted fish, milk powder, sugar, salt, eggs, oil, kerosene, clothing, etc. They also brought cultural activities even to remote plantations, including film screenings and theatre performances. These achievements are summed up with derision in the 1967 NBC special report, *Indonesia: The Troubled Victory*: 'Indonesia has a fabulous potential wealth in natural resources, and the New Order wants it exploited.' Cut to a Goodyear plantation near Tebing Tinggi, North Sumatra. 'The communists still work the rubber, but now they are prisoners, and they work at gunpoint. The New Order wants Goodyear to come back. And Goodyear and other capitalists are anxious to return, but not all their findings are happy. When the communists ran the plantations, they built schools, raised salaries, but productivity didn't rise, and profits went out the window.' The communists never ran the plantations, and NBC doesn't acknowledge the possibility that the primary purpose of a public sector company might be something other than making profits for the owners, and instead to provide jobs and lift people out of poverty.

****** Comment from JO:** So they build their own monuments, like the '66' monument by the train station in Medan, and the obelisk in the village of Kampung Kolam, celebrating the massacre of the villagers, and inventing their own savagely tortured and killed Pemuda Pancasila members to parallel the national fantasy of generals mutilated by sex-crazed communists in Jakarta.

SHOW OF FORCE: A CINEMA-SÉANCE OF POWER AND VIOLENCE IN SUMATRA'S PLANTATION BELT

Joshua Oppenheimer & Michael Uwemedimo

The evening breeze was gentle. The crescent moon crept behind the clouds like a thief terrified of being caught. The air grew colder, unaware of our burning spirits. Our sweat ran hot, our faces flush. We had asked Dormin to drive us to the execution site. [...] The car sped to Sialangbuan to pick up our quota. Who knows why, but we feared nothing. Dormin was a real James Bond, racing down the potholed road. Perhaps he was daydreaming, imagining Japanese beheading allied soldiers like in some old WWII movie, and not looking at the road in front of him. We walked the last hundred yards, making our way through undergrowth and oil palm. Under the gleam of flashlights, we arrived at an old well. One by one, Karlub, Uyung and Simin beheaded the five goats.

— *Embun Berdarah* ('Dew of Blood'), Amir Hasan Nasution¹

HISTORY: SCENE AND OBSCENE

On the night of 30 September 1965, six of Indonesia's top army generals were abducted and murdered in an abortive coup attempt. Who was ultimately behind this operation, and their final objectives, remains unclear.² In a response that appears to have been remarkably well rehearsed, General Suharto seized control of the armed forces and instigated a series of nationwide purges to consolidate his power. Suharto engineered and set in motion a killing machine whose chain of command reached into every region and every village, murdering alleged communists, trade unionists, organised peasants, members of the women's movement and anybody else the army considered a threat.³

The campaign was deliberately organised so as to implicate the 'masses' (or *massa*, the term used by Indonesian officials when reference to the massacres is unavoidable): much of the killing, although under the supervision of the army, was actually carried out by paramilitary branches of political groups opposed to the Communist Party of Indonesia (Partai Komunis Indonesia, or PKI) and affiliated groups. As the pro-Suharto American diplomat Paul F. Gardner observed, Suharto 'did not wish to involve the army directly ... he preferred instead [quoting Suharto], "to assist the people to protect themselves and to cleanse their individual areas of this evil seed [the PKI]."'²⁴ This 'cleansing' cleared the political stage for the creation of the 'New Order' military dictatorship.

The massacres that swept the archipelago in the months after October 1965 were one of the most systematic genocides of the twentieth century. To the extent that the genocidaires remain largely in power, its national (and to a significant degree, international) account has been given by its victors.

The rendering of this account, however, has not been a project of straightforward revisionist erasure. While there have been no memorials for genocide victims, and no trials for their killers, the official histories of the New Order do not simply deny its constitutive violence: ever since the killings, the Indonesian government has worn the face of that violence, as administrators and agents of genocide were promoted through the ranks of military and government.²⁵ The violence of the massacres continued, and those who instigated it still seek to conjure its force in ways that we will analyse here.

Yet the official history (and this is no surprise) refuses to recollect the systematic nature of the terror within a judicial, ethical or forensic frame. The deliberate nature of the massacres is *obscene* to an official history, which casts the extermination programme as the spontaneous uprising of a people united in a heroic struggle against the 'evil seed' of atheist communism.²⁶ Wherever this historical scenario is rehearsed – in the official history books or statue books; in classrooms or national parades; in propaganda films or the rallies of paramilitary groups; in the management and labour structures of the plantations or, until recently, the stipulations determining the status of identity cards – its obscenity operates, insinuating terror, haunting the available spaces of social interaction.

The apparatus, activities and artefacts of movie-making provide the means and methods of research for the project upon which this chapter reflects. As cinema has been both a means of research and an object of it, a rehearsal of the New Order history that bears particular mention here is the four-hour propaganda film *The Treachery of the September 30th Movement of the Indonesian Communist Party [Pengkhianatan G 30 S/PKI]* (dir. Noer, 1984). The film was mandatory viewing every year for twenty-four years on Indonesian television and in

all cinemas until Suharto resigned in 1998. Schools would visit the cinema, and families were compelled to watch the film on TV. These thousands of screenings surely constitute the most potent performance of the official history of 1965–66. As such, G30S is marked by (or marks) the generic imperatives, stylistic tendencies and performative routines and effects of the New Order history. It is precisely these imperatives, tendencies and effects that this chapter focuses on.⁷

The film restages the night of 30 September 1965 as a curious blend of documentary exposé, political thriller and slasher movie. It opens and closes as sensational reportage (black-and-white archival footage and photographs; shots of documents and newspaper clippings; a mastering narration over dramatic music) while the requirements of a thriller narrative are fulfilled through a plot performed by shadowy enemies of state, here played by treasonous PKI villains. The slasher aesthetic renders the graphic murder of the six generals at the hands of a communist mob, their genitals mutilated in a sadomasochistic orgy perpetrated by members of the PKI-affiliated Gerwani (Women's Movement), burnt with cigarettes, slashed with razor blades, stabbed with bayonets, beaten with rifle butts, all to the accompaniment of wild chanting and drums.

The exposé and the slasher are both forms predicated on an explicit and excessive visibility. In the exposé this takes the form of an insistence on the self-evidence of its images ('it is plain to see how things really were and this is plainly how things were'). The excess of the slasher, insists that we see everything, revealing in the generic gore of a projected PKI sadism. This grotesque excess operates in interesting ways. It is not merely designed to elicit a common outrage for the PKI, but to create a scene of sacrificial and ritual participation. And, as spectacle, the violence fascinates. Thus are spectators bound and incorporated by an enthrallment with their projected enemy. In as much as the PKI violence is clearly displaced (and projected) state violence, should one identify sympathetically with the massacres' victims, that violence would immediately become a threat.

These genres serve the New Order 'historiography' well, staging the PKI as both self-evidently and explicitly sadistic, while, as the political thriller's necessarily shadowy villains, also threateningly spectral (and spectral not least because, by the time of the film's production, the PKI had been exterminated). For all its excessively visible violence, the film *withholds* from view the true force of the violence which it performs – that of the massacres.

The film is so potent because it serves to justify a massacre that remains obscene, or inadmissible, within the framework of the narrative. The film *generically* rehearses the killing of six generals, a general's daughter, and the same general's adjutant. The rehearsal is generic not only because of its respect for cinematic codes and conventions, but also its faithfulness to a twenty-year-old official his-

tory that those codes serve. That is to say this scene, the murder of the generals, is received as *the* legitimating metonym for the massacres that followed.

The subsequent murder of at least half a million people goes unmentioned, and yet it is this unspoken terror that provides the film with a certain mystique, a *frisson* and fascination.⁸ For the massacres hardly fail to haunt *G30S*, because the film exists almost wholly to justify the massacres and the regime founded upon them. The film's generic rehearsals derive their conventionality precisely from their social and political context – a context constituted by genocide; the film is able to perform the genocide without directly citing it, then, because the genocide is the violence that continues to constitute the film's iterative condition. Thus the film conjures a violence as *spectre* – the extermination of the entire PKI (a group itself rendered spectral) – by not mentioning it explicitly. It is in this way that *G30S* is a *performative* instrument of terror – it does violence. *G30S* was, perhaps more than any other piece of propaganda, the basis for the second half of Suharto's rule.

The film graphically demonstrates the way in which New Order history at once conjures the PKI as a spectral power and condenses that power in spectacular images of violence, so as to claim that power for the shadowy techniques of state terror. The spectral subsists in the spectacle. Obscene to the staging of national history, the systematic nature of the violence nevertheless *sets the scene*, lurking in the wings and constantly threatening a spectacular (re)appearance. It is a haunting presence that might flare up again in a show of force through which the nation has been compelled to imagine and perform itself.

Researchers of New Order histories will find a generic coherence to its scripts and performances (such as one finds in *G30S* – no transgressive formal experiments there), but clearly the aim of these 'historiographic' conventions is not historical coherence as such since they are not concerned with adequacy to actual events. New Order historiography is not a history in the realist register. It is not recounted in order to refer; rather, it is rehearsed in order to *exercise a power*. It is a history in the performative register: history as a histrionics of terror.

Michael Taussig, writing of the economy of violence in the Amazonian rubber boom of the late nineteenth century, describes '*the mediation of terror through narration*, and the problem that raises for effective counter-representations'.⁹ This chapter and the film project it reflects upon attempt to make headway in analysing this problematic even as it re-casts its epistemology.

Eschewing an epistemology of representation, we avoid considering historical narration as mediation of a past that can be made coherently and fully present; instead we consider historical narrative as a performance whose staging produces effects. It is these historical and contemporary effects that are our primary

concern here. We analyse how the elaborations and ellipses of the ceaselessly rehearsed histories of the period conjure terror and interact with the conjurations of previous acts – whether acts of historical account (speech acts) or historical acts (the events that constitute the past).¹⁰ It is less a matter of producing effective counter-representations than intervening with counter-performances, that is, interventions capable of countering the spectral powers of history as terror.

This chapter sketches out some critical moments from the early stages of a film project that intervenes into Indonesia's history of terror to re-stage its performance for the camera, to re-frame it in a way different from its repeated rehearsals in schools, on national television, on days of official memorial.¹¹ The aim is, in the first instance, to perform it in such a way that the operations of its obscenity can be grasped, so that the spectres it produces can enter the scene in a way that allows them to be addressed, acknowledged and contended. Whereas *G30S* allows to justify a massacre it does not name and thereby conjures as spectral, this project seeks to stage a series of 'perverse' performances of official history that will name it and give it substance. It thus sets out to frame performances that contravene the generic imperatives of official history while nevertheless acting in its name and acting out its routines.

Here we focus on the performances of perpetrators. By giving perpetrators free reign to declaim their pasts for our camera, in invariably generic terms (in 'testimonial' interviews, re-enactments and even musicals), we have sought to deconstruct the ways in which generic and political imperatives always already shaped not only the victor's history (including such scenes as we filmed), but also the violence of the genocide itself. By making these codes, conventions and scripts manifest, by marking the ways in which the historical accounts and enactments of the New Order are elements of a performative apparatus of terror, the project attempts to make these insights – as well as previously repressed historical detail – available to a political and historical imagination that can draw the process of national- and self-imagining from under the shadow and sway of catastrophe.

What follows is a critical reflection on an early moment of the project: the filmed encounter between two aging genocidares at an execution site by a river in North Sumatra. From the many hundreds of hours of footage that followed the filmed encounter, this project is now resolving itself into three film works. Here we focus on just a few of those hours.

SNAKE RIVER: A ROUTINE ENCOUNTER

At the National Security Archive in Washington D.C. there is an anonymous and untitled folio of notes recording some of what little is publicly known of the

1965–66 Indonesian genocide. A Sumatran massacre of 10,500 people is recorded in a typical entry as follows:

CARD NO: 20 143

DATE: NO DATE

INDIVIDUAL: N. Sumatra

ITEM: From North Sumatra came a report of the slaying of 10,500 prisoners, who had been arrested for PKI activities. Their bodies were thrown into the Sungai Ular,

The Sungai Ular, or Snake River, is distinguished only by its size and relatively swift flow. It was for this reason that it was chosen as an execution site – unlike slower smaller rivers, the Snake River could be relied upon to carry the dead out to sea. Before the river meets the sea, it passes under the trans-Sumatran highway at Perbaungan, about thirty miles southeast of Medan, North Sumatra's capital city. Within sight of a bridge where the highway spans the river is one of the clearings in the plantation belt where the Snake River was loaded with its nightly freight of bodies.



Fig. 1 On 22 January 1966, Amir Hasan's first five victims were dumped in a disused well at Batang Kepayang, Teluk Mengkudu, North Sumatra. This illustration introduces a chapter in *Embun Berdarah* (1997) in which their ghosts narrate the massacres that follow.

It is here, 38 years later, that we brought Amir Hasan Nasution and Inong Syah. Amir was commander of the Komando Aksi death squads for the Teluk Mengkudu district, where he killed, by his own account, 32 people at this clearing on Snake River. During the 1960s he was an art teacher and a primary school governor. After the killings, he was asked by the plantation management to found the management-and-military-dominated union that replaced the progressive union that he exterminated. He was later promoted to school inspector, and then regional head of the government's Department of Education and Culture. After retiring, he was appointed head of his district's KPU (Komisi Pemilihan Umum, or Public Election Commission). His duties were to ensure that general elections are 'fair and clean' – an ironic reward for a man who was earlier responsible for exterminating the largest political party in the same district.

Now the elections are passed and he has time on his hands. An avid writer and painter, he has

already produced a lavishly illustrated book about his life; it is titled *Embun Berdarah* ('Dew of Blood').

Inong Syah was a carpenter for the British rubber plantation, Harrison-Crossfield (now London-Sumatra). He was the youngest member in a death squad of nine. At the Sungai Ular, his role was to bring victims to the river and drag them to be killed.

Although they participated in the massacres during the same period, and were surely on occasion at the river on the same nights, Amir and Inong were in different death squads and did not meet until, decades later, they enthusiastically agreed to give an account for the camera of their role in the killings.

The two former death squad members stand on the roadside where a dirt path leads towards the river, down a steep bank, through the trees to a clearing by the water. They take this path, addressing the camera directly as they go. Each takes it in turns to play victim and executioner. Despite their age they go at it with gusto, assuming all the necessary positions for their demonstration: squatting with hands bound behind back; lying with legs raised while dragged by the ankles; pulling, pushing forcefully with feet in a wide stance to take the strain; bowed forward, nape of the neck exposed for decapitation.

From the unloading of bound and blindfolded prisoners to a demonstration of decapitation at the site of dispatch, they go through the motions of what was their nightly routine.

The fact that the performance does indeed make the process *seem routine* has two somewhat contradictory effects. On the one hand, it allows us to understand the killings as *routine*, as *mass* killings, as systematic and thus scripted, rehearsed and generic. On the other hand, this scripted quality leads one to doubt the footage's evidentiary value for any *particular* killing. In this respect Amir and Inong's performance is wholly typical of the perpetrators' accounts this project has gathered.¹² Even the performances that seem most graphic appear not to be rendered as singular explications of specific events, but rather (as we shall explore in some detail below), as rehearsals of *genres* whose register is the graphic.

A PROPER PERFORMANCE: THE TV PRESENTER'S LIVE SPECTACULAR

As Amir drags imaginary naked victims along the ground, beats them senseless *en route* to execution, perhaps the most unnerving thing is his relentless smile. It is a smile appropriate to the type of performance for which the camera seems to offer Amir an opportunity: that of the TV presenter.

Not only does Amir never stop grinning, he provides a seamless, present-tense narration of everything they are doing. As he shows the camera how they would

drag victims on the final stage to the river, lines such as this are typical of his continuous commentary: 'So now I am demonstrating how we drag him to the riverbank.' The lines seem appropriate to an on-location reporter providing a blow-by-blow account of a shoot out between police and some bank robbers caught in the act (*Cops*-style reality crime shows are a regular feature of Indonesian national TV programming), or perhaps even a sports caster providing play-by-play narration for a football match in which the national team is trouncing the traditional opponents.

Amir holds forth as if from a *live* event. His re-enactment of course *is* live, though as re-enactment it seems to gesture to the past. In as much as this past threatens to return, the re-enactment is a *preview*. Thus his presentation is strangely tensed, he seems neither to be referring to a particular past, nor to an actual present (we shall return to the future in a moment): not so much, 'this is what we did' nor 'this is what we are doing', as '*this is what is done*'.

In the observance of 'what is done' there is a peculiar formality to Amir's presentation. Like anybody boasting on camera, Amir is camera-conscious, and in this decorous self-consciousness, his performance becomes more intensely, explicitly theatrical. And so, focused through the camera's lens, two senses of performativity converge: there is the performative in J. L. Austin's sense on the one hand (and just what, in the performative sense, this act *does* we shall consider in a moment), and performative as in 'theatrical', on the other.¹³

Perhaps these two senses of performativity, despite Austin's proscription of the theatrical, are already implicated in a 'general iterability'.¹⁴ As we shall see, this general iterability conditioned the staging of the massacres themselves, and therefore it conditions Amir and Inong's performance both 'then' and 'now'. This is not to claim that there were no originary acts that constituted the genocide. If only this were so. Rather it is to recognise that these fatal acts reveal the threat of repetition as a constitutive element of the performance of terror: not merely, 'this is what is done', but 'this is what *will* be done'.

It is this theatricality, conditioned by a general iterability, that makes visible the imprint of the generic – the performance of a script that appears to be well-rehearsed. Amir becomes a smiling presenter, and whenever he finishes a certain explanation, he pauses, refreshes his already gleaming smile, and gives the camera alternatively an enthusiastic thumbs-up or a 'V' for victory.

In his Playboy shades, pausing at the end of his demonstration to pose for a snapshot at the murder site, his is the same pose struck by those leering American soldiers in Abu Ghraib.

The perverse *tableaux vivants* staged by Amir and Inong during their demonstration are re-enactments in an obvious sense, but just as those of Abu Ghraib,

they are also rehearsals of 'standard operating procedures'¹⁵ (and certainly in the case of the latter, these procedures were codified in legal directives and described in detailed official interrogation manuals, all now in the public domain).¹⁶ That is to say, the gestures of murder and torture are and were already re-enactments, just as these smiling snapshot clichés are pulled from a repertory of stock poses and therefore already and always repetitions. What Rebecca Schneider notes of the Abu Ghraib photographs also holds for the pose Amir assumes for his souvenir photo: there is a 'citational logic' in the staged triumphalism of these gestures – these are poses struck precisely to be repeated, not only through the rehearsal of the torture scene in other such institutions (in the case of Abu Ghraib) or the threatened return of anti-communist massacres (at Snake River), but also through the circulation of the images at viewings that are yet to come. Facing the camera, and looking deliberately toward a future spectator, the ostentatious theatricality amplifies the effect of the performance as show-of-force.¹⁷

Here, in the future, looking back at Amir posing for his souvenir by the river where four decades previous he had struggled so tirelessly, we can ask how our camera is implicated in this staging. Indeed, in response to this image, we went on to explore the ways in which a filmmaking method that re-stages particular events and typical routines ('standard operating procedures') in a deliberately theatrical mode might insightfully frame the genocide's operations as performances (that is, as oriented towards a spectatorship that was both contemporaneous and anticipated). These explorations lead to further questions: if re-enactment is scripted into terror's performance and its staging as spectacle, what role might re-enactment play in a critical and interventionist historiography; and how might such critical re-stagings and re-framings, in turn, render legible the scripts of such performances, describing their mises-en-scène, and revealing the ways in which the operations of the genocide were generic – that is, both routine and conditioned by genre?

Responses to these questions emerge from a more detailed consideration of Amir and Inong's walk to the river.

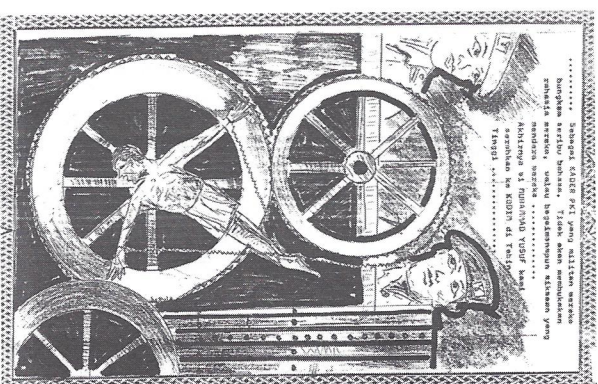


Fig. 2 Amir Hasan supervises the electrocution and torture of trade unionist Mohammed Yusuf in the machine room of the Matapao oil palm refinery; from *Embun Berdarah*

At the start of his walk to the Snake River, Amir goes to great lengths to set the scene, wistfully referring to the 'romance of their work' (*romantisme pekerjaan*), describing the 'fearsome night' (*malam takutkan*) with the crescent moon hanging over the dark oil palm plantation. Amir even attempts to freeze the moon in its romantic crescent, as on an opera stage, suggesting that the moon was always a crescent, as if, during the time of the killings, the lunar phases froze to create the right *suasana* (ambience) for the bloodshed. In his remarkable memoir of the killings, *Embun Berdarah*, incredibly written in the first person from the perspective of the ghost of his victims, and illustrated with his own graphic paintings of the murders, Amir goes to even greater lengths to tell his story in an idiom faithful to a genre of romantic heroism.

Amir's clichés include: 'A great nation is one that knows her history'; 'It was a matter of kill or be killed'; 'A man who doesn't know his history is a small man who accepts whatever comes his way'; 'It was a time of revolution'; and the trauma and violence were all part of 'the romance of life on this mortal earth' (this last one, certainly, is self-invented).

Clichéd invocations of massacre as 'heroic' and 'historic' frame the killing as part of an epochal battle against an enemy of mythic proportion. This is a central trope in both Amir's memoir and his and Inong's performance at the Sungai Ular: set in a gothic landscape of ghosts, crescent moons and a watchful animal kingdom (frogs, monkeys and birds are invariably mentioned as the witnesses of Amir's atrocities), the PKI is performed as a supernatural threat to be overcome. Amir empowers his victim as a mythic power to be conquered, allowing him and Inong to claim that power at the moment of slaughter, transforming themselves into heroes rather than people who committed the cowardly deed of executing those with no power to resist.

There is a tension between that which is *well-rehearsed* about Amir and Inong's performance and the fact that this is their first visit to the Snake River since the killings, and certainly their first time together. The scripted-ness of the encounter derives, surely, from the generic conventions conditioning all public discourse about the killings. For example, 'the generation of '66' (*angkatan 66*) has been celebrated as heroes, and so they easily slip into a well-rehearsed performance as heroic patriots who would stop at nothing to defend the nation.¹⁸ Yet there is a grim misfit between their claim to be heroes and the events they perform. First, they must overcome the abject powerlessness of the victims, and this forces them into a supernatural register, conjuring magic powers of resistance. In *Embun Berdarah*, Amir's narrative strategy is to blame any obstacles faced by Komando Aksi

on the mischievous ghosts of those already killed; thus, only posthumously do the PKI victims summon the resistance required to constitute their killers as heroes. Having established the epic struggle between killer and PKI members, the stage is now set for another genre, quite unlike that of patriotic heroic struggle: slasher or shock-horror.

GENOCIDE AND GENRE: SLASHER AND SADIS

Indeed, it comes as a real shock when, smiling as ever, Amir holds the stick he is using as a sword over his mouth and says, 'Sometimes the executioner would drink the blood like this.' Drinking blood is one of many grisly details unabashedly recounted. Others include how water, not blood, would flow from the amputated breasts of Gerwani members, how victims would urinate at the moment of death, how human corpses smell, how the *kebal* (those imbued with the power of invincibility) were forced to eat and then defecate to overcome their magic powers, and how Komando Aksi rigged the bodies to float rather than sink so as to terrorise people living down stream.¹⁹ These stories recount details that are routinely, to the point of cliché, called *sadis* (an Indonesian appropriation of 'sadist'); indeed, these stories are told in the register of *sadis*. The enthusiastic recounting of the *sadis* conjures, for the killer, an ultimate, metaphorical and magical power over death. It is a power to be relished, savoured, by rehearsing again and again the grisly details. Thus, through the genre of *sadis*, may killers perform themselves not just as victors and appropriators of the PKI's projected powers, but as men of preternatural strength with an *ilmu* (or magical knowledge) far greater than that of their victims.

Demonstrating in this way their own magical power over life and death is important, because it makes the killers (and sometimes when they attach names to their victims, the killings, too) *specific*, locating the power of death in the actual individuals who finally carried out the murders. (Here, as we shall see, is where Amir and Inong contravene the conventions of the official history, not least by identifying a locus of culpability, albeit one focused on instruments of murder, rather than its institution).

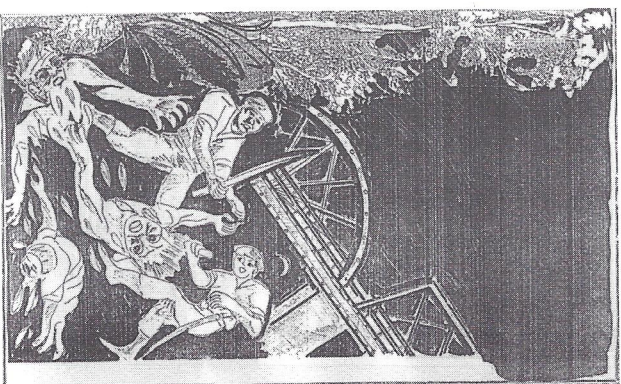


Fig. 3 An illustration of the killings at Snake River; from *Embun Berdarah*

If the routine they performed seemed predicated merely on efficiency rather than theatricality, if they spoke only in statistical terms, performing themselves as no more than killing machines in the service of the army, it would be apparent that the true spectral power of death was located in those who assigned their 'quotas' (*jatah*, the term used to describe their allotment of victims). When Amir and Inong highlight the singular and inevitably lurid moment of slaughter, by speaking the language of *sadis*, Amir and Inong take for themselves, as individuals, the power of death otherwise vested in the institutions that commanded them.

Sadis, given its prominence on Indonesian TV networks like Trans TV, may be described as a non-fiction sub-genre of shock-horror. Violence is always explicit. Grisly and shocking details are told with pride and smiles, by respectable citizens – a school governor, in Amir's case. *Sadis* is presented as public fact. But despite the fact that *sadis* is so self-consciously explicit, almost pornographically so, despite all the detail – or perhaps because of it – one cannot help but feel the loss of the actual event, its eclipse by its symbolic and generic performance. And because the grisly detail is rehearsed as a boasting, one cannot help but feel the performer's *interest*, his *investment* in claiming power through the performance.

Perhaps it is this way in which the *sadis* always conjures something as *held back* that Inong alludes to when describing how *dukuns* (or shamans) always hold back the lion's share of their knowledge from their students so that, if a *dukun* must fight his student, he will know the key to overcoming the student's power, but not the other way round.

This provides an allegory for the *gesture of withholding*, a gesture that structures that most explicit of genres – the *sadis*, the shock-horror. For this withholding, this *secret* that one must always conjure as an excess or supplement even to the most luridly graphic story, also constitutes a certain *ihmu*, a mystique, a non-transferable power claimed by the performer who refuses to give away the whole game. As we have noted, the film *G30S* is analogously structured, and we are suggesting that structured into Amin, Inong and other killers' performance of *sadis* is the same withholding, so that in a double movement, they can at once claim the godly power over life and death from their superiors, while at the same time locate this power beyond that which they reveal, in a mystique conjured as a supplemental spectre, encrypted as the *obscene* to their performance – a performance whose explicitness, as we shall see, is itself already the obscene to the official history.

Amir and Inong's performance exemplifies this replenishment of spectral power through storytelling, through performances that seem well-rehearsed, even scripted. Inong in particular tells a lot of graphic stories. In his own community,

Inong's stories, whether true or merely 'empty talk' (*omong kosong*), disseminated far and wide via Inong's 'big mouth' (*muntirnya sampai ke mana mana*), have acquired for him the reputation of being an *aligo*, or executioner, a word often used generically – and *sotto voce* – for anybody rumoured to have participated in the killing. This reputation makes Inong feared, anticipated as one with sufficient ties to the terrifying Indonesian state to be instructed to kill, and then be protected. There is a tense relationship to an unstable logic of anticipation, as Inong acquires a force precisely because his spectral violence threatens to suddenly explode into the spectacular. As such, this constitutes a real social power for Inong in his community – one constituted through stories, through his big mouth.

UNDER THE SPELL OF STORIES

These stories are performatives (in Austin's sense). It is not enough to drink blood or cut off heads; one must also tell about it, rehearse it again in whispered performances and repeated gestures, if one wants to conjure the spectral power claimed during the massacre, and manifest it as a social force. The performances of killers as they rehearse these stories are what accomplish this conjuration.

In her essay on gender constitution, Judith Butler argues that the constitutive performatives of gender are 'objects of belief'.²⁰ However, the 'conjunctive' performances of those such as Amir and Inong need not be correspondingly charged with credibility. That is, they need neither themselves believe all they say, nor need their audience, for the conjuration to be effective, any more than they need believe in the propaganda about a murderous PKI to act *as if* they believed it.

Acting 'as if' the PKI posed an overwhelming threat was a moment in the appropriation of that threat's projected power, moreover one needs to be *recognised* as a killer in rumour and whispered gossip. For this reason, establishing yourself as a killer – or potential killer – in the eyes of the community may be more important than participating in the killing itself. The killers, or would be killers, act out of the fascination of their own terrifying fiction. Thus may people brag of things they never did or exaggerate their role. This attests to the *power of narrative* – of rumour, stories and performance.

Taussig writes about how such terror can lead those under its spell to themselves do terrible things. Writing about the Amazonian rubber boom, Taussig describes the reaction of colonists to the spectral terror of the imaginary Indian threat:

The managers lived obsessed with death, Romulo Paredes tells us. They saw danger everywhere. They thought solely of the fact that they lived surrounded by vipers,

tigers, and cannibals. It was these ideas of death, he wrote, that constantly struck their imagination, making them terrified and capable of any action. Like children, they had nightmares of witches, evil spirits, death, treason, and blood. The only way they could live in such a terrifying world, he observed, was to *inspire terror themselves*.²¹

The nature of this 'terrifying world' needs real thought. Does it mean that the colonists actually *believed* they were surrounded by cannibals? Taussig does not quite say so. In the case of 1965, would it mean that Amir and Inong actually believed the PKI kept secret death lists with their names on them, and were poised to massacre anybody who believed in God – despite the fact that PKI members prayed in the mosque as much as everybody else? If they did believe it, what is the nature of such belief? Or, perhaps the colonists described by Taussig were obsessed by cannibals without having actually to believe that they were surrounded by them. Perhaps they 'lived' in such a terrifying world' because they were told, and were telling each other, terrifying stories about their world. But that does not mean they actually believed the stories. What matters is the genre of story, how it is repeated, how it is insinuated as rumour into the subtext of daily life, its context of circulation. A ghost story can terrify without one believing that it is true. Narrative has the power to conjure terror, and somehow, as with ghost stories, this power is attractive; we *want* to hear stories, even, or perhaps especially, terrifying ones; we voluntarily place ourselves under the spell of the terrifying effects of stories.

This is not a unique observation about our susceptibility to narrative; we merely suggest that this dynamic of narrative can have very real and terrible political consequences. Just as we need not discuss belief to account for the spectral effects of ghost stories, we need not when we describe the effects of anti-PKI propaganda, or stories about Indian savagery. In order to kill, and to kill so many, Inong and Amir may indeed have been *under the spell* of this narrative terror. But when we say Amir and Inong were under the spell of terror, we do not say anything about what they *believed*. Rather, we mean that they were attracted by the spectral power of terror invested in the phantasmatic PKI by all the stories about them then in circulation, and they availed themselves of the opportunity to appropriate some of this power by participating in the killing. It does not follow that in order to be under the spell of terror they had to believe the stories that conjured it in the first place. This is a terrifying and terrible actuality: that one could commit genocide under the spell of stories – stories of heroism, horrors, ghosts.

These stories haunt, yet are themselves haunted. What haunts these stories of *sadis* is the real. These displays of excessive visibility, by eclipsing with their

generic gore the terrible singularity of each murder, make visible the relationship between obscenity (in the everyday sense) and its own obscene – the historical real itself. And in this evocation of the historical real, what is made real is the *absence* of the victims – that is, their death.

SHORT CIRCUITS: CAMERA AS LURE, FILM AS INTERVENTION

If the haunting persistence of the massacres remains the source of Amir and Inong's conjured power, we will be able to see now how it is also their undoing. For they have done more here than merely provide us with an opportunity to analyse the narrative and generic imperatives of their recount.

We have suggested that Amir perceives the filming as a rather unusual public relations opportunity – to claim, rather than deny, the killings and so too to claim the spectral power that attends them. Yet Amir's bid for publicity is fraught with contradictions. As he writes in his memoir, *Embun Berdarah*, and repeats for our camera when he first presents the book to Inong, 'This is for people who wish to know more about our struggle, so that what we did will never be forgotten.' He makes photocopies of the book, but then tells us the book is full of national secrets and should not be made public. He changes all the names in the book, but then on the final page provides a key so the reader can know the names of the actual people upon whom the characters are based.

Following the walk to the river, he suggests a collaboration to adapt his book into a musical film, and enthuses about the project to his friends. When his friends try to warn him off the project, suggesting the film might be too explicit (and thereby violate the national taboo around publicly discussing the massacres), he changes all the names in the screenplay and sets it on another planet, leaving the story intact. He is, after all, reluctant to give up the enterprise. Whole segments of his own community are already in the grip of his power – that is, they are afraid of him – and he hopes that the film he would make might enlarge the compass of that power, drawing others into his fold, manifesting publicly that which has hitherto been made explicit only on the unread and moldy pages of his own memoir, written yet secret.

If he does see the film as somehow condensing his claim to spectral power, in what fora of presentation or circuits of distribution does he see his power emerging? That is, who is Amir's imagined audience? Given how worried he is about 'revealing secrets', despite his vigorous boasting, it is probable that he has no *particular* audience in mind. For as soon as Amir imagines any *particular* audience, he becomes aware of *risk*. It is only when he imagines actual and singular human beings viewing his filmed performances does he realise that he is providing

substantive and singular information. That is, only when he imagines a specific audience does he realise that his performance substantiates so much that had previously been unsaid, condensing the audience's reception of his image into the transaction of a secret. Here is where he imagines danger, and suggests changing names.

At other times, for instance with Inong at the Snake River, rather than imagining any particular audience, it is as if he is performing for an anonymous and, like spectrality itself, miasmatic public defined and interpellated by an equally generic



Fig. 4 Original and Fictional Names from the memoir, *Embun Berdarah*. The right column is victims, the left perpetrators and their supporters.

film's force: as we have seen, *G30S* has also been an instrument of terror, the film itself is part of the *ilmu* used to conduct the séance of Indonesian state terror, attempting to conjure the spectral power of the PKI, condense it in the film, and claim it for the state.

He hoped to use the film to close the circuit of spectral power's passage from them PKI to himself, and to amplify the strength of this power with the dissemination of his image through his generically imagined audience. But rather than complete it, the film *shorts* this circuit of acquiring spectral power. That is, once Amir and Inong make a spectacle of their spectrality, they undermine their own power, because their power was established precisely as that spectrality conjured

'media'. Or perhaps he does not even imagine the public, but only the system of images that constitute 'media'. Perhaps it is the rather impressive technology of filmmaking itself that enables Amir to avoid thinking about how his performative project, in his mind, *lacks* an audience. That is, perhaps the spectacle of filmmaking functions like a fetish, a substantive *metonym* for the missing audience, as well as a concrete *metaphor* for the abstract apparatus of television and media as system of images. Thus does the camera entice Amir to forget, momentarily, the absurdity of the fact that he has authored and starred in performances for nobody.

The film Amir has set out to make is self-consciously influenced by *Pengkhinatan G30S PKI*. (In an unrecorded discussion about how to transform his novel into a heroic musical, he said that the model for him would be *G30S*.) By conjuring a PKI opponent roughly consistent with that conjured in *G30S*, he would claim some of the latter

by that which was *obscure, unspoken and unsubstantiated* (and ideally, for the architects of genocide, *unsubstantiated*).

By publicly performing the well-rehearsed but *obscure* scripts that constitute the massacres' systematicity, Amir and Inong reveal that they were instruments of a system rather than its masters – they show themselves to be culpable functionaries. And so, in their attempt to use film to complete the circuit of acquiring spectral power, and to manifest spectral power as actual power, they reveal that the power was never theirs in the first place. Amir was ordered to kill by his brother-in-law, an army major. The killers were under army orders. They were killing only those whom they were authorised to kill. Lured by the opportunity they perceive, Amir and Inong get sloppy and fail to meet the terms of their own genre. They name names, including their own and, worse still, their superiors. They stumble and make precisely the kind of public admissions that have been proscribed.

Particularly, by naming names and describing the killing machine in such detail, the footage confirms what had long been suspected, or substantiates that which had been spectral. Tellingly, after our first visit, Amir would never perform another 're-enactment' (*peragakan*) as such. However, the route to the historical scene through *fiction*, no matter how transparently direct, remained open.

Originally, Amir had asked to produce an explicit adaptation – albeit a musical, heroic one – of his memoir. After talking (bragging?) about this with friends in the regional government as well as veterans of his Komando Aksi group, including a member of the Badan Intelijen Negara (National Intelligence Body, Indonesian equivalent to the CIA), he was told that this might not be such a good idea. He was warned against doing any more filming about 1965–66.²² He was crestfallen, until he came up with his strategy of interplanetary displacement.²³

He considers this within the sacrosanct realm of 'art', and thus somehow no longer about his experiences, but continues to make the same blunder of making explicit that which had been obscure. The disguise of changed names and the relocation of events to an imaginary cosmos already structured by the well-rehearsed genres of patriotic heroism that code films like *Star Wars*, a model for Amir's adaptation, is fragile. Not only do we know all the names already, Amir is repeatedly *arrested* and *possessed* by the singularity of his own experience and repeatedly interjects tellingly specific detail. He even wants to shoot his film in more or less the historical locations, with original costumes and weaponry, along the muddy rivers of Sumatra's oil palm belt, despite its purported interplanetary setting.

Amir's use of historical performance as a performative bid for power, and his veiling of that performance, even from himself, in the name of 'art', is re-

peatedly troubled by the tension between the spectral and the substantial. The meaning, force and consequence of circulating substantiated stories with named killers and victims is vastly different from that circulating unsubstantiated and spectral rumours. Moreover he does so on record. Not only do they substantiate their stories before the eye of the camera, their self-conscious historicities make all-too-evident the generic imperatives that have constituted so many thousands of similar historical performances that remained unrecorded, always and again *live*. As a living threat, these performances are moments in the spectral circulation of terror; as *material artifacts*, they can be analysed critically, decoded, rendered evidential – that is, their own theatricality, borne of their eager attempt to seize the filmmaking as *opportunity*, produces a kind of over-acting that makes obvious the fact that their performance is scripted. These previously inadmissible scripts, thus revealed through the obviously generic qualities of their historic performance, lose the obscenity from which they derived their power.

It is through cinema that Amir and Inong's power dissolves at the moment that their performance is condensed onto tape and taken away from them, beyond their control. They have revealed at once the details of their own role and the generic imperatives of a broader chain of command. Above all, they transformed rumour into evidentiary account. Rendering the spectral explicit allows it to be critically reframed, and this process opens on to the potentially redemptive and retributive possibilities of this project. Once captured on film, these performances can be given over to those very subjects that the performance of the massacres was and is intended to physically and symbolically annihilate – survivors of the terror and those still under its sway.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERFORMANCE

This moment of restaging the perpetrator's performance *in ways that allow survivors to imaginatively respond* to a history bent on their destruction is beyond the scope of such a brief essay, one which has focused on just four hours of footage from an archive of many hundreds of hours, and one which has focused on only the first moment of a production and research method that can be thought of as an *archaeological performance*.²⁴

This method of archaeological performance entails successively working with and through the gestures, routines and rituals that were the motor of the massacres, as well as the genres and grammars of its historical recount, typically moving from interview and re-enactment with the historical actors, such as that of Amir and Inong on the Snake River, to increasingly elaborate re-stagings of the events related in the interviews. Between a buried historical event and its restag-

ing with historical actors this method opens a process of simultaneous *historical excavation* (working down through strata), and *historionic reconstruction* (adding layers of stylised performance and recounting).

So, to close, let us briefly look at one of those moments of historionic reconstruction with Amir Hasan.

ON CECIL B. DEMILLE AT LAKE TOBA

In his study of the psychology of denial in perpetrators of atrocity, Stanley Cohen argues that 'Participants glibly appeal to "history" for vindication. A Serb soldier in 1999 talks about the Battle of Kosovo as if it happened the week before.'²⁵ The power of the victims in the past, be it actual or mythic, is used to figure the victims not as victims but as powerful adversaries to be overcome in heroic defence of the nation. Amir and other perpetrators' repeated appeals to the propagandistic commonplaces of PKI treachery at the 1948 Madiun rebellion and 1965 'Gestapu' coup – even if both are ultimately spectral conjurations in their own right – perform this same role.²⁶ So does Amir's clichéd claim that 'they would have killed us if we didn't kill them first'.

But Cohen continues, referencing Michael Ignatieff's 1997 study of ethnic cleansing in the Balkans:

This nationalism, Ignatieff points out, is supremely sentimental: *kitsch is the national aesthetic of an ethnic cleanser*. This is like a Verdi opera – killers on both sides pause between firing to recite nostalgic and epic texts. Their violence has been authorized by the state (or something like a state); they have the comforts of belonging and being possessed by a love far greater than reason: 'Such a love assists the belief that it is fate, however tragic, which obliges you to kill'. This is your destiny.²⁷

In the case of Amir Hasan, Cohen's description of the Verdi opera proves to be more than just a metaphor. In a still-in-progress part of the film practice Amir has been working with us to film a musical adaptation of his memoir, *Embun Berdarah*. Amir himself has assumed the role of 'film director' for this musical film-within-our-film. To this end, he has recruited a university choir to create the music. He then wrote a series of poems and speeches, and recited them 'amidst the beautiful nature of Indonesia' in North Sumatra's crater lake, Danau Toba, a well established tourist destination. Basing these speeches on Cecil B. De Mille's introduction to *The Ten Commandments* (1956), which we had showed him as one of many possible models for his production, passages include:

Why make this film? Because this is my creation, the fruits of my own imagination, expressing the history of my own life.

Let me tell you something you should know: [Quoting directly from *Embung Berdarah*] The red sunlight shines down upon the earth. Red, green, blue and other colours struggle to dominate the heavens. Banners emblazoned with writing seek to discredit everybody else. But storm clouds are gathering, and they cannot hold back the rain of blood that will fall upon our mother, the Earth. This is the fight between good and evil.

This is the romance of life [romantika kehidupan] in our mortal world.

Amir directly addresses the audience from this picaresque scene, pausing to wave and shout, 'ahoy!', to a lake-tour boat that passes behind him. Paraphrasing De Mille, he declares, 'By watching this film, you will have made a pilgrimage to the actual land sanctified by blood in the patriotic battle to save our nation.' Under a soundtrack of choral music, Amir Hasan delivers his speech before a shifting background of clumsy tourists learning traditional Indonesian dances, sipping multi-coloured cocktails, and bemusedly enjoying Amir's poetry amid the tropical paradise.

NOTES

An earlier version appeared in *Critical Quarterly*, 51, 1, 2009, 84–110. This version has been revised and updated.

- 1 A. H. Nasution (1997) *Embung Berdarah*. Unpublished memoir.
- 2 The most compelling analysis, and a useful survey of other accounts, would be J. Roosa (2006) *Pretext for Mass-Murder: The September 30th Movement and Suharto's Coup d'Etat in Indonesia*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press; see also B. Anderson and R. McVey (1971) *A Preliminary Analysis of the October 1, 1965 Coup in Indonesia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press; C. Budiardjo (1991) *Indonesia: Mass extermination and the consolidation of authoritarian power*, in A. George (ed.) *Western State Terrorism*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 180–212; C. Budiardjo (2002) 'Soeharto and the Grand Scheme of Things', *The Jakarta Post*, 2nd June; J. Hughes (2002) *The End of Sukarno – A Coup that Misfired; A Purge that Ran Wild*. Singapore: Archipelago Press; D. S. Lev (1966) 'Indonesia 1965: The Year of the Coup', *Asian Survey*, 6, 2, 103–10; and P. D. Scott (1985) 'The United States and the Overthrow of Sukarno, 1965–1967', *Pacific Affairs*, 58, Summer, 239–64. See also Benedict Anderson's contribution to this volume.
- 3 This campaign was not without its international enthusiasts. The CIA provided radio equipment and arms, MI6 provided 'black propaganda' (propaganda whose imputed source is the enemy), the US military provided training and cash, the US state department provided death lists, and the Agency for International Development provided support for 'youth groups' that

- were groomed to become death squads. The campaign was presented in the West as 'good news' (see NBC Special Report (1967) *Indonesia: The Troubled Victory*, Broadcast 19 February 1967 and J. Reston (1966) 'A Glimpse of Light in Asia', *The New York Times*, IV, 4, 19 June). For background on the United States' role, see P. D. Scott (1985) 'The United States and the Overthrow of Sukarno, 1965–1967', *Pacific Affairs*, 58, Summer, 239–64; for the CIA, State Department and US Defense Department's roles, see especially FRUS (Foreign Relations of the United States 1964–1968) (2001) Volume XXVI, Indonesia; Malaysia-Singapore; Philippines. Documents 100–205. Washington: The Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State, and K. Kadane (1990) 'U.S. Officials' Lists Aided Indonesian Bloodbath in '60s', *The Washington Post*, 21 May; for the UK's role, see M. Curtis (1996) 'British Role in Slaughter of 500,000', *The Observer*, 28 July; M. Curtis (2003) *Web of Deceit: Britain's Real Role in the World*. New York: Vintage; M. Curtis (2004) 'Britain's Real Foreign Policy and the Failure of British Academia', *International Relations*, 18, 3, 275–87; W. A. Hulami (2000) 'MI6 Overthrew Sukarno', *Malaysia General News*, 18 April; P. Lashmar and J. Oliver (1998) 'How we destroyed Sukarno: Foreign Office "dirty tricks" helped overthrow Indonesia's President Sukarno in 1966. Over the next 30 years, half a million people died', *The Independent*, 1 December; P. Lashmar and J. Oliver (2000) 'MI6 Spread Lies to Put Killer in Power; Revealed: Healey Admits Role in British Dirty Tricks Campaign to Overthrow Indonesia's President Sukarno', *The Independent*, 16 April, and E. McCann (2002) 'West has Played a Major Role', *Belfast Telegraph*, 17 October.
- 4 P. F. Gardner (1997) *Shared Hopes, Separate Fears: Fifty Years of U.S.-Indonesian Relations*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 229.
 - 5 An account of the pervasiveness of perpetrators in positions of state power is well beyond the scope of a footnote, or even a brief essay. Executioners were promoted, offered scholarships and given seats in the Indonesian legislature. Commander of the strategic reserve in North Sumatra, General Kemal Idris, was promoted to commander of the Indonesian Strategic Reserve (Kostrad), the position occupied by Suharto immediately before he became president. Indonesia's current president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, is the son-in-law of the former head of the Indonesian special forces, Colonel Sarwo Edhie Wibowo, who claimed in a deathbed confession that he killed three million people; see B. Anderson (2000) 'Petrus Dadi Ratu', *New Left Review*, 3, May–June, 1–7.
 - 6 A particularly absurd condensation of the official history may be found at Jakarta's Museum of PKI Treason; see also Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia (1975) *30 Tahun Indonesia Merdeka: Jilid 3 (1965–1973)* [30 Years of Indonesian Independence: Volume 3 (1965–1973)]¹.
 - 7 See also Ariel Heryanto's contribution to this volume.
 - 8 The exact number of dead is unknown, but historians' estimates range from 500,000 to 2.5 million people killed – plantation workers, landless farmers, ethnic Chinese, intellectuals and other alleged 'leftists' – in under six months.
 - 9 M. Taussig (1987) *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 127; emphasis added.
 - 10 Of course, history in normal usage has several simultaneous meanings, referring to past events, to the narratives that claim representational adequacy to those events, and to a discipline that seeks to narrate and interpret the past and define protocols for that process. For the purpose of this essay, we will refer to the past not as history but as the past, or events, or, occasionally, the historical real, a term used to explicitly contrast with historical narrative, the ungraspable and therefore also spectral actuality of the past itself. This project does not seek to take events and create new histories, but rather to talk about history-making, and

to intervene in the spectral fields of power that are both constituted and claimed during the process of history-making.

- 11 Joshua Oppenheimer began his filmic excavation of the 1965–66 Indonesian genocide in collaboration with Christine Cynn, Michael Uwedimo and Andrea Zimmerman in 2004. This project culminated in the documentary films *The Act of Killing* (2012) and *Snake River* (2013). This chapter focuses on key moments from the shooting in January–August 2004 (that is, the earliest stages of the project).

12 Each successive interview or re-enactment generated histrionic performance after histrionic performance that were ill-suited to a historiography that strives to representational adequacy and coherence. Interviewees would say their lines, rehearse a script, plot out a carefully staged mise-en-scène, re-staged for the camera in a mode not of remembrance but of *performing ideology* (though of course memory stages its own show). Althusser's notion of the ideological is useful here; see L. Althusser (2001) *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press. For Althusser the domain of ideology, which mediates 'the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence' (2001: 109), is not so much the realm of theory, but rather of practice, that is to say, of performance: ritual re-production, an endless going through the motions, rehearsing the gestures – giving salutes, bowing in deference, genuflecting, drawing machetes, tying up bodies, shaping words.

13 See J. L. Austin (1975) *How to Do Things With Words*, second edition. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. While Austin excludes the later from the former, perhaps they are always already implicated. He argues that performative speech consists of utterances that actually effect something, with prime examples being wedding vows and other promises, such as bets. See also, J. Butler (1993) *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*. New York: Routledge, and J. Butler (2004) *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. New York: Verso: Butler expands Austin's theory, arguing that 'reality' is always already constituted by the performative effects of discourse; in J. Butler (1990) 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', in S.-E. Case (ed.) *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, she builds on Foucault's understanding of discourse as constituting the objects it names and describes, arguing that reality is not a given but is continually created 'through language, gesture, and all manner of symbolic social sign' (1990: 270). As she explains, 'Within [Austin's] speech act theory, a performative is that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names' (1993: 13). A speech act can produce that which it names, however, only by *iterating* a previously established discourse. Any speech act is therefore always a citation of a previous discursive formation. Butler also cites Derrida who indicates performative utterances' dependence on the iterability of discourse: 'Could a performative utterance succeed if its formulation did not repeat a "coded" or iterable utterance, or in other words, if the formula I pronounce in order to open a meeting, launch a ship or a marriage were not identifiable as conforming with an iterable model, if it were not then identifiable in some way as a "citation"?' – J. Derrida, J. (1988) 'Signature, Event, Context', in G. Graff (ed.) *Limited, Inc.* Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 61–2. Butler expands both speech act theory and Foucauldian accounts of discourse by tracing the ways in which discourses *perform* social reality in precisely the same way as speech acts. By continually *rehearsing* the conventions and ideologies of the social world around us, we enact – or manifest and conjure – that reality. Thus does Butler argue that 'performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate "act", but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names' (1993: 2). She goes on to suggest how performative citations of existing discourses can either, on the one

hand, reinscribe and rely existing discursive formations, or else trouble them by citing them out of context, constituting a denaturalisation, an interruption which she terms "subversive resignification" (see 1993: 226–7).

- 14 'Performative utterance will, for example, be in a peculiar way hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage' – J. L. Austin (1975) *How to Do Things With Words*, second edition. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 22.

15 See also Joshua Oppenheimer's contribution to this volume on Errol Morris.

16 See also John Yoo's 'Torture Memos'. Penned while working at the Office of Legal Counsel, these memos make clear that the 'abuses' at Abu Ghrih, Bagram, Guantanamo, or the archipelago of CIA 'Black Sites' and client torture centres were of course not aberrations, precisely not 'scandals', but part of a systematic regime at a prison/torture network instituted with the active complicity of the very highest levels of the US administration. The torture techniques were not born of the crazed imaginations a few low-level individuals, but 'scientifically' detailed procedures designed with the support of psychologists, physicians, lawyers and 'skilled interrogators'. From 'Phoenix' (Vietnam) to 'Condor' (Latin America), the systematic nature of US-executed or supported terror is well documented. See, for instance, 'Kubark Counterintelligence Interrogation (1963) <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB27/01-01.htm>; accessed 14 April 2012, and 'Human Resource Exploitation Training Manual – 1983' (1983) <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB27/01-01.htm>. It should be noted that the Indonesian genocide was carried out with significant US (and UK) support (see footnote 3, above). Though the systematic terror of the massacres was downplayed for an international public, that very terror was deliberately conjured by the CIA six years later, when, going after Allende, they sent key figures on the left and the ultra-conservative right alike, cards, each day for a month, reading 'Diakarta se acera.' – Jakarta is coming. See . D. Scott (1985) 'The United States and the Overthrow of Sukarno, 1965–1967', *Pacific Affairs*, 58, Summer, 239–64, and D. Freed and F. S. Landis (1980) *Death in Washington*. Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill, 104–5. Here, the CIA invokes that which it did and denied as a spectre; or rather, as a spectral refractor, through which left and right are rendered as spectral but lethal threats to each other. The massacres are deliberately produced as spectral the better to serve as an instrument of terror. And thus word of the systematic terror must be excluded from official history, but kept in alive in a liminal, or covert, circuit of discourse. Thus terror is produced as spectre. See also L. Mira (1985) 'The G30S/PKI symbol is the major obstacle to democracy', *Tapol Bulletin*, 71, September.

17 See R. Schneider (2005) 'Still Living: Performance, Photography, Reenactment' paper delivered at Roehampton University, 28 February, 17–18.

18 Publicly, perpetrators of the massacres are of course not celebrated for their role in killing people, but rather for their participation in a generic struggle to save the nation from communism.

19 All these claims are made in recorded interviews with Inong Syah and Amir Hasan, or can be found in Amir Hasan's memoir.

20 J. Butler (1990) 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', in S.-E. Case (ed.) *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 271.

21 M. Taussig (1987) *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 122; emphasis added.

22 When Amir described his film project to the *bupati* (district head), he was told that he should not adapt *Embun Berdarah* into a film because another film, *Pengkhianatan G30S PKI*, can no longer be screened now that Suharto is not in power. This is an interesting and perhaps

disingenuous response, because G30S/PKI certainly can be screened; it simply is no longer mandatory viewing.

23 There are many hours of footage documenting the workshops wherein Amr makes these adaptations.

24 The disciplinary encounter is wholly figurative, and not like the literal exchange of 'theatre/archaeology'.

25 S. Cohen (2001) *States of Denial: Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 96–7.

26 The PKI joined the nationalist revolution, Indonesia's war of independence from the Dutch, from 1945–49, but its fortunes changed dramatically during the so-called Madiun Rebellion of 1948. No matter what one's interpretation of the events at Madiun, the PKI was brutally crushed by the Indonesian military, with the summary execution of eleven PKI leaders, including Musso, and the imprisonment of 36,000 PKI members and 'sympathizers'; G. J. Pauker (1967) *Indonesia in 1966: The Year of Transition*. Rand Corporation report number P-3525. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation. The movement behind the failed coup attempt of 1965 was originally known as Gestok (or Gerakan Satu Oktober, or October 1st Movement), but its name was quickly changed by Suharto to Gestapu (or Gerakan September 30) to evoke the spectre of the Nazi Gestapo. Officers leading the campaign against the PKI at Madiun included General Haris Nasution and Kemal Idris, both of whom took leading roles in the 1965–66 genocide and invoked Madiun as proof of PKI treachery: 'Nasution ... called for the total extinction of the PKI' "down to its very roots so there will be no third Madiun" – P. D. Scott (1985) 'The United States and the Overthrow of Sukarno, 1965–1967', *Pacific Affairs*, 58, Summer, 247.

27 S. Cohen (2001) *States of Denial: Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 91; emphasis added. See also M. Ignatieff (1997) *The Warrior's Honor: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience*. New York: Henry Holt/Metropolitan Books.

MISUNDERSTANDING IMAGES: STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE, ERROL MORRIS

Joshua Oppenheimer

Errol Morris, a documentary film director, lives and works in Cambridge, Massachusetts. *Standard Operating Procedure* was produced in 2008 in the USA.

Errol Morris: Part of the problem with talking about images, photographic images in particular, and violence, is that people really don't understand photography to begin with. They don't understand the effect that images have on us, how we deal with images, how we often make inappropriate inferences from images. Probably because when our brains were put together by natural selection, sight was given this privileged place among the senses. We think that having seen something – even if it's in a photograph – that we've seen some piece of reality that we know what we're looking at, and we can make inferences from it accordingly. My movie *Standard Operating Procedure* is about how we can't make those kinds of inferences. That there are all kinds of hidden assumptions in photographs – and in the process of looking at photographs. I'm sure that you've read about so-called 'selection effects', where we think that having seen a part of the whole, that we're seeing everything. And the Abu Ghraib photographs are a perfect example of that sort of thing. Because we think we've seen Abu Ghraib, and we think that we've seen the crimes that were committed at Abu Ghraib, when in fact what we've seen is a couple of hundred images which were taken during a very restricted period of time on Tier 1A of the prison during the fall of 2003. And the real story of Abu Ghraib is in no way contained in those images. Nor do those images contain the worst of the violence. Nor do those images tell you the role of the Defense Department and the White House and the policies with respect to