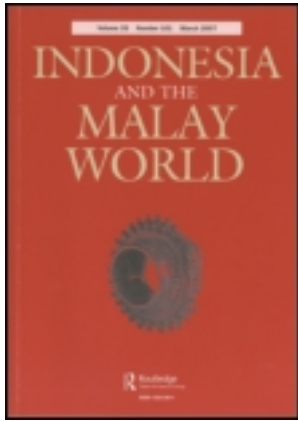


This article was downloaded by: [University of Hamburg]

On: 13 September 2012, At: 03:15

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Indonesia and the Malay World

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cimw20>

DAKWAH BY THE PEN

Monika Arnez

Version of record first published: 16 Mar 2009.

To cite this article: Monika Arnez (2009): DAKWAH BY THE PEN, *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 37:107, 45-64

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13639810902743040>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae, and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

Monika Arnez

DAKWAH BY THE PEN

Reading Helvy Tiana Rosa's *Bukavu**

Islamic fiction has become increasingly popular since the 1980s, a development that is related to the Islamic revival of that decade. Islamic narratives, aimed at Muslim teenagers, have proliferated in the last three decades. Helvy Tiana Rosa, a productive writer of Islamic fiction and founder of the Pen Circle Forum (Forum Lingkar Pena, FLP), is one of the most popular figures of this literary movement. This article explores the following questions: what functions do the female characters in Helvy Tiana Rosa's short fiction have in representations of conflict in Muslim societies, and how can they be viewed as models for the readership? What role do representations of the female body, beauty and purity play in the selected narratives? To what extent are Islamic values presented through the female characters of the stories and how are they related to FLP's declared mission to proselytise by the pen?

Islamic narratives and teenage reading since the 1980s

Islamic narratives gained popularity in Indonesia in the 1980s, a period which was marked by the revitalisation of Islamic thought with the development of Islamic revivalism and Javanist decline (Hefner 1997: 90). At that time an increasing number of Muslim intellectuals and students engaged in proselytising. One reason for this development was the Indonesian government's expansion of institutional resources for Islamic education and *dakwah* (Feillard 1997: 141–49).¹ As one instrument of *dakwah*, these youth groups generated Islamic teenage reading (*sastra remaja Islami*) as a form of Islamic literature exclusively printed under the labels *novel Islami* (Islamic novels), *fiksi Islam* (Islamic fiction) or *sastra Islam* (Islamic literature). In Stefan Danerek's words, the rise of this genre 'is intertwined with the role of proselytizing and activism initiated in the 1980s by young student intellectuals' (Danerek 2006: 40).

*I would like to thank Edwin Wieringa, Peter Pink and two anonymous IMW reviewers for comments on an earlier version of this article as well as Andrew Buckler for co-editing this article. However, the responsibility for this article is my own.

¹This article does not aim to give a comprehensive account of various aspects that provide evidence of Islamic revival since the 1980s; I only include the actors, Muslim intellectuals and students, relevant to this article.

Islamic fiction targeting a young readership has only recently become popular.² The most prominent example in Indonesia is the best-selling novel *Ayat-ayat cinta* (Verses of love) by Habiburrahman El Shirazy, a graduate from Al-Azhar University in Cairo and writer of the Pen Circle Forum (Forum Lingkar Pena, FLP), who was active in its Middle Eastern branch. First published in 2004, *Ayat-ayat cinta* reached its 35th reprint in March 2008 when it sold 400,000 copies, excluding an unknown number of pirated ones. Its film version had an audience of more than 4 million (Widodo 2008).

Although the success of this novel is exceptional and has led Amrih Widodo to talk about an '*Ayat-ayat cinta* fever', narratives addressing a young readership have also attracted many older readers and filled Indonesian bookshops. Islamic fiction produced by writers of FLP and the magazine *Annida* has been popular for several years. These texts have been explicitly published under the label 'Islamic teenage reading'.³ Narratives published by Mizan have also been frequently labelled Islamic teenage reading. It is disputed among critics whether the term *sastra remaja Islam* is suitable for the narratives published in this category. Danerek postulates that much of the literature published as *novel Islami* or *fiksi Islam* has an 'adolescent flavour' and is accordingly being published as youth literature (Danerek 2006: 40), but he does not define the 'adolescent flavour' more accurately in this context. Maman Mahayana asserts that it is not always correct to consider these texts as youth reading, suggesting that the target readership is not necessarily young people (Mahayana 2005). He identifies *sastra remaja Islam* as a marketing label, which serves to sell Islamic narratives especially to a young readership.

Works published under this label often serve a didactic purpose, encouraging its readership to live in line with Islamic teachings and to protect Muslim souls from worldly sins. They frequently employ religious symbolism and suggest ways to be a good Muslim, for example, by presenting the characters as models of modesty, chastity and benevolence. Many of the characters described are young Muslims in their teens or early twenties. This also applies to fictional texts written by Helvy Tiana Rosa (b. 1970 in Medan, henceforth referred to as Helvy), a popular writer publishing so-called Islamic teenage reading, whose short fiction from her latest book *Bukavu* (2008) will be the focus of analysis here.

As far as literary criticism is concerned, it must be said that not even a small percentage of the genre *sastra remaja Islam* has been appraised, probably because there has been a flood of such books.⁴ This lack of criticism means that appraisal of Islamic teenage fiction is often based on feedback among its readers, rather than on profound critique. The prestigious awards given to several Islamic narratives have probably helped to increase their circulation. For instance, Asma Nadia's book *Rembulan di mata ibu* (Moon in mother's eyes), published by Mizan in 2001, was awarded 'best national teenage book' by Adhi Karya IKAPI (Ikatan Penerbit Indonesia, Indonesian Publishers Association). In 2002 Adhi Karya IKAPI chose Asma Nadia's book *Dialog dua layar*

²Islamic narratives started booming in the early 2000s and according to Arndt Graf (2007: 165), these books formed 20% of the market.

³For instance, *Titian Pelangi* (2000) and *Hari-hari cinta Tiara* (2001) by Helvy Tiana Rosa appeared under the label *sastra remaja Islam*. Examples of other books published under this label in the early 2000s are *Serenade biru Dinda* (2001) and *Rembulan di mata ibu* (2001) by Asma Nadia, *Penantian Mei Siang* (2001) by Himmah Tirmikoara and *Impian terindah* (2001) by Salman Iskandar.

⁴Lack of criticism is also a problem for other genres of Indonesian literature.

(Dialogue of two sails), published by Mizan that year, as one of the three best youth books. The image of the literature in question, however, is not necessarily positive; in certain circles it is stigmatised as an idle pastime which ought to be condemned. Furthermore, critics point to the weakness of consciously Islamic narratives in that its authors would rather lead prayers than write literature (Holid 2008).

There is agreement among critics that Islamic teenage reading has gained importance at around the same time that another literary trend developed in the aftermath of the Suharto era, the so-called *sastra wangi* or *sastrawangi* ('perfumed / fragrant literature'). In this context Watson has correctly observed that Islamic youth reading is sometimes seen as an antithesis of *sastra wangi* (Watson 2005: 69), a term invented by the mass media to refer to a new 'generation' of writers who are young urban women. *Sastra wangi* novels often have urban settings, and are associated with women's liberation and the 'new assertiveness they are showing in contemporary Indonesia', especially since the fall of Suharto (Watson 2005: 69). The term *sastra wangi*, in the media mainly used for fictional texts by the authors Ayu Utami, Djenar Maesa Ayu and Dewi Lestari,⁵ is disputed by critics and authors alike and has generated controversial debate in Indonesia. Several literary critics and authors agree that *sastra wangi* is an unsuitable term for the new generation of women's writers because it is pejorative in referring to the authors' looks rather than appraising the narratives. As Pamela Allen points out, for example, the term *sastra wangi* is largely now used in dismissive tones. She argues that narratives written by these women are perceived as a rather insubstantial form of pop culture, which relies on the good looks and marketing prowess of the writers and their publishers and not on literary merit (Allen 2007: 25).⁶ The reaction to *sastra wangi* is divided. Many critics praise the authors and their texts for their originality, but criticise them for overemphasising sexuality as a theme (Cahyono 2003). Medy Loekito argues that the so-called *sastra wangi* texts violate any notion of morality, mostly because of the open and at times vulgar descriptions of sexuality (Loekito 2003). Helvy, one of the founders of FLP, shares Medy Loekito's opinion on so-called *sastra wangi* texts. She takes a critical stance towards this new literary phenomenon, asserting that sexual mores and decency are desirable for women, rather than a female quest for emancipation expressed through descriptions of sexuality. Presenting a counter model to *sastra wangi*, Helvy explains that one of the characteristics of Islamic narratives is that they do not raise sexual relationships as a topic or depict the attractiveness of women's bodies or immorality (Rosa 2003: 6). She mentions this aspect of Islamic fiction after having argued that love – of God, fellow Muslims and all living creatures – is an important characteristic of Islamic literature. Her clear rejection of raising sexual relationships as a topic in Islamic fiction should be read as an attempt to provide the reader with a clearer sense of what the readership should *not* expect of Islamic literature rather than the author's admission that her definition regarding love of God and humanity in her essay is too wide, as Diah Ariani Arimbi argues (2006: 182).

To clarify what the readership *should* expect of Islamic fiction, Helvy asserts in the same essay that Islamic literature which is universal in truth, justice, and humanity,

⁵Other writers such as Fira Basuki, Dinar Rahayu and Nova Riyanti Yusuf have also been labelled *sastra wangi* writers, but Ayu Utami, Djenar Maesa Ayu and Dewi Lestari are more frequently mentioned in the media in the context of the so-called *sastra wangi*.

⁶See also Laksmi 2004: 206.

ideally has the function to ‘take part in overcoming the destruction of *akidah*⁷ and *akhlak*⁸ of its community’ (Rosa 1997: 7). Furthermore, she states that literature is one pillar of *dakwah* and that an author writing Islamic literature will first and foremost position himself or herself as a *da’i*, someone who proselytises and spreads Islam, to improve behaviour and thought in line with Islamic beliefs (ibid).

Helvy is a very productive writer, having published about 40 books, most of which are collections of short stories.⁹ She started writing poetry as a child and began to write short stories as a teenager. Her poems are included in the anthologies *Sajadah kata* (Prayer mat of words, 2002) and *Graffiti gratitude* (2001). Some of her fictional works include *Ketika mas gagah pergi* (When brother handsome departed, 1997), a collection of short stories about religious values, and the short stories on Palestine *Hingga batu bicara* (Until the stones speak, 1999). Her latest collection is *Bukavu* (2008). Several of her short stories have been translated into English, Arabic, French, Japanese and German. In addition to fiction, Helvy has also published some essay collections. Among these are *Bukan negeri dongeng: kisah nyata para pejuang keadilan* (Not a country of fairy-tales: true stories of fighters for justice, 2003), which deals particularly with religious education and philosophical aspects of Islam, and *Segenggam gumam: esai-esai tentang sastra dan kepenulisan* (A bit of mumbling: essays about literature and writing, 2003), which grapples with topics such as publishing, writing, literary criticism and the book industry.

Helvy founded Teater Bening, a women’s Islamic theatre at the Faculty of Literature of Universitas Indonesia (UI), Jakarta, in 1990. She has written several plays and staged their performances in centres for arts and literature in Jakarta such as Taman Ismail Marzuki and Gedung Kesenian. Helvy was Secretary of the Jakarta Arts Council (DKJ) in 2003 and a member of its literary committee from 2003 to 2006. She obtained her master’s degree from UI in 2004. For the past few years she has been teaching Indonesian literature at Universitas Islam Negeri in Jakarta. She has won various competitions for reading, poetry and short stories, at both the provincial and national level. Her poem *Fisabilillah* came third in the National Competition of Islamic Poetry Writing. The literary journal *Horison* selected her short story ‘Jaring-jaring merah’ (The red net) as one of the best narratives for the period 1990 to 2000. The anthology *Lelaki kabut dan boneka* (Dolls and the man of mist, 2002) won the Pena Award in 2002. She received an honorary award as ‘Tokoh Perbukuan Islam’ from the committee of the Islamic book fair (IBF), implemented by the IKAPI in 2006, and won the prize for the Appreciation for the Achievement of Indonesian Women by Tabloid Nova and the Indonesian Ministry for Women’s Empowerment in 2004.

One of her most influential activities since 1997 is her engagement with FLP, which she co-founded with her sister Asma Nadia and Mutmainah at the Ukhuwah Islamiyah mosque, UI, on 22 February 1997. Helvy was chosen as the forum’s general chairperson and led the organisation until 2005 when Mochammad Irfan Hidayatullah replaced her. The following sections give an account of FLP’s aims¹⁰ to place the author’s literary work in a wider framework.

⁷Faith.

⁸Ethics.

⁹Helvy said she does not have the patience to write novels. Personal interview with the author, 19 September 2006.

¹⁰The role of the magazine *Annida* is examined here as it publishes many FLP writers.

Forum Lingkar Pena

With more than 5,000 members in 23 provinces in Indonesia, 8 branches abroad and sub-branches in more than 100 cities in Indonesia, FLP has started to play an important role on the Indonesian literary scene. Publications by FLP writers – more than 500 books and several thousand short stories – were well received by readers. Over the last decade, FLP has become a magnet, especially for young Muslim (prospective) authors.¹¹

Helvy explains that the underlying motive for establishing FLP is to foster the interest of young Muslims in reading and writing. FLP's motto is 'devotion, work and meaningfulness' (Aminudin 2005). Its aspirations according to its mission statement (Rosa 2003: 44, 45) are for FLP to:

1. be a forum for writers and potential writers
2. improve the quality and productivity of members' writings, as a contribution to society
3. help to create an objective and responsible media image
4. help to improve the reading and writing culture, especially for the younger Indonesian generation
5. become an organisation that always creates new writers, from regions throughout Indonesia.

Furthermore, FLP regards 'writing as one channel of the ummah's enlightenment' (Helvy 2003: 44). Helvy sees the FLP as an organisation to 'shape new writers', spread Islamic values through narratives and to give prospective and young writers the opportunity to gather and share ideas, and to write literature.¹² She wants literature to move people, to 'set something in motion'.¹³ The writer also states that she often travels to various Indonesian regions to encourage potential local authors to write Islamic fiction and emphasises that she does not receive any remuneration for this as her reward is in discovering new talents.¹⁴

Helvy's personal commitment is part of FLP's *dakwah*. Her aim is to recruit new members for FLP, preparing young writers concerned with *dakwah* issues for the challenges of globalisation. Another method of proselytising is FLP's involvement in Islamic study groups called *Rohis* (*Kerohanian Islam*, Islamic spirituality) found in several schools and universities, including at UI, where branches of FLP were established. FLP uses the internet for contact with members, through blogs, websites and mailing lists, and works with radio stations such as Radio Tarbiyah. It has also established *rumah cahaya* (houses of enlightenment) in many places, for example in Depok, south Jakarta, which, among other things review short stories and motivate members to write, organise writing workshops and talks by religious teachers to enrich its members' Islamic knowledge (Latifah 2006: 23). *Rumah cahaya* often provide libraries

¹¹The best-known book published by an FLP writer to date is *Ayat-ayat cinta* by Habiburrahman El Shirazy.

¹²Author's interview with Helvy Tiana Rosa, 19 September 2006.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

for the local community and organise activities for children, such as competitions in Qur'anic reading¹⁵.

A declared FLP aim is *dakwah bil qalam*, *dakwah* by the pen. For instance, Ali Margosim, the head of FLP Semarang, writes: 'Dakwah bilqalam is the responsibility of all of us. With or without a forum called FLP we have to fulfil this agenda, also in accord with the challenges of the *globalization era*'.¹⁶ A prominent author of FLP, Gola Gong, also stresses *dakwah bil qalam*.¹⁷ According to Mardinata, FLP chairman in West Sumatra, *dakwah bil hal* (proselytising through good example), is the most efficient form of proselytisation although *dakwah bil qalam* is fairly effective. He admits that there are not many *da'i*, as few have the gift of proselytising by the pen (Mardinata 2008).

FLP and *Annida*

FLP has since June 2000 been associated with the Ummi Group which publishes the magazines *Annida*, *Ummi* and *Saksi*. Soon after its foundation FLP had an effective outlet for its authors through *Annida*, the Ummi Group's magazine for teenage girls. First published in 1991 by PT Kismus Bina Tadzkia, it targets young Muslims as its contents are predominantly Islamic short stories that stress ethics and identity (Rijal 2005: 430). Moving away from previously overt missionary articles of the Ummi Group, *Annida* uses fiction as an instrument for proselytising as it was considered more likely to engage its readers (Latifah 2006: 6). Its circulation of almost 100,000 copies each month is proof of its receptivity (Rosa 2003: 43).

It is likely that Helvy contributed to FLP's success by fostering its cooperation with *Annida*. The author was *Annida*'s editor-in-chief for ten years (1991–2001), and she was still in close contact with the editors when she co-founded FLP. Through *Annida*, FLP authors became well known in many Indonesian regions, which facilitated the expansion of its network. According to Helvy, 75% of *Annida* writers, mostly women, have since joined FLP (*ibid.*).

Annida clearly distances itself from other publications for teenagers, such as *Gadis* and *Anita Cemerlang*, which are deemed 'un-Islamic' and unfit for Muslim teenagers. *Annida* openly declares its mission to challenge fashion magazines of un-Islamic women.¹⁸ It proudly presents itself as an alternative to other secular teen magazines, arguing that it rejects a hedonist, immoral, western lifestyle and is distinct from 'rival fashionable magazines of *jahiliyah* [ignorant, un-Islamic] women' from the outset (*ibid.*).

Whilst it is seen as an alternative to secular magazines, *Annida* also attracts readers who steer clear of magazines such *Sabili* and *Hidayatullah* published by Muslim

¹⁵ Interview with the local Fatayat NU chairwoman in north Jakarta, 02 April 2008.

¹⁶ <<http://www.dudung.net/artikel-islami/bunga-rampai-dakwah-bilqalam.html>> Accessed 20 November 2008.

¹⁷ <<http://keluargapengarang.wordpress.com/2007/04/09/tujuan-menulis-isi-tulisan-buku-harian-dan-riset-1/>> Accessed 20 November 2008.

¹⁸ Its advertisement appeared in the back cover of *Annida* 2 (1) in 1991 and it was cited in 'Ensiklopedia', *Annida* 11 (1): 30–31 in 2001.

hardliners. Syamsul Rijal, who categorises *Annida* as an Islamist magazine, states that unlike the more radical *Sabili* or *Saksi*, *Annida* does not criticise other religions, but rather it 'encourages its readers to help Muslim Palestinians against Zionist Israel' (Rijal 2005: 430).¹⁹ However, as with *Sabili* and *Saksi*, *Annida* strongly advocates shari'a law but it does so in a less aggressive way, in fact, as a 'friendly whisper' (*bisikan bersahabat*) (Latifah 2006: 5). As Latifah observes, *Annida* considers shari'a as its most important principle (Latifah 2006: 7). The magazine endorses an Islamic code of conduct for Muslim youth including Islamic dress codes such as the *jilbab* for women, and does not support friendship between young Muslim men and women. In the preface of *Nida Cool* (a special edition of *Annida*, also known as *Nida*) in 2003 the editor writes: 'The edition of this year's NIDA COOL is: Let's be peaceful! It certainly has become a tradition that the topics Nida proposes for you are out of the ordinary – when other magazines give tips for dating, Nida promotes: No dating or having a boy or girl friend. When other media all chat about mystery stories, Nida communicates: you shall only fear Allah.'²⁰ Several sources indicate that *Annida* and FLP are close to the Justice and Prosperity Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, PKS). Its website, *kaderpks*, suggests such a connection. Its column 'gathering the potential of the cadres and the ummat' describes the activities of FLP.²¹ Furthermore, the PKS website has disseminated information about the publications of FLP authors several times, and a number of blogs mention FLP as a PKS wing. Helvy is close to PKS, as the following examples reveal. In 'Taman Karya Pipiet Senja' (Garden of Pipiet Senja's works), a girl, Teteh, asked Helvy to put her in touch with a *liqoh* (prayer gathering) Helvy asked Teteh if she minded that the *liqoh* was with PKS.²² Teteh furthermore states that she was impressed by the increasing number of young FLP writers, who according to her, 'strengthen the line of warriors who fight for Islam with FLP's pen'.²³ Helvy has also been involved in PKS-related activities, such as establishing libraries for children throughout Indonesia in July 2007, which had the mottos 'Increasing Indonesian children's interest in reading through the library movement' and 'Hoping to become an inspiration and departure point for combating illiteracy of children all over Indonesia' (PKS Jakarta: 2007). In the same source, she is honoured as an ambassador of the libraries owned and managed by the Justice Post for Women (Pos Wanita Keadilan, Pos WK)²⁴ in Indonesia because of her attempt to collect one million books that would lead people to Islam (*ibid*). Dewi Candraningrum (2005) has noted that almost all members of FLP are also members of PKS.

¹⁹According to Syamsul Rijal (2005: 436) the magazine *Sabili* was a pioneer of the Islamist media in the post-Suharto era, which has proliferated since 1998 and now include *Annida*, *Ummi*, *Saksi*, *Tarbawi*, *Al Izzah*, *Darul Islam*, *Salafy*, *Percikan Iman*, *Hayatul Iman*, *Gema Islam*, *El-Fata*, and *Islamia*.

²⁰Fajri, Dian Yasmina. 'Sapa Nida', *Annida Cool* edition, October 2003. Quoted in Latifah 2006.

²¹*Kaderpks* <<http://www.kaderpks.net/modules/wordpress/2007/10/11/bagaimana-dengan-partai-harapan-rakyat-flp-underbouw-pks-bikin.html>> Accessed 25 February 2008.

²²*Pipietsenja* <http://pipietsenja.multiply.com/journal/item/53/Kenapa_Harus_Fiksi_Islami_3> Accessed 5 February 2009.

²³*Ibid*.

²⁴The Justice Post for Women, managed by the women's division of PKS, is a social programme aimed at empowering society.

Some scholars feel that PKS, which made significant gains in the 2004 general election when it won more than 7% of the total votes, has a double agenda: one focusing on good works, education, anti-corruption and good governance, and the other on enforcing Islamic purity, internal discipline, and shari'a.²⁵ Susanne Schröter (2007:19) maintains that the PKS tries to create Muslims who are keen to serve God and the ummah and to lead a life free of sins with the aim of creating a caliphate. Furthermore, PKS calls for the enforcement of morality and has played an especially active role among Indonesian parties in formulating the draft of the pornography bill, arguing that pornography damages national morality (Trotter 2006: 42). Though the connection between PKS and FLP need not necessarily imply that FLP shares these aims, FLP's closeness to *Annida* would suggest such a conclusion.

Women in conflict: representations of the female body, beauty and purity

This section examines representations of women drawing on the female protagonists in three short stories published in 2008 in *Bukavu*: 'Kivu Bukavu', 'Jaring-jaring merah' and 'Peri Biru'.²⁶ The first two stories aroused my curiosity because both relate female beauty to spiritual experience, mainly in the context of existing national conflicts. They offer a spiritual access to female beauty, discussing it in terms of purity, piety and abandonment of the female body. 'Peri Biru' is interesting as in addition to offering a different viewpoint on disembodiment from the other two narratives, it is in my view a prominent illustration of FLP's *dakwah* strategy.

In trying to answer questions on the role of female protagonists in representations of conflict in Muslim societies and how they can be regarded as models for the readers, I focus on analysing representations of the female body, beauty and purity in the selected narratives. Additional questions include the Islamic values that are presented through the female protagonists and how they relate to FLP's *dakwah*.

Helvy's *Bukavu* (2008) includes narratives written between 1992 and 2005. As in *Lelaki kabut dan boneka*, most narratives in *Bukavu* are fictional representations of real conflicts at the national and transnational level. The national conflicts woven into her stories include the struggle between GAM (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, Free Aceh Movement) and Tentera Nasional Indonesia (TNI, Indonesia's military) in Aceh, North Sumatra; the violence between Dayaks and Madurese in North Kalimantan; the killing of Muslims in Ambon, the Moluccas; clashes between the pro-independence and pro-integration movements in East Timor; and the terrorist attacks in Indonesia. Transnational conflicts that she draws on include the struggle over land between Israel and Palestine, the Srebrenica massacre in 1995, and the tension between the Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda. The latter is the subject of the story 'Kivu Bukavu,' which is set in Kivu, a province in Eastern Zaire.

'Kivu Bukavu' is based on the Rwandan genocide in 1994. Helvy wrote it a year after the genocide. The story takes as its starting point the flight of the Tutsi to

²⁵See for instance Abuza (2006: 25); Schröter (2007: 19).

²⁶'Jaring-jaring merah' was previously published in the anthology *Lelaki kabut dan boneka* (Bandung: Syaamil Cipta Media, 2002).

Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo, which followed the violence in Rwanda that began in April 1994 and continued until July 1994. When the plane of Rwandan president Juvénal Habyarimana was shot down on 6 April 1994, his government blamed the Tutsi who were unrepresented in government, and considered opponents by default. The consequence was the biggest genocide since the Holocaust (von Horn 2004). In the massacre that ensued, between half a million to one million people lost their lives. In about 100 days the Hutu majority killed about 75% of the Tutsi minority living in Rwanda. The perpetrators were the Rwandan army, the national police and the civil bureaucracy. Hutu militias, Interahamwe and Impuzamugambi, and a large segment of Hutu civilians participated in the slaughter, triggering an exodus of some three million refugees to neighbouring countries.

The narrator in 'Kivu Bukavu' (1995) is Lake Kivu, one of the largest lakes in Africa, straddling the border between Zaire and Rwanda. The lake is presented as a contemporary witness of the crimes against the Tutsi. It describes the ragged condition of the thousands of fugitives crossing the border to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and their desperation as a result of losing dozens of family members in just one night (p. 194). It further points out how the hatred between Tutsi and Hutu in Zaire culminated in President Mobutu Sese Seko's decision to expel the Tutsi from Zaire.

The leitmotif of the story, the repeated reference to Ernest Hemingway's praise of Lake Kivu: 'Kivu, you are the most beautiful . . .', plays an important role.²⁷ This praise functions as a means to contrast wishfulness from reality, drawing the readers' attention to the discrepancy between the past, when Lake Kivu was still beautiful, and the narrated present, when dead bodies are thrown into the lake or are piled up around it. The narrator implies that in 1954, when Hemingway praised Lake Kivu's beauty, the relationship between Rwanda and Zaire was still intact, while in the narrated present its beauty is destroyed because of the war between the two countries.

Although the lake remembers Hemingway's praise positively, longing for him to repeat it, it increasingly feels that it is no longer appropriate:

Ah, sungguh aku rindu suara itu. Namun adakah artinya? Sejak dua tahun yang lalu itu, keindahanku mulai memudar. Aku mengharap pelangi, tetapi di dekatku hanya mayat-mayat yang berserakan. Sampah-sampah bertebaran, air mata duka dan riak percikan darah . . .
(p. 195)

Ah, I have really longed for that voice. But does it have any meaning? In the last two years my beauty has started fading. I hoped for a rainbow, but there are only scattered bodies close by. Debris is spread all over, tears of grief and ripples of blood-tainted water. . .

²⁷*Kivu, kau yang terindah.* In two places the statement is: *Kivu, kau indah* (p. 197, 198). As in other details in this short story, this leitmotif is based on historical facts, although the year Hemingway praised the beauty of Lake Kivu, was 1954, not 1957 (p. 202). Hemingway was on his African tour and made the following comment when he saw the lake: 'We landed at a very fine airstrip at the town of Costermansville situated on Lake Kivu . . . The lake is one of the most beautiful that I have ever seen.' (Fedarko et al. 1996).

The destruction of the lake's beauty is related to the decreasing purity of its water. Not only is the lake unsightly from the piles of corpses and debris but the water is contaminated.²⁸ The perpetrators of violence 'poison' the water, the essence of life and symbol of purity in Islam, by causing bloodshed. It is especially these criminals' impure state of mind which the lake questions, recognising the destruction of peaceful human interaction. The lake becomes the legitimate authority in the text to punish human beings for their horrible crimes. Its wrath leads it to whip up the water, causing trees to fall and fulfilling God's judgment upon the atrocities:

*Wahai Manusia, lihatlah Sang Maha Penguasa! AmarahNya adalah amuk semesta!
Mengapa selalu saja kalian rencanakan pertumpahan darah? (p. 197)*

O, Mankind, behold God Almighty! It is His wrath that makes nature run amok!
Why is it that you always plan bloodshed?

By directly turning to the readers and reminding them that human beings are responsible for their deeds, the narrator becomes God's mouthpiece. Italicising and thus visualising the narrator's command to see God Almighty and His punishment is a stylistic device used to further emphasise the message to readers to stand up for peace, refrain from violence and to be fearful of God. These issues are presented through a black woman, a model of peace and *taqwa* (fear of God). She carries the message of peace in her prayers, where she pleads to God to eliminate envy among human beings, which she recognises as reasons for violence, and asks Him for His guidance, the eternity of Islam and friendship (p. 201).

The woman is the personification of spiritual beauty. The narrator calls her *dara* (Indonesian: virgin, maiden, young girl), not *perempuan* or *wanita*, which are commonly used, explicitly pointing to the fact that she is not yet married, and thus young and virginal. In contrast to the lake, the beauty of which is destroyed by waste, corpses and poisoned water, this woman's inner beauty is extraordinary. Although she is raggedly dressed in clothes smeared with blood and a torn veil, the narrator compares her to a beautiful rainbow (p. 199), and on the following page it uses Hemingway's words ('you are the most beautiful', p. 200), to praise her beauty.

The kind of beauty implied relates to *ibadah* (worship of God), and *ikhlas* (sincere devotion). The narrator describes the woman's cleanliness, the very foundation of *ibadah* and *ikhlas*, when highlighting how she ritually washes face, hands and feet before praying (*berwudhu*) to reach purification (*taharah*). This ritual cleanliness is related to her spiritual strength, which stands in stark contrast to her body, enfeebled by hunger. The woman is still able to keep on praying when surrounded by corpses despite her physical weakness; her spiritual strength and endurance make her angelic.

In the course of the story, the narrator recounts how the young woman's body is slowly fading away and how she finally dies. Just as she is about to receive a piece of bread from aid workers 'with fierce faces' (p. 200) she falls under the stampede of ravenous refugees who are trying to get to the food. Abandoning her body becomes an opportunity for the woman to escape unbearable reality and to entirely entrust

²⁸The water of Lake Kivu is also 'poisonous' because of emerging toxic gases.

herself to God. In this way the narrator emphasises the woman's spiritual beauty and purity, contrasting it with the sin of inhumanity. The narrator's reaction to inhumanity is a key scene of the short story:

'Kivu, kau yang terindah,' bisik Hemmingway. Aku ingin menangis, namun danau tak dapat menangis. [. . .] Mungkin keindahan yang tersisa hanyalah, sesosok jasad yang beristirahat di sini. Seorang dara tulus dalam husnul khotimah. Orang-orang membuang mayatnya pada tubuhku tanpa upacara kematian (p. 202)

'Kivu, you are the most beautiful,' whispers Hemmingway. I want to cry, but a lake cannot cry. [. . .] Perhaps the only beauty left is a body resting here. A sincere virgin in *husnul khotimah* [happy end]. People throw her corpse on my body without a funeral ceremony.

The story reveals that the consequences of the conflict between Tutsi and Hutu leave the protagonist with no other alternative than to find peace in the afterlife. *Husnul khotimah* implies that the virgin is redeemed in death. She does not die painfully but enters Heaven peacefully and joyfully, although she has suffered in her earthly life. The narrative depicts the virgin as a true heroine, designating her as a role model for the readers by calling for deep devotion to God, purity and *taqwa* to create a socially just society. The scene where the protagonist dies as she is about to receive food from an aid worker underscores the point that the troops of the United Nations, France, and Zaire among others were unable to distribute relief supplies in time to the refugees. They faced immense logistical problems and also had difficulty dealing with the massive influx of starving refugees who fought each other for food. Describing the aid workers as having 'fierce faces' (p. 202) probably alludes to the inglorious role France played in Rwanda. As Dominic Johnson reveals, it took France three days after initial contact to begin a rescue operation in west Rwanda (Johnson 2004). This scene, however, does not imply an us-versus-them attitude (Muslims against non-Muslims), which Helvy's fiction has been accused of,²⁹ but rather it reveals that all parties have failed in the Rwanda conflict, and thus it is the task of true Muslim believers to act on human rights violations. The message to the readers is that solving conflicts as described in 'Kivu Bukavu' requires true humanity, based on Islamic piety.

Unlike the virgin in 'Kivu Bukavu', in the short story 'Jaring-jaring merah' (1998), set in Aceh against the background of the struggle between soldiers of the Indonesian military operation Red Net (Operasi Jaring Merah) and the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM),³⁰ the attempt by Inong, the female protagonist, to leave her body behind to be purified fails. Arimbi (2006: 279) describes Inong, a woman raped by the Red Net soldiers trying to eliminate GAM, as someone caught

²⁹Diah Ariani Arimbi (2006: 293) has alluded to that accusation.

³⁰Operasi Jaring Merah was active from 1989–90 until 1998 (Arnez 2002: 211). The term was the military code name for its operations against GAM during the 1990s (Aveling 2007: 18). Operation Red Net's terror tactics included targeted killings, rape, public display of corpses, and compelling civilians to 'co-operate' with the military to flush out the guerrillas (Robinson 1998: 143). In the armed conflict around 2,000 were killed (*ibid.*, p. 128).

in a net from which she can only escape by becoming a bird.³¹ Arimbi views this transformation as a way of resisting violence – by abandoning her female body and becoming a ‘body-less female’, Inong has the strength to survive:

Despite the violence and brutality that Inong experiences in relation to her body, she finds ways to resist the kind of body pressed upon her through a politics of the body: she becomes a bird, a body-less female. A bird has no social or sexual identification to human society: it is not a culturally charged and classified body. By leaving her body behind, becoming a bird, Inong manages to survive, because the ‘homelessness’ of her body becomes her resistance to violence.

(Arimbi 2006: 280)

However, here Arimbi has failed to point out that Inong is unable to keep up her resistance against violence. The young woman has not been able to overcome her trauma that occurred four years ago when the soldiers raped her and killed her family. It is only temporarily that she succeeds in escaping physical violence by self-identifying as a bird. Inong loses her freedom again, when she desperately searches for her wings, wishing them back:

Di mana sayapku? Aku ingin terbang dari sini! Oiii, tolong ambulkan sayapku! Aku ingin pindah ke awan! (p. 214)

Where are my wings? I want to fly away from here. Hey, please fetch my wings! I want to move up to the clouds!

She loses her bird-like ease again, falling into the red net, a metaphor for the trap the Indonesian military has set for women in Aceh.³² By calling the protagonist ‘Inong’, which means ‘woman’ in Acehnese, the narrator points to the fact that most victims of the crimes committed by the Operation Red Net were women. This operation failed to solve any of Aceh’s problems; instead thousands of innocent civilians, many of them women and children, were victims of atrocities the government supported, including rape, murder and vandalism. The red net suggests that the victims were helplessly exposed to the soldiers, who deeply hurt their dignity.

The metaphor illustrates that under the New Order government women suffered violence from a military that abused its power, with the implicit support of Suharto. On a more abstract level, the military’s violation of human rights reveals that it was the patriarchal structure and men’s abuse of power that degraded and abused women like Inong. Their helplessness vis-à-vis the institutionalised state power is further emphasised with the description of gigantic hands swaying the red net back and forth. These hands stand for the perpetrators of violence, who cause pain and bloody injuries to the

³¹After raping Inong the soldiers killed all her family members. The attackers accused Inong’s family of having supported insurgent groups called GPK (*Gerakan Pengacau Keamanan*, Security Disruptor Movement), the Indonesian government’s perjorative name for GAM.

³²Alexander Roesler and Stefan Munker observe that the net is one of the most efficacious metaphors at present. <<http://www.klassik-stiftung.de/einrichtungen/kolleg-friedrich-nietzsche/kolleg/wissenschaftstheorie.html>>

victims in the net, including Inong. Adjectives written in a staccato manner emphasise the psychological effects of the victims' painful injuries (p. 214).

Thus, the red net not only symbolises the military operation, as Danerek (2006: 42) writes, but, more importantly, it also stands for violence, specifically the crimes committed by soldiers. The colour red suggests bloodshed, relating to the physical aspect of political violence, whereas the net stands for imprisonment (Arnez 2002: 201). Red also refers to Inong's state of mind, her traumatising from the violence suffered. The end of the short story shows that Inong must surrender to violence and oppression. In the end Cut Dini's repeated call to be 'determined', to persevere, does not reach Inong anymore as she feels caught in the net again, fluttering, bleeding.³³ Her struggle to become free, metaphorically flying away in the shape of a bird, fails.

Cut Dini is Inong's counterpart. Her role is closely related to the safeguarding of human rights. She is described as one who possesses characteristics associated with the traditional female role, such as benevolence, compassion, softness and purity but she is also an example of an emancipated, independent and determined Muslim woman. She is courageous and charitable. In line with Islamic teaching she selflessly helps Inong. Cut Dini's sartorial form supports her ideal character traits. The narrator repeats several times in the short story that she is wearing a white veil as a symbol of purity, and is deeply devout. Cut Dini is a model of charity and fulfils the call for deep devotion to God, purity and *taqwa* to create a socially just society in 'Kivu Bukavu'. A Muslim activist, she returns to Aceh after completing her studies in Jakarta because she feels full support for victims of violence can only be effective if she works in the field. She criticises the military for brutality, crudeness and corruption and accuses them of irresponsibility. She is appalled when the soldiers try to atone for their crimes by offering her hush money. Here the narrator contrasts the soldiers' inhumanity with Cut Dini's socially ideal behaviour as a critique of the morally corrupt military government.

Cut Dini as a model character shows that agency, courage and commitment are needed to confront the military. She shows no signs of fear when she lists the atrocities the military committed against helpless victims. She is outraged that the soldiers have asked that she keeps quiet about their crimes. She rejects the money they offer her and directly accuses them of violating human rights:

'Tidak! Bagaimana dengan pemerkosaan dan penyiksaan selama ini, penjaqalan di rumah geudong, mayat-mayat yang berserakan di Buket Tangkurak, Jembatan Kuning, Sungai Tamiang, Cot Panglima, Hutan Krueng Campli . . . dan di mana-mana!' suara Cut Dini meninggi. *'Lalu perkampungan tiga ribu janda, anak-anak yatim yang terlantar . . . keji that! Tidak!'* (p. 210)

'No! How about the rapes and torture all along, the murders in the main building, the bodies that are scattered all over Buket Tangkurak, Yellow Bridge, Tamiang River, Cot Panglima, Hutan Krueng Campli . . . and everywhere!' Cut Dini's voice grows louder. 'And then the villages with three thousand widows, neglected orphans . . . very despicable! No!'

³³I spread my wings again. Fluttering. Bleeding in the net. (Rosa 2008: 215).

As stated by Stefan Danerek (2006: 43), Cut Dini is a principled heroine motivated by religion and love for humanity to act on her beliefs in the here and now. Since Cut Dini's activism is clearly directed against the national military forces, the story is obviously anti-military.³⁴ Additionally, I argue that Cut Dini is designed as a positive role model for the readers, presenting a concept of Islamic morality which is closely linked to social responsibility. She reminds the readers of adherence to what she regards as universal Islamic values: justice, social responsibility, devotion, charity and compassion. These, as the author indicates, should be part of Muslim women's morality and should serve to enhance human rights. The elaboration on Cut Dini's traits like devoutness,³⁵ kindness and readiness to care for the victims of violence, carries the message that the role of women in Islam is to take responsibility and to move against cruelty and *ketidakadilan* (injustice), as experienced by Inong. Through Cut Dini's voice Helvy demonstrates that Muslim women can play a crucial role in conflict areas by devoting their time and energy to the well-being of the oppressed.

In this context I disagree with Candraningrum's statement that 'Jaring-jaring merah' asks the readers to return to *kaffah* (total Islam). She argues that through symbols such as the 'Kerudung, Muslimah, Qur'an, Dzikir and Thausiyah' Helvy intends to convey the message of *kaffah* (Candraningrum 2005).³⁶ She explains that Helvy teaches her readers good Islamic moral conduct through her major characters i.e. to wear the veil, read the Qur'an, pray five times a day, repeatedly say the name of Allah with all one's heart, and to teach moral conduct to other Muslim women. A reference to these terms, however, cannot be seen as evidence for this statement since they refer to Islamic practice, rather than revealing a connection to Islam and the idea of a call to Muslim women to return to *kaffah*. Other unconvincing factors that Candraningrum addresses to substantiate Helvy's call for returning to *kaffah* in the latter's stories are the protests against the Israeli government's actions towards Palestine, the Indonesian army's responsibility for killings in Aceh and the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia. Although it is true that in several of her stories she takes oppression or violence against Muslims as a theme, this does not apply to 'Jaring-jaring merah'. In this narrative the author presents a principled, persevering, devout heroine on the one hand, and a war victim on the other hand as messages urging readers to confront the military as well as devote time to supporting people in crisis regions such as Aceh so as to heal the wounds of war. She also stresses in other short stories such as *Darah hitam* that women are capable of supporting victims in conflict regions. In this narrative the protagonist has journeyed through physical violence, prejudice and hatred of alleged 'enemies' before being able to show commitment for the needy, in this case, orphans. I agree with Arimbi that Helvy's stories, far from being divisive in showing Muslims against non-Muslims in fact shows how female protagonists can move peacefully through their lives (Arimbi 2006: 293).

'Peri Biru', similarly, is not a short story calling for *kaffah* but it clearly highlights FLP's mission and Helvy's close relationship with this forum. In this context it is worth noting how 'Peri Biru' came about. The author wrote it as a guest writer for the short

³⁴Harry Aveling (2007: 16) and Stefan Danerek (2006: 43) have both stressed the anti-military aspect of the short story.

³⁵Her devoutness shows, for instance, when she regularly reads to Inong from the Qur'an (p. 209).

³⁶In her paper Candraningrum also discusses two other stories by Helvy Tiana Rosa, 'Hingga batu bicara' and 'Maut di Camp Loka'.

story collection *Hongkong, namaku Peri Cinta* (Hongkong, my name is Fairy of Love, 2005), written by Indonesian migrant workers in Hong Kong, most of whom work as maids (*pembantu*). All of the seven authors³⁷ are members of FLP Hong Kong, which was founded in February 2004, and Helvy's sister Asma Nadia taught them the craft of writing. Most of the stories involve the troubled experiences of domestics abroad. It is in this light that we have to view 'Peri Biru'.

As in many of Helvy's narratives, the protagonist called Peri Biru is female and young. The reader is told that she is about to graduate from junior high school (SMP), thus she is about 15 years old. The possible meanings of Peri Biru are manifold and oscillate between the world of reality and dreams, as seen at the beginning of the narrative, where Peri Biru speculates about why her mother has chosen this name for her. She comes up with the following options: she, Peri Biru, might just be a reflection of the blue colour in her mother's life or her mother might have needed a miracle or a fairy in her life. The first interpretation alludes to the possible similarities between her mother's experiences of rape and violence and her own in the real world. Her mother had been raped by some unknown youths when her husband was working in Malaysia, and later she was effectively a single parent caring for her children, one of whom has a learning disability. The first-person narrator recounts that Mr and Mrs Waduk (Indonesian for paunch), a rich Indonesian couple for whom she works as a *pembantu*, are physically abusive towards the girl. The narrator uses the blue colour as a synonym for melancholia and human misery here, attributes that have often been assigned to the colour blue in literature and arts.

It soon becomes clear, however, that Peri Biru is unwilling to passively endure her fate as she escapes in a world of dreams. It is mainly through writing that the protagonist tries to live her dreams. She takes Peri Biru as her pen name and thinks about attending school. Here the author probably alludes to the blue fairy in Pinocchio,³⁸ where the fairy is fostering Pinocchio's education and personal progress. In 'Peri Biru', however, education is clearly linked or even reduced to reading and writing only, specifically of Islamic texts, for which such literary figures of Islamic literature as Asma Nadia and Taufiq Ismail, serve as models (p. 143).

Writing becomes Peri Biru's own salvation, a symbol of her dreams, which helps her to overcome her difficulties in life (p. 144). It provides escape from the misery she suffers, for instance when working for Mr and Mrs Waduk, who try to deprive Peri Biru of her dream, denying her name 'Fairy' (*Peri*), calling her 'Smarting/Stinging Pain' (*Perih*). As a reaction to this she uses all her free time, especially during the night, to write:

Kadang kuterjemahkan airmata di atas kertas. Kutafsirkan kegalauan, awan, dan cicak di sudut gudang yang merangkap kamarku. Aku merasa menulis memanglah kegiatan peri karena selalu menerbitkan keajaiban dalam diriku (p. 146).

Sometimes I translate the tears on the paper. I interpret confusion, clouds and house lizards in the corners of the storage room which serves as my bedroom. I feel that writing indeed is a fairy's activity because it always causes miracles within me.

³⁷The writers are Fia Rosa, Ikrima Ghaniy, Andina Respati, Rof, S. Aisyah Z., Syifa Aulia and Winna Karnie.

³⁸The blue fairy in Pinocchio is also known as the fairy with turquoise hair.

The miracles alluded to are closely related to the wings that are mentioned several times in the narrative. In contrast to 'Jaring-jaring merah' where the wings appear as a symbol of a freedom gained and lost, in 'Peri Biru' the wings stand for the protagonist's outlet to find fulfilment and freedom through writing. To abandon the body and to grow wings like a bird is symbolic of achieving freedom through (Islamic) writing, a 'miracle' that is not only offered as an option for Peri Biru, but also for other women who have suffered violence, torture and loss of dignity abroad when working as *pembantu*. Peri Biru's dream goes beyond her own personal restrictions and clearly serves as an instrument to encourage other women who identify with the protagonist to write:

Ya, entah dari negeri mana, entah sampai kapan, aku harus terus berjuang untuk menumbuhkan sayap, menulis dan menghidupkan dongengku sendiri . . . (p. 149)

Yes, no matter from which country, no matter when, I have to continuously fight to grow wings, to write and to revive my own dream . . .

At the same time, however, Peri Biru, as the author's mouthpiece, ponders the limitations of writing. She is aware that she is unable to remove all sorrow but knows that writing about injustice is a means of capturing the 'trails of sorrow' and 'wounds' in the world (p. 144). The message is that these conflicts are worth writing about. The narrative illustrates that women need a fighting spirit to put their dreams into practice, to record for posterity their personal as well as collective memories in the form of Islamic writing.

This story can be seen as a call to young people, especially women, to improve their literacy. 'Peri Biru' is an example of Islamic writing that allows access to new 'miraculous' worlds, whilst giving women the strength to overcome difficulties in their lives, and helping them to be at peace and to live in peace with God. The narrative illustrates Helvy's proselytising through writing, and thus promoting Islamic literature. This is referred to by Asma Nadia and Taufiq Ismail as a universal value which is useful to women in any country.

Conclusion

Helvy's short fiction is Islamic literature directed at young readers who are mostly women. Rather than use the term *sastra remaja Islam* for her narratives, the more adequate term would probably be youth literature. Firstly, this can be seen from the protagonists of the short stories, in most cases young women, who serve as role models for the reader. Secondly, if we consider the place where the anthology *Bukavu* was launched, the university where Helvy is currently teaching, we can clearly see that her fiction does not only target teenagers and children, as the term *sastra remaja Islam* implies, but also students³⁹.

Most of Helvy's narratives can be considered *cerpen aktual* as the subjects are often about contemporary societies in Indonesia or beyond. The stories analysed are

³⁹Helvy Tiana Rosa has explicitly stated that FLP is a forum that is also open to talented children (interview with the author, 19 September 2006.) Her own son, Abdurrahman Faiz, has written several poetry anthologies and has won a number of awards for his work.

characterised by protest against oppression and violence, the perpetrators are representatives of the military, as in 'Jaring-jaring merah' and in 'Kivu Bukavu', or individuals such as Mr and Mrs Waduk in 'Peri Biru'. In addition, Helvy's narratives refer to discourses on strengthening women's morality that in the Indonesian context have resulted in controversy over the pornography bill. The argument in Helvy's fiction that morality needs to be strengthened is based on her rejecting representations of public sexuality and sensuality which have occurred more frequently since the fall of Suharto. With this argument Helvy is also critical of secular works written by Indonesian women writers, the so-called *sastra wangi*. She feels that sexual mores and decency are more desirable for women than the female quest for emancipation expressed through descriptions of sexuality. This makes her a representative of conservative Islamic forces, and we have seen that Helvy is close to PKS, although she is not a member. She also uses vocabulary similar to the PKS such as *pencerahan ummah* (enlightenment of the ummah), and has the intention to set something in motion (*bergerak*) in all her writings. We cannot assume that this is synonymous with a call for 'total Islam', as Candraningrum (2005) has suggested. Although in several short stories the author has chosen historical settings where Muslims have been victims, which has led some critics to conclude that she has a simplistic view of problems involving Muslims and non-Muslims, the analysis of the short stories in this article has revealed that her fiction is based on what she regards as universal Islamic values such as social justice, tolerance and readiness to help. Thus, the selected narratives raise topics that are also important to PKS, such as social justice and the urgent need to establish rules of morality. However, they do not refer to other aims connected with PKS, as such their intention to create a caliphate.

With her fiction Helvy has a role in overcoming the alleged destruction of *akidah* and *akhlak*, and the female protagonists portrayed in the selected short stories can generally be divided into two categories: victims, and strong principled heroines. The former serve to draw attention to existing conflicts in Muslim countries, which mainly affect the weak, such as women and children who have lost family members, land, and their identity. Through her fiction, Helvy points to existing global trouble spots as a possible 'channel of the ummah's enlightenment' (Rosa 2003: 44). She presents enlightenment as a pre-condition of social action, characterised by commitment to those suffering from war and conflict. This commitment is clearly revealed in heroines like Cut Dini in 'Jaring-jaring merah', who alleviate the suffering of women because their Islamic morality is driven by social responsibility. These heroines symbolise ideal Islamic behaviour, and are described as devout, properly veiled, pure and God-fearing. The female heroines are furthermore marked by what Arimbi (2006: 13) calls a 'mixture of feminine and masculine qualities'. The 'feminine' qualities are demonstrated in their readiness to help and educate, and the masculine qualities in their fighting spirit, independence and perseverance. Helvy thus does not see women in the traditional role of being at home and content with *kodrat wanita* (natural destiny), but that they are important players in the public sphere and equal to men.

A number of heroines in Helvy's narratives stand out because of their inner beauty, which is marked by ritual cleanliness and spiritual strength. In the context of violence the battered female body is often viewed as a burden one needs to be rid of in order to find peace with God. This body stands for the problems women face in conflict regions: rape as a result of violent conflicts between the Indonesian military and GAM in the case

of Inong in 'Jaring-jaring merah' or abuse as a consequence of exploitation by unscrupulous employers in the eponymous short story of Peri Biru. Abandoning one's body is a way for women to surmount their difficulties and strengthen their spiritual power. This becomes clear in 'Kivu Bukavu', where the protagonist's spiritual power is in stark contrast to her weakened physical constitution, ending in her death at the end of the narrative.

The stories are part of *dakwah bil qalam* since they point to the importance of Islam as a socially just religion by emphasising Muslim women's spirituality, morality and social responsibility, and because they suggest that their readers could follow Islamic rules and be committed in their fight against injustice and oppression. Some of the stories can be read as a call to their readers to be involved in writing and to use the newly acquired craft as a way of dealing with problems in difficult phases of life, broadening one's horizons and living one's personal dreams. Other narratives read like parts of a handbook informing readers on the correct way to conduct Islamic rituals and adhere to Islamic values. Helvy's stories reflect FLP's vision of proselytising through writing.

Through FLP and its organ *Annida*, Helvy has succeeded in establishing a significant literary *dakwah* movement that calls out to both young men and women to work for the country's moral and social reform, in this case through the medium of fictional texts. Over the years FLP has become an effective instrument for *dakwah bil qalam*, not least through Helvy's personal commitment.

References

- Abuza, Z. 2006. *Political Islam and violence in Indonesia*. London: Routledge.
- Allen, P. 2007. Beyond *écriture féminine*: desperately seeking a new literary paradigm. *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 41 (2): 25–40.
- Aminudin. 2005. FLP: Oase di jagat penulisan. *Harian Umum Pikiran Rakyat*. <<http://flp-bandung.blogdrive.com/archive/3.html>> Accessed 5 February 2009.
- Arimbi, D.A. 2006. Reading the writings of contemporary Indonesian Muslim women writers: representation, identity and religion of Muslim women in Indonesian fictions. PhD thesis. University of New South Wales.
- Arnez, M. 2002. Politische Gewalt und Macht in indonesischer Literatur von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart: PhD thesis, University of Cologne. Malaiologischer Apparat. <http://deposit.ddb.de/cgi-bin/dokserv?idn=965528235&dok_var=d1&dok_ext=pdf&filename=965528235.pdf>
- Aveling, H. 2007. Indonesian literature after *reformasi*: the tongues of women. *Kritika kultura* 8: 9–53.
- Cahyono. 2003. Berharap kepada perempuan penulis. *Sinar Harapan*, 20 December. <<http://www.sinarharapan.co.id/hiburan/budaya/2003/1220/bud2.html>>
- Candraningrum, D. 2005. Helvy Tiana Rosa's campaign for the Islamic brotherhood (ummah) and the return to the 'total Islam' (kaffah) in her three short stories – Jaring-jaring Merah, Maut di Kamp Loka and Hingga Batu Bicara: Indonesian Islamic fundamentalism literature. *Interfaith Cooperation*. <<http://daga.dhs.org/icp/blog/dewi.html>> Accessed 14 August 2008.
- Danerek, S. 2006. Tjerita dan novel. Literary discourse in post New Order Indonesia, PhD thesis. University of Lund.
- El Shirazy, H. 2004. *Ayat-ayat cinta*. Jakarta: Penerbit Republika.

- Fedarko, K., Graff, P. and Michaels, M. 1996. Death cries of a nation. *Time.com*. <<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,985508,00.html>> Accessed 14 August 2008.
- Feillard, A. 1997. Traditionalist Islam and the state in Indonesia: the road to legitimacy and renewal. In Robert W. Hefner and Patricia Horvatic (eds), *Islam in an era of nation-states. Politics and religious renewal in Muslim Southeast Asia*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, pp. 129–53.
- Gong, G. 2007. Tujuan menulis, isi tulisan, buku harian, dan riset. <<http://keluarga-pengarang.wordpress.com/2007/04/09/tujuan-menulis-isi-tulisan-buku-harian-dan-riset-1/>> Accessed 20 November 2008.
- Graf, A. 2007. Religiöser Wandel und Krisenerfahrung: Tendenzen der islamischen Buchproduktion in Indonesien seit 1945. *Asien* 104: 153–65.
- Hefner, R. 1997. Islamization and democratization in Indonesia. In Robert W. Hefner and Patricia Horvatic (eds), *Islam in an era of nation-states. Politics and religious renewal in Muslim Southeast Asia*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, pp. 75–127.
- Holid, A. 2008. Am Scheideweg – Islamische Verlage in der Krise. <<http://www.goethe.de/ins/id/lp/prj/buk/vbw/vin/de3518409.htm>> Accessed 13 August 2008.
- Horn, H.von 2004. Das 'Versagen' der internationalen Gemeinschaft. Zum 10. Jahrestag des Beginns des Völkermordes in Ruanda – Erklärung von UN-Generalsekretär Kofi Annan. In *AG Friedensforschung an der Uni Kassel*. <<http://www.uni-kassel.de/fb5/frieden/regionen/Ruanda/10jahre.html>> Accessed 14 August 2008.
- Iskandar, Salman. 2001. *Impian terindah*. Bandung: Mizan.
- Ismail, T., Rosa, H.T. and Abdullah, R, Radik, T. 2002. *Sajadah kata*. Bandung: Syaamil Cipta Media.
- Johnson, D. 2004. Ruanda, kolonialer Frontstaat. <<http://www.taz.de/index.php?id=archivseite&dig=2004/04/07/a0169>> Accessed 17 September 2008.
- Latifah. 2006. Writing the self, ascribing Islam. Islamic teen fiction: reforming the Moslem identity. Paper presented at ARI 4th Graduate Workshop on 'Asian Entanglement, Religion and Technology in Contemporary Asia', 19–20 January 2006, National University of Singapore.
- Laksmi, G.W. 2004. Seks, sastra, perempuan. *Prosa* 4: 185–233.
- Loekito, M. 2003. Ketika perempuan menulis. <<http://cybersastra.net/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=3719>> Accessed 14 August 2008.
- Mahayana, Maman S. 2005. Di Indonesia, sebutan sastra Islami agak rumit. <<http://syirah.blogspot.com/2005/03/di-indonesia-sebutan-sastra-islami.html>> Accessed 7 August 2008.
- Mardinata. 2008. Dakwah 'Bil Qalam' ADK. <<http://www.padangekspres.co.id/content/view/14129/114>> Accessed 13 August 2008.
- Margosim. 2008. Bunga rampai dakwah bilqalam. <<http://www.dudung.net/artikel-islami/bunga-rampai-dakwah-bilqalam.html>>
- Nadia, A. 2002. *Dialog dua layar*. Bandung: Mizan.
- Nadia, A. 2001. *Rembulan di mata ibu*. Bandung: Mizan.
- PKS, Jakarta. 2007. PKS luncurkan 490 taman bacaan di seluruh Indonesia. <<http://www.pks.or.id/v2/main.php?op=isi&id=3380>> Accessed 5 February 2009.
- Rijal, S. 2005. Media and Islamism in post-New Order Indonesia: the case of Sabili. *Studia Islamika* 12 (3): 421–74.
- Robinson, R. 1998. Rawan is as rawan does: the origins of disorder in New Order Aceh. *Indonesia* 66: 143.

- Roesler, Alexander and Munker, Stefan. Wissenschaftstheorie. Das Netz als Metapher. <<http://www.klassik-stiftung.de/einrichtungen/kolleg-friedrich-nietzsche/kolleg/wissenschaftstheorie.html>> Accessed 16 September 2008.
- Romli, M., Moch, A. and Rachman, Abid. 2001. *Graffiti gratitude: sebuah antologi puisi cyber*. Bandung: Angkasa.
- Rosa, H.T. 1997. *Ketika mas gagah pergi*. Jakarta: Penerbit Seri Kisah-Kisah Islami Annida.
- Rosa, H.T. 1999. *Hingga batu bicara: kumpulan cerpen Palestina*. Bandung: Asy Syaamil; Jakarta: SKI Annida.
- Rosa, H.T. 2002. *Lelaki kabut dan boneka*. Bandung: Syaamil Cipta Media.
- Rosa, H.T. 2003. *Bukan negeri dongeng: kisah nyata para pejuang keadilan*. Bandung: Syaamil.
- Rosa, H.T. 2003. *Segenggam gumam. Esai-esai tentang sastra dan kepenulisan*. Bandung: Syaamil Cipta Media.
- Rosa, H.T. 2008. *Bukavu*. Depok: Forum Lingkar Pena, 'Jaring-jaring merah', pp. 203–216, 'Kivu Bukavu', pp. 193–202, 'Peri Biru', pp. 141–49.
- Schröter, S. 2007. Re-Islamisierungs-Prozesse in Südostasien. *Orient* 4: 17–30.
- Tirmikoara, Himmah. 2001. *Penantian Mei Siang*. Bandung: Mizan.
- Trotter, Lydia. 2006. Islam, women and Indonesian politics. The PKS challenge to substantive theories of democracy. Thesis. <http://www.arts.usyd.edu.au/departs/indonesian/docs/Lydia_Trotter_Hons%202006.pdf> Accessed 17 September 2008. University of Sidney.
- Watson, C.W. Plus ça change ... ? A comparison of two Indonesian feminist novels : Suwarsih Djojopuspito's Maryati and Istiah Marzuki's Sundus. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 33 (95): 67–85.
- Widodo, A. 2008. Writing for God. Piety and consumption in popular Islam. *Inside Indonesia* 93 <<http://insideindonesia.org/content/view/1121/47>> Accessed 15 September 2008.

Websites

- Cybersastra.net <<http://www.cybersastra.net>>
- Dudung.net <<http://www.dudung.net>>
- FLP Bandung.blogdrive.com <<http://flp-bandung.blogdrive.com>>
- Inside Indonesia <<http://insideindonesia.org>>
- Kader PKS <<http://www.kaderpks.net>>
- Keluargapengarang.wordpress.com <<http://keluargapengarang.wordpress.com>>
- Klassik-Stiftung <<http://www.klassik-stiftung.de>>
- Padang Ekspres <<http://www.padangekspres.co.id>>
- Pipietsenja <<http://pipietsenja.multiply.com>>
- PKS-Jakarta <<http://www.pks-jakarta.or.id>>
- Syirah Blogspot <<http://www.syirah.blogspot.com>>