

# Romanticism and Nostalgia from Afar: Signification of Home for a Political Exile in Leila s. Chudori’s “Home”

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**Abstract** The aftermath of Indonesian 1965 political riots left deep consequences for the parties involved or those considered to have had political affiliation. The world was prospectively promising for a particular group but doomed for the other group of people. The previous group had the rights to determine whether members of the latter might stay alive or might not both literally and metaphorically. The latter group whose lives were in the hands of the previous had only two hard choices - if they were lucky enough: to stay or to flee. To stay means to be stigmatized as partisan of PKI (Indonesia Communist Party) for the rest of their lives and consequently alienated from social and political activities. To flee means to be stateless people with even more social, economic, and political hardships. Suddenly, they became paria. It is in the context of being exiles around which Leila S. Chudori’s “Home” is centred. The lives of the displaced people considered to be affiliated with PKI are recounted. The signification of “home” for the main character, Dimas Suryo, who lives miles away from his birthplace becomes the focus of this paper.

**Key words** exiles; homeland; identity; politics; Indonesian contemporary novel

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### Introduction

Most historical books on Indonesian political riots in 1965 claimed it was a coup which claimed lives of a number of senior Indonesian Army generals. Indonesia Communist Party<sup>1</sup> (hereinafter *PKI*) was accused of backing up the action and was then considered to be the one who should have taken responsibility for that action. The coup resulted in executions without trials. The executions were massively done in some parts of Indonesia to those who were accused of members and partisans of *PKI*, such as in Java and Bali during 1965-1966.

The coup is so-called in the history as “the movement of September 30” motored by *PKI* (*Gerakan 30 September PKI* or abbreviated *G30S-PKI*). The term “coup” as a matter of fact is not appropriately used since the aim of the movement was not to overthrow the government. The more suitable term is “putsch” (Chambert-Loir 191; Mudzakkir 173) as the aim of the movement was actually to protect the government from the actual coup assumed to be prepared by the military.

Until now, the accusation towards *PKI* as the mastermind of such a coup to the legal government has been left unproven. So the question remaining unanswered is “who were actually the actors of the kidnapping and killing of those generals which triggered the riots?” Zurbuchen (566) argues that there were “five different scenarios” that could be extracted from 1965 historical literature: first, the assassination of the generals was totally done by the *PKI* and the *PKI* and its partisans alone who were responsible for the action; second, the failed coup was the consequence of an internal armed forces endeavor; third, General Suharto was the coup’s real initiator, or he at least manipulated and falsified the killing of the generals for his own desired results; fourth, there was a secret that President Sukarno allowed discontented officers to act against other officers; fifth, it was a consequence of foreign intelligence operation to expel Sukarno, who was suspected by the west to be in favour of the left political ideology; and finally, there were also some descriptions that combined more than one of the previously mentioned schemes. Whether or not *PKI*, the clash of the generals in the Indonesian military or even foreign intelligence had the stake at the coup, what remains crystal clear is that

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1 Indonesia Communist Party — in Indonesian is called *Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI)* - was the biggest non-ruling party in Indonesia during the middle of the twentieth century. It was liquidated in 1965 following the killings of some army General in September 30, 1965 and banned in the following years to date.

it claimed victims: the murdered generals, the execution of hundreds of thousands of innocent Indonesians without trials, the collapse of Indonesian politics and economy, and the exiles.

During the reign of the New Order era, the voices of “people in connection with the coup attempt of 1965” (Hearman 22) are officially prohibited. Those who were sent in exiles by the New Order regime (1966-1998) could not go back to the country they loved and were forced to live in foreign countries without identity of being Indonesians. Just because they were assumed to be involved with the party, they had to bear the political consequence of being exiled. They never had opportunities to delineate their actual position and view toward *PKI* nor did they have a chance to defend legally whether or not they had real involvement with the party or other organizations affiliated to the party. Some of them even “rendered stateless after the New Order refused to renew passport abroad” (Hill 6). Consequently, the only possible way to return to Indonesia is through “surreptitious visit” (Hill 6) once they obtain foreign passports.

The end of the New Order regime in 1998 is also the beginning for contemporary writers to “freely express their ideas and elaborate” (Prasasti 143) what has been silenced for more than three decades. Literary works depicting the events related to the movement of September 30, 1965 are prohibited during the ruling years of New Order regime because such topics are considered socially and politically sensitive. The presentation and depiction of the effects of the movement towards other people deemed to be involved in the movement and their families are forbidden. That has literary writers to have limited room to explore the other side of the story — the other perspectives that has never been told by the government. The people who are forced to live as aliens in foreign countries have muted to tell stories from their viewpoints. There has been therefore no such a written work talking about what have been experienced by the displaced people until the beginning of Indonesian Reformation Era<sup>1</sup> in the new millennium.

Leila S. Chudori’s “Home,” a novel about the life of Indonesian exiles, was firstly published in 2012, almost one-and-a-half decades after the beginning of the Reformation Era. It is inspired by the feeling of longing for the homeland,

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1 Indonesian Reformation Era — also known as Post-Suharto Era — began when the authoritarian president Suharto resigned from his 32-year ruling position in May 1998. It was triggered by the worsened economic condition as an impact of Asian financial crisis and a series of riots in some parts of the country. At these situations, Suharto was willing to be assigned as the sole presidential candidate proposed by the parliament amid the urge of his resignation. The conditions made the students become outrageous. Their rallies resulted in the occupation of parliament building demanding Suharto’s immediate resignation. The era was the beginning of the more open and liberal democracy in the country.

romanticism of being rejected to go back to the homeland, and the tension and dilemma to be coerced into residing in an alien country for being assumed of having different ideology from that of the authority felt and experienced by the exiles. It took six years for Chudori to research all materials needed for writing the novel. The research included interviews with the exiles and their families living overseas or in Indonesia. The novel was awarded *Khatulistiwa Literary Award*, a prestigious award given for outstanding Indonesian literary works in 2013. Due to its popularity and quality, the novel, which was originally written in Indonesian, was translated into English by John H. McGlynn, an Indonesianist, in 2015.

“Home” focuses its story on the life of four exiles — Dimas Suryo, Nugroho, Risjaf, and Tjai — whose Indonesian passports were withdrawn and annulled by the Indonesian consulate general in Paris after wandering from country to country looking for a place that allowed them to go back to Indonesia. After having tried ways to survive in the alien place, they decided to open an Indonesian restaurant in Paris to earn for their living. Their struggle to survive in a foreign country and the feeling of longing for the lost home are painstakingly depicted in chains of events. The focus of this research is on the main character, Dimas Suryo, and his way in signifying the meaning of “home” while living in exile. He had never felt that he completely lived in Paris for he always thought of and left his heart in Indonesia. What had been experienced by the male protagonist is the portrayal of how political exiles lived their lives in an alien place. He was banned from re-entering the country where he was born without being given a chance to explicate his stances towards communism and forced to accept that he was the number one enemy of the state. His visa application to visit Indonesia was never granted because he had already been stamped to be a person holding ideology that might endanger Indonesian ideology under the New Order regime. The journey of Dimas Suryo’s life was told from the time before the movement of September 30, 1965 to the time when the New Order regime relinquished its power in May 1998 with emphasis on his life as a displaced person during Suharto’s presidency.

As part of contemporary Indonesian literary works, Chudori’s “Home” depicts the political turmoil happened in 1965-1966 and its impacts on the people considered to be involved in the movement of September 30, 1965 and their stories - the stories that had been silenced for decades by the ruling authority from 1966, the beginning of New Order Era, to 1998, when the Reformation Era began. The sequence of events is not depicted rigidly based on the timeline as they are told back and forth and viewed from different angles by different characters — among them are Dimas Suryo; Surti Anandari, Dimas’ true love living in Indonesia; Vivienne

Deveraux, Dimas's French wife; and Lintang Utara, Dimas' and Vivienne's only daughter. Since the conflicts in the novel involve both the suspense the characters had to face when dealing with Indonesian political upheaval either in 1965-1966 or in 1998 and romanticism the characters had to experience when dealing with the feeling of longing for the lost home and loving somebody, this paper aims at exploring Dimas Suryo's endeavour in defining the place he is currently living — the host country he is living in as an exile — and the place from which he has been banished - his home country he loves wholeheartedly.

### **Exiles: Being Ideologically and Politically Different from the Authority**

Political exiles are expelled from the country where they were born to other places because they are considered having different ideology from the authority. By definition, exile is a “banishment, the political action that forces a person to depart from his country” (Barbour 293) and “a displacement from the core to periphery” (Piacentini & Pallot 33). They are also forbidden to enter their homeland because their ideology is believed by the authority to possibly endanger the solidity of the country. Their rights as a citizen are annulled as punishment for having antithetical political point of view. Living in a foreign country they are not familiar with is not an easy thing to do. Exile is “the unhealable rift forced” between an individual and his or her indigenous place (Said *Reflection* 131), as becoming exiles is to be “cut off from their root, their land, their past” (Said *Reflection* 140). It may result in a dreadful, strenuous and difficult experience. The memories formed by the experience of being an “exile, nostalgia, homesickness, belonging” (Said *Place* 21) have created an intricate web taken part in the forming of the displaced person's identity.

As part of migration, exile concerns with “dispersion” of the people in a wide areas, and “homeland orientation” (Brubaker 5). The dispersion causes the feeling of longing for a lost home. Even though exile is part of migration, it is, however, different from other terms related to migration such as émigré, refugee, and expatriate. Émigré is “anyone who emigrates to a new country,” refugee is “herds of innocent and bewildered people requiring urgent international existence” and expatriate is people “voluntarily live in alien country, usually for personal or social reasons” (Said, *Reflection* 144). Exile is, on the other hand, a forced migration. Because exiles are not leaving the country to look for better lives of their own will, the feeling of longing for the home that is forcefully taken from them is greater than others who voluntarily go away from their homeland.

Exiles live in a foreign country that is totally alien for them not because they

want to. They are banished by the authority and lose their rights to be part of the nation. They live far from the culture they are familiar with, no longer speak the language they are proficient in, and cannot meet their love ones. They have to face the unfamiliar environment, think of ways to survive which is not easy because of being foreigners, and are shocked at the new sociocultural conditions far different from their own. At this situation, Said (*Reflection* 140) delineates that exile is “a discontinuous state of being” — a state of being unable to carry on the past and current stories to colour the future life because of being completely removed from the root, culture, and land and because of being forced to leave their homeland due to the ideological disagreement.

As exiles live in a great distance from their homeland, their nationalisms are often questioned. Some of them, after becoming stateless persons for considerably longer time because of the invalidation of their passports, are granted new citizenships from the host countries and received new foreign passports. It has made their nationalism at stake. Said (*Reflection* 139) defines nationalism as “an assertion of belonging in and to a place, a people, a heritage” and accordingly the feeling of home is generated by the similarity of language, culture, and tradition. The displaced people are obliged to speak the language spoken by the local people, adjust with new culture and tradition of the country they currently live in. Their sense of belonging and their feeling of home are accordingly challenged. The feeling of torn between belonging to home or host countries has raised their “diasporic consciousness” (Friedman 9). Foucault (11) suggests that exiles are prisoners rooted in “a barren wasteland between two lands that can never be his own.” It confirms the dilemma faced by exiles while living in banishment. In spite of the fact that there is a place called homeland, it is not anymore “a welcoming place” (Safran 91) because those exiles have, or are assumed to have, different political or ideological views from the authority.

Exiles are torn in defining a place they can call “home.” On the one hand, their bond with their homeland, the country where they were born, cannot be easily cut off. The memories they have in mind about the cultural beauty, the scent of the soil, the unforgotten web of relations, and even the taste of morning breakfast they have experienced the whole life will always live. On the other hand, they feel that they do not belong to the country where they currently live in because they feel alienated from the society due to the different language, culture and tradition. Since the concept of “homing desire” is “not the same thing as desire for a ‘homeland’” (Brah 177), it has raised a question whether such a feeling is prompted by a significant nostalgic remembrance adhered to the homeland or due to the consequence of being

“un-homeliness” because of the totally distinct situation in the new place (Gunew 31). The answer to the question rests in the heart of the exiles because they can never be separated from the homeland and the country they live in.

### **Dimas Suryo: Entrapped between Home of the Past and the Present**

Works of literature of which storyline is about the life of exile are part of postcolonial literature. Tyson (427) characterises that postcolonial literature deals with “the struggle of individual and collective identity and the related themes of alienation, un-homeliness, double consciousness, and hybridity.” The four exile characters in Chudori’s “Home,” including Dimas Suryo, had to deal with such problematics. As people living in exile, they were obliged to comply with the adjudgement of the authority who banished them to live far away from home. They consequently felt that they were isolated from their root land and at the same time were compelled to adjust to a new socio-cultural condition of a place they unwillingly lived in. They might live in a torn paradigm of “home.”

The journey to Santiago, Chile, for joining journalist conference representing *Nusantara News Agency* right before the burst of September 30 Movement had happened was the beginning of the characters’ journey to be displaced persons. Soon in Cuba, Dimas Suryo realised his passport was invalidated and consequently became stateless. He was exiled and forbidden from returning to his homeland purely because of indication that he had an affiliation with *PKI*, the party blamed for the failed coup on the night of September 30, 1965.

“Then the next bomb dropped: our passports were revoked and we became, in an instant, a band of stateless people with no fixed identity... The sword of Damocles now hung over our heads, ready to fall. Every day our lives were filled with the pounding of our heart, because we have no idea what our future held. To go home was impossible. To wander the world, unlikely — not without money or a passport” (69)

The moment the Indonesian passports of Dimas Suryo and his friends were voided was the time when the anxiousness and uncertainty started shadowing their lives. They lived without certain identity of belonging to a certain nation with certain names and recognition. Dimas Suryo felt that his nightmare has just begun to live overseas without identity and without assurance that they were allowed to go back to their homeland. The exiles had to undergo such traumatic experience because of the sudden banishment and invalidation of the documents authenticating their

identity. Their whereabouts — to be out of their homeland — intensified the feeling of agitated. Dimas Suryo did not even know what really happened in his home country. What he heard from the plenary session in the conference he was attending that the political heat in Jakarta had been escalating due to the coup done to some high-rank military officers seemed to be unexpected and unpleasantly surprising.

“It was during the middle of the conference in Santiago that Jose Ximenez, the chairman, made a special announcement in a plenary session about what the English-language press was calling the ‘September 30 Movement’ which had taken place in Jakarta. We later learned that the Indonesian phrase, ‘Gerakan September Tigapuluh’, had quickly been changed by the country’s new military rulers into the more ominous sounding acronym, ‘Gestapu’ we were shocked. High-level military officers kidnapped and killed? We couldn’t imagine who might have perpetuated such an act” (65)

Dimas Suryo could not believe what he heard. He could not believe that what he just discovered had an immediate impact on his fate. He had never imagined that the political situation, happened millions of miles away from the place he was sent to, had a significant influence on the nullification of his passport. He had been through a state of being “cut off from the roots and birthplace” (Said, *Reflection* 140).

Living as an exile was not easy for anyone, not even for Dimas Suryo and his friends. They had to experience moving from one place to another looking for a permanent alien place that welcomed their existence as stateless persons and possibly allowed them to go back to their home country. Having been stranded in China, Dimas Suryo started thinking that he and his friends would not possibly be able to survive there. He was agitated with absolutism and communism that he had to swallow while living there. He, then, thought of Paris as the next destination.

“After three years of life in Peking and having to constantly raise our fists to praise of Mao Tse Tung and calling out ‘Long Live Chairman Mao!’ all the while studying agricultural production in a number of villages, I was fed up with the absolutism of the Cultural Revolution being crammed down the throats of the Chinese people [...]

One night, after many nights of sleeplessness in the guesthouse where I was living in the Red Village, I finally came to a decision [...]  
[...]

‘Paris, I want to go to Paris. Tjai has already said that he’d be willing to

move to Paris or Amsterdam. We could meet him there.” (74-75)

French as the land of “*égalité*” was deemed to be a place where they would be able to plan to return to Indonesia and re-embrace their past lives. French has always been a place to go for those seeking for political asylum, for those being exiled.

Living in Paris, however, was never easier for Dimas Suryo and friends. In order to survive in Paris, they had to change professions. They did anything in order to earn for their living.

“Life as a political exile would not have been complete without a steady stream of trials: having our passports revoked; being forced to move from one country and from one city to another; having to change professions; even having to change families — all with no obvious design or definite plan. All these things were happening while we were in the midst of a search for our identity, shapeless souls searching for a body to inhabit” (126)

Because of their longing for the lost home, the home forcefully taken away from them, they kept on trying to create a “home” ambience around them. Even though the four exiles were very close and their brotherhood had made them feel that they socio-culturally lived in Indonesia, they wanted something “very Indonesia” that could bind them and that they could call “home”; home coloured by the smell of cloves, the scent of tropical wet soil after rain, the *wayang*<sup>1</sup> [shadow puppets], and the cuisines rich with spices. They also wanted a more steady state of living. Based on their needs and wants, they created a place they call “home” in their version, a place that could accommodate their yearning for their detracted homeland.

“The poet Robert Frost said that home is our destination, the place that will embrace us. *Tanah Air* Restaurant was our destination, the place that would embrace us, but she has to be able to demonstrate cheer upon our arrival (121).”

The name of the restaurant sounded very Indonesia. *Tanah* literally means soil and *Air* literally means water. However, when the two separate words are compounded, the meaning becomes homeland, the place that had been missing in the life of the

1 *Wayang* in this context refers to a shadow puppet personifying characters from two major Indian epochs, Mahabharata and Ramayana, usually performed in a shadow puppet play. The play — also called *wayang* — is a dramatic performance of the epochs and notably from Indonesia. It has been acknowledged by the UNESCO as the intangible cultural heritage of humanity in 2003.

restaurant founders for years. The homeland was their destination, their journey's end. They never wanted to permanently live in Paris. Deep down inside their heart, they really wanted to go back to their birthplace, despite difficulties they have to deal with as they have been rejected to re-enter their homeland for being stigmatized as enemies of the state.

The setting of place of Jakarta and Paris has signified the meaning of binary opposition for Dimas Suryo. He lived in Paris yet his mind was in Jakarta. He married a French woman yet he still kept Surti (his ever-lasting love) in his mind.

“He then spoke in his story-telling voice ‘Cloves have an exotic aroma that many a sharp-nose European sailor was able to smell them continent away. And these seamen competed to subjugated and control the spice-laden archipelago where clove trees grow. They even planted the name of their own country in that place and called it the Dutch Indies, making it a part of the land from whence they came.’

‘Then why turmeric, Ayah?’ Lintang asked wide-eyed as she stared at the yellow powder in the other jar.

The question, Dimas never answered; he just smiled and let Lintang inhale the sharp scent of the turmeric powder. Her nostrils twitched as she did this.

[...]

I [Vivienne] looked at the top sheet. Handwritten with well-structured Indonesian in neat and regular penmanship. A letter for Dimas [...] All were letters from Surti Anandari, dating from the late 1960s, after the military had captured her husband. But wait, there were other letters too, dating from 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1982... I [Vivienne] looked at one.” (223-224)

Indonesia, the Dutch Indies in the colonial era, was never far from Dimas' mind. He kept the history of his beloved country, although he was physically miles away. He was “homed” by Paris yet he kept longing for being under the sky of Jakarta, longing for inhaling the Indonesian air. He was psychologically torn between living with the imagery pictures of his past in Jakarta and living in current reality as an exile in Paris.

“It was around that time, I guess, that Vivienne began to gradually turn Paris into a kind of resting place for me. Not a home, per se, but a place where I

could stop for a while.” (83)

He was neither half Indonesian nor half Parisian. He was not either full Parisian. His mind was full of Indonesian imaginary. Despite the fact that he appreciated what Vivienne had done for making him feel comfortable, still Paris was unable to lull him to accept his wife as part of his full life. His daughter with French passport was unable to wake him up from his past. His family was unable to grant him new life. He acknowledged but refused to accept all.

The binary opposition of Dimas Suryo is also reflected in the way he created a little Indonesia in his Parisian house. He never wanted to abandon the country even though the country had abandoned him for years. He even wanted his daughter to learn about the root culture from her father’s side.

“In the living room of our apartment was an Indonesia that Dimas Suryo recreated. Two *wayang* figures hung on the wall — Ekalaya and Bima — along with several masks, gifts from friends had brought back from Indonesia. There was a batik runner on the top of the bookshelf and a batik map of Indonesia in Lintang’s room” (222)

The *wayang*, masks, and batik are Indonesian signatures. They are all the products of outstanding artistry and cultural heritage signifying Indonesian identity. Dimas Suryo deliberately decorated his house in such a way so that he felt closed to the country he was born, so that he would have felt as if he had been home. Not only did he decorate his living room with Indonesian characteristics, but also put the batik map of Indonesia in Lintang’s room. He just wanted his daughter to be closed to Indonesia and always reminded her that there was Indonesia in her blood. The way Dimas Suryo decorated his house signified his nationalism. He had a tremendous attachment to the country even though he had been discarded by the regime ruling the country.

Dimas Suryo had his own unique way in keeping all the nostalgic memories about his homeland.

“But the most curious items were two apothecary jars, tucked between books on the shelf where Dimas had put them. One jar was filled with cloves; the other with turmeric powder [...]

[...]

Dimas replaced the contents of the jars annually, after the scent of the spices

had begun to fade” (222-223).

Cloves and turmeric are kinds of spices that can only be found in Southeast Asian regions. In Indonesia particularly these two spices are typical due to their particular and exotic aroma. Cloves, along with tobacco, are particularly used as the main ingredients of *kretek*<sup>1</sup> cigarettes — kinds of cigarettes originated from Indonesia. The smell is very distinctive and strong. Turmeric is another kind of spice usually used for cooking some Indonesian dishes. The natural yellow colour of turmeric makes the dishes cooked look delightful. The spice also flavours the dishes. The smell is also exotic and specific. For Dimas Suryo, who favoured *kretek* cigarettes, the smell of cloves always reminded him of the place he belonged, Indonesia, specifically the island of Java. The smell of turmeric was able to evoke his romanticism and nostalgic past memories far before he was stranded in his new home, Paris. The aroma of the spices could bring him to the land and root culture he loved the most, and the past, his first love. When he inhaled the aroma from the spices he kept on a jar, all the nostalgic memories and romanticism lingered in his mind. Such spices as clove and turmeric powder were the ways Dimas Suryo keeps his homeland alive in his mind. He additionally tried to keep the smell on its place so that he could always inhale the strong aroma of the spices by continually changing the faded cloves. It is important for Dimas Suryo, as a displaced person, to always touch the nostalgic memories about his homeland through the senses. The spices were the medium to keep him attached to his root and his past.

Dimas Suryo also wanted the memory of his past, of Indonesia to live forever. He, in his effort to preserve the memory, transplanted the knowledge of his memory in forms of icons and story underlining the icons: icon of wayang with the story of Mahabarata, icon of masks with dances, turmeric with the food he and his friends served in their restaurant Tanah Air, clove with *kretek* he loved to smoke. He wanted her daughter to also be his living memory. He wanted her to be able to pass his memory to her children and her grandchildren and great grandchildren and great, great grandchildren. Dimas Suryo was aware that it was all his loving memory of Indonesia that had helped him survive his life as it is in the case of Nabokov’s Ganin who was able to survive as a Russian exile and “prepared to revisit his homeland” (Pichova 23).

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1 *Kretek* is a cigarette originated from Indonesia, particularly the island of Java. It is made from the blend of Indonesian tobacco and cloves which produces specific and unique smell and taste. The cigarette is named *kretek* because of the crackling sound produced when the cloves inside the cigarette are burned.

He reserved one space in his heart for some things very Indonesia: Surti, cloves, turmeric, batik, *wayang*, and masks. He preferred to accept a divorce to eliminate the space once occupied by his French wife, which consequently would enlarge the space he reserved in his heart for Indonesia, for his past Surti and other Indonesian signifiers.

“At that moment I [Vivienne] realized that I had never completely owned now would ever completely own Dimas. At that instant I also knew why he continued to wish to return to the place that he so loved. Somewhere in the corner of his heart was Surti; there he owned her forever, eternalized in the spices found in those two apothecary jars. Surti was the scent of cloves and turmeric. All were one in Indonesia. That night I told Dimas I wanted to separate.” (226)

He was entrapped between the romanticism of his past in his hometown, Jakarta, and the life he was pursuing, the family he raised in his new home, Paris. He was torn between his past memories and his present day life. He was stuck on his past identity yet at the same time he was unable to compromise it with the new identity, the identity of an exile; the identity of a political asylum; the identity without identity.

In the middle of being socially and psychologically torn between the two places, Dimas Suryo explicitly stated the meaning of “home” for a person forced to live abroad for political reasons — the meaning viewed differently by his French wife. It had caused them to have an argument.

“I followed Dimas to the terrace and attempted to defend my point of view without further upsetting him.

‘Home is where your family lives.’

‘Home is the place where I feel I am at home,’ Dimas replied, his voice cold and flat.” (214)

Dimas Suryo signified that he never felt home after all that time living with his wife and daughter. He still felt displaced for being separated from the root and land he deeply loved. As a displaced person, whose nationalism was theoretically questioned and torn, Dimas Suryo’s case was exceptional. His love for his homeland, his nationalism, is indubitable. His definition of “home” never shifted. Despite his despair of being rejected to re-enter his homeland, he still held his optimism that at

the end he would be home. His nationalism was never torn, although he struggled hard to compromise living in a place he was not socio-culturally familiar with, as an exile. He was still longing for his homeland and sure that at his old age, he could be granted to be back to the country, spend the rest of his life and be buried there when he departed this life.

“Tell me, Ayah, once and for all, are you still a *flâneur*? Are you the inveterate wanderer who is always seeking, always traveling, never able to anchor?”

This time Dimas gave a sincere and honest answer: ‘I want to go home, Lintang. To a place that understand my odor, my physique and my soul. I want to go home to Karet.’” (295).

Karet<sup>1</sup> is the place Dimas Suryo wanted to go at the end of his journey. He never mentioned other places in Paris as his home. The only “home” he meant was his homeland. Although it had been difficult for him to go back to his homeland alive, he hoped that his corpse could go back and be buried in a cemetery he called “home,” the place where he would permanently reside.

Indonesian political condition changed at last. In the year of 1998, the New Order regime finally relinquished its control and power over the country as Suharto resigned from his position. It was a new beginning for political exiles, the moment for them to be allowed to go home. After wishing that someday he could be granted to go home, Dimas Suryo was finally able to go back to his beloved homeland a month after the New Order regime collapsed.

“In *Karet*, even in *Karet* (my future abode), the cold wind comes...

In the end, Ayah did come home, to Karet, to finally reunite with the soil that he said had a different scent from the earth in the Cimetière du Père Lachaise. The soil of *Karet*. The land he was destined to come home to.” (484)

Dimas Suryo was a displaced person who had experienced “homeland orientation” (Brubaker 5) specifically orientation to return to his homeland since he kept all his “memory, vision, and myth” about his place of origin (Safran 83). He experienced the impacts of forced migration. He was never willing to go abroad but forced to go away from his beloved country. Although he never had a chance to go back to the country he loved when he was still alive, he was home at last. He finally rested on

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1 Karet is one of the biggest cemeteries in Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia. It is a public cemetery and located in central Jakarta.

the land he loved the most, peacefully and soundlessly.

Dimas Suryo had never been in doubt of being an Indonesian. His “Indonesianity” had never been torn. Yet this un-torn identity had torn his life psychologically; struggling to realistically live and survive in the host country while at the same time living in the nostalgic recollection of the home country, and admitting to be estranged in a foreign country while at the same time living his dreams to go back to his birthplace.

### **Conclusion**

Indonesia’s Reformation Era has offered new opportunity for Indonesian contemporary literature to develop. Chudori’s “Home” pictures the other side of September 30 Movement that had been silenced by the New Order authorities for decades. The life of the exile is portrayed in such a way signifying that the sense of belonging, nationalism, and love for the country cannot be easily wiped off just because a person is banished to the countries located miles away for political reasons. The novel has told the readers that being forced to live far away from the country, revocation of the passports, and restriction to visit the homeland cannot stop the attachments of the displaced people to the root and land they love. Dimas Suryo is a representation of an Indonesian exile who was always proud of his identity of being Indonesian and knew only one home, Indonesia.

In living his life as an exile, Dimas Suryo had to live in reality in Paris and at the same time claimed that he was rooted in Indonesian culture and maintained this as his identity in his whole life. His unwillingness to compromise his identity had consequently torn his life psychologically. His memory has turned into a “dangerous territory” (Pichova 22) which eventually “hegemonised” his thought from moving on his life. The memory of Indonesia had helped Dimas Suryo to survive, in the senses that he never gave up his wanting to return to Indonesia.

To sum up, Chudori’s “Home” wants to convey a message through its main character, Dimas Suryo, that living far away from the country cannot easily change one’s identity and nationalism in the middle of the turmoil of being socially and psychologically torn. As exile is a forced migration, Dimas Suryo, as a representation of a displaced person, still felt attached to his homeland and root culture. While living in exile, the romanticism and nostalgia about his homeland could only be pictured from the memories the last time he saw the country, things that he always wanted to keep in his mind. The homeland where he was born denoted the root to which he belonged. Although exiles are deemed to be wandering people with no such explicit identities, their neediness to be rooted to certain

national and cultural identity is undeniable.

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