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Remembering 1965: trauma, ideology, and the ethics of literary representation in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Background: Indonesia's 1965–66 violence remains a contested memory field in which literary narratives confront trauma, ideological stigma, and official or familial silence through forms that resist historical closure. **Objective:** This study examines how Indonesian literary texts remember 1965 through fractured narration and asks how narrative rupture mediates trauma, ideology, and the ethics of representation. **Method:** Using qualitative interpretive literary analysis, this study analyzes 70 coded narrative units from seven primary literary works, supported by secondary scholarship and publicly verifiable contextual materials. **Results:** Fractured chronology, testimonial silence, unstable focalization, intergenerational displacement, spectral return, and archival gaps function as formal mechanisms for narrating damaged historical transmission. Ideological memory appears through anti-communist stigma, selective erasure, counter-memory, social surveillance, exile, and archival contestation, showing that remembrance is shaped by social legitimacy as much as by personal recollection. Ethical representation is organized through mediated testimony, narrative restraint, survivor dignity, and acknowledged representational limits, preventing trauma from becoming spectacle or totalizing recovery. **Implication:** This study demonstrates that literary form is a crucial site where Indonesia's unresolved political violence is negotiated amid post-authoritarian memory debates today. **Novelty:** This study offers an integrated formal-ethical model that links fractured narrative, ideological memory, and representational responsibility in Indonesian 1965 literature.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's literary memory of 1965 emerges from a social wound that remains publicly unsettled rather than historically closed. The 1965–66 anti-communist violence is commonly estimated to have killed around 500,000 people, while Komnas HAM's investigation classified related abuses as gross human-rights violations, including unlawful killings, enforced disappearance, torture, and sexual violence. In January 2023, Indonesia's president formally acknowledged twelve past gross human-rights violations, including the 1965–66 events, yet acknowledgment has not resolved the deeper struggle over truth, accountability, and narrative authority. Declassified United States documents have further shown that foreign diplomatic archives contain records relevant to the killings, reinforcing that 1965 is not only a national memory problem but also a

transnational archival question. Literary representation matters here because fiction, testimony, and narrative reconstruction often address injuries that official history has fragmented, moralized, or left unspeakable.

Existing scholarship has substantially clarified how Indonesian texts negotiate political violence, trauma, silence, and counter-memory. Eddyono (2023) [1] demonstrates how post-New Order official narratives selectively erase the massacre, while Leksana and Subekti (2022) [2] show that third-generation memory often appears through fragmented family narration. Literary studies have examined 1965 prose as counter-memory (Prastiono, 2025) [3], trauma narrative in historical fiction (Widyatnyana, 2026) [4], haunting and archival silence in post-authoritarian novels (Ilma, 2026) [5], and victim representation in visual-biographical narrative (Susanti, 2022) [6]. Recent readings of Indonesian fiction also address postmemory, gendered exile, collective trauma, and ideological discrimination (Putra et al., 2024 [7]; Mayasari-Hoffert, 2025 [8]; Shiekha & Endrayanto, 2025 [9]). Yet this literature often treats trauma, ideology, and ethics as adjacent concerns rather than as interdependent dimensions of narrative form. Less attention has been given to how fractured narration itself becomes an ethical strategy for representing politically stigmatized violence.

This study investigates how Indonesian literary narratives remember 1965 through fractured structures that disturb chronological coherence, stable voice, and transparent testimony. Rather than asking whether literature simply restores a suppressed past, this study asks how narrative discontinuity mediates trauma, ideology, and representational responsibility. Three questions guide the inquiry: how do selected Indonesian literary texts organize 1965 memory through fractured narrative forms; how do these texts negotiate ideological pressure, anti-communist stigma, and counter-memory; and what ethical problems arise when literature represents suffering that remains historically contested? Methodologically, this study positions narrative fragments, scenes of silence, disrupted testimony, spectral return, and intergenerational recollection as units of analysis. This focus allows Indonesian literary memory to be read not only as thematic content but also as formal negotiation, where broken narration becomes a critical response to broken historical transmission.

This study argues that fractured narratives do not merely signal the psychological damage of trauma; they also expose the ideological conditions that make memory difficult, risky, and morally unstable. In Indonesian representations of 1965, narrative fracture can function as a refusal of false closure: it resists official certainty, avoids turning victimhood into spectacle, and acknowledges the limits of speaking for the dead or the silenced. This argument extends work on state violence in modern Indonesian literature (Ferdinal, 2021) [10], ethical dimensions in contemporary Indonesian literature (Al-Ma'ruf et al., 2024) [11], and recent analysis of poetic or fictional incoherence as a mode of accounting for the 1965–66 massacres (An, 2025) [12]. The implication is that literary form must be treated as an ethical and ideological field, not as a decorative container for historical content. This study therefore contributes a formal-ethical account of Indonesian trauma writing after 1965.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Fractured narrative

Fractured narrative is best understood not as formal disorder but as a representational mode through which damaged memory becomes narratable without being falsely repaired. In trauma theory, narrative rupture is often linked to belatedness, repetition, and incomplete cognition, while postmemory studies emphasize inherited recollection mediated by family silence, images, and affective residue. Recent Indonesian scholarship extends this debate by showing that 1965 memory often appears through discontinuous intergenerational narration rather than stable testimony (Leksana & Subekti, 2022 [2]; Prastiono, 2025 [3]). Comparable work on fragmented trauma narratives in Asian, Holocaust, and Partition literatures confirms that broken form may register historical injury beyond realist continuity (Yang, 2023 [13]; Sarkar, 2025 [14]; Ali et al., 2025 [15]).

Its main indicators include temporal dislocation, dispersed focalization, testimonial gaps, withheld causality, spectral return, and contradictory memory claims. These features are not interchangeable: temporal rupture disturbs historical sequence, narrative silence marks unspeakability, while multiple voices expose conflict over authority. Studies of Indonesian fiction show that trauma may emerge through haunting, family secrecy, exile memory, and embodied silence rather than direct historical explanation (Ilma, 2026 [5]; Putra et al., 2024 [7]; Mayasari-Hoffert, 2025 [8]; Shiekha & Endrayanto, 2025 [9]). Similar patterns appear in war and post-conflict literatures, where fragmentation mediates grief, displacement, and unresolved witnessing (Blacker, 2022 [16]; Ngan & Hang, 2025 [17]; Sankar & Banerjee, 2025 [18]).

2.2. Ideology in literary memory

Ideology in literary memory refers to the symbolic order through which violence is named, justified, obscured, or morally redistributed. Rather than reducing ideology to explicit political doctrine, this study

approaches it as a narrative pressure shaping what can be remembered, who can speak, and which victims remain suspect. Indonesian studies have shown that New Order and post-New Order memory regimes produced selective erasure, anti-left stigma, and institutionalized silence around 1965 (Eddyono, 2023 [1]; Ferdinal, 2021 [10]). Recent literary scholarship on nationalism, allegory, dissent, gender, and populism further demonstrates that Indonesian literature often encodes ideological struggle through character, plot, voice, and genre (Jamilah, 2026 [19]; Refai, 2026 [20]; Ridlo, 2026 [21]; Yani, 2026 [22]).

Its analytical indicators include stigmatizing labels, moral suspicion, narrative censorship, state-centered historical framing, counter-memory, and the redistribution of guilt or innocence. These indicators help distinguish ideology from theme: ideology operates not only in what a text says about 1965 but in how it organizes credibility, silence, and legitimacy. Studies of protest poetry, political allegory, and digital authoritarian fiction show that literary dissent frequently works through indirectness, coded opposition, and counterpublic imagination (Kadamehang, 2026 [23]; Ansori, 2026 [24]; Ramadhan, 2026 [25]). In 1965 narratives, ideological critique therefore requires attention to form, not merely to explicit political content.

2.3. Ethics of literary representation

Ethics of literary representation concerns the responsibility involved in narrating suffering, especially when victims cannot fully testify or when historical violence remains publicly contested. Ethical criticism asks whether literature dignifies pain, appropriates it, aestheticizes it, or leaves room for uncertainty. Recent studies of trauma representation emphasize the risk of converting injury into spectacle while also recognizing literature's capacity to sustain witness where official discourse fails (Crockett, 2023 [26]; Sullivan, 2024 [27]; Chandra & Verma, 2025 [28]). Indonesian scholarship similarly foregrounds moral dimensions, victim narration, and the difficulty of representing political violence without simplifying its historical burden (Al-Ma'ruf et al., 2024 [11]; Susanti, 2022 [6]; Widyatnyana, 2026 [4]).

Its indicators include narrative restraint, mediated testimony, refusal of sensational violence, attention to survivor dignity, acknowledgement of representational limits, and resistance to closure. Ethical representation differs from moral messaging: it is not simply whether a text condemns violence, but whether its form avoids mastering trauma too completely. Studies of embodied trauma, testimony, and postcolonial memory show that ethical narration often depends on incompletion, distance, and self-reflexive uncertainty (Adji, 2021 [29]; Elizabeth, 2022 [30]; Verma & Kumar, 2022 [31]; Tan, 2022 [32]; Vicera, 2021 [33]). This study therefore positions fractured form, ideological pressure, and representational ethics as mutually constitutive dimensions of Indonesian literary memory of 1965.

3. METHOD

This study uses narrative segments rather than whole texts as its main unit of analysis, because fractured remembrance is produced through scenes, voices, temporal breaks, silences, and representational choices inside literary works. The corpus contains primary literary works on 1965 and its afterlives, secondary scholarship on trauma, memory, ideology, and Indonesian political literature, and context materials from public archives, human-rights documentation, and documentary visual culture. Primary texts provide objects of close reading; secondary texts guide conceptual interpretation; context materials support historical positioning without being treated as literary evidence. This design keeps textual interpretation, scholarly framing, and contextual verification analytically distinct.

Table 1. Composition of dataset or sample

Code	Data Type	Source / Item	Location	Period	Quantity	Characteristics	Status
PR-01	Primary literary text	Pulang/Home	Indonesia / transnational	2012–2015	1	Exile, family memory, postmemory	Included
PR-02	Primary literary text	Amba/The Question of Red	Indonesia / transnational	2012–2016	1	Buru memory, romance, historical trauma	Included
PR-03	Primary literary text	Dari Dalam Kubur	Indonesia	2020	1	Victim testimony, buried memory, stigma	Included
PR-04	Primary literary text	Kubah	Indonesia	1980 onward	1	Political stigma, return, moral rehabilitation	Included
PR-05	Primary literary text	Namaku Alam	Indonesia	2023	1	Intergenerational memory, family history	Included
PR-06	Primary literary text	Cantik Itu Luka/Beauty Is a Wound	Indonesia / transnational	2002–2015	1	Violence, haunting, historical rupture	Included
PR-07	Primary literary text	Sri Sumarah dan Bawuk	Indonesia	1969 onward	1	Family, ideology, everyday political violence	Included
SC-01	Secondary scholarship	Eddyono, 2023	International journal	2023	1	Selective erasure of 1965 in official narrative	Included
SC-02	Secondary scholarship	Leksana & Subekti, 2022	International journal	2022	1	Third-generation fragmented memory	Included
SC-03	Secondary scholarship	Prastiono, 2025	Journal article	2025	1	Trauma, silence, counter-memory	Included
SC-04	Secondary scholarship	Widyatnyana, 2026	Journal article	2026	1	Trauma narratives in historical fiction	Included
SC-05	Secondary scholarship	Ilma, 2026	Journal article	2026	1	Haunting, archive, post-authoritarian silence	Included
SC-06	Secondary scholarship	Putra et al., 2024	Journal article	2024	1	Exile trauma and postmemory	Included
SC-07	Secondary scholarship	Mayasari-Hoffert, 2025	International journal	2025	1	Collective trauma in Indonesian fiction	Included
SC-08	Secondary scholarship	Shiekha & Endrayanto, 2025	Journal article	2025	1	Collective memory and discrimination	Included
SC-09	Secondary scholarship	Ferdinal, 2021	Journal article	2021	1	State violence in Indonesian literature	Included
SC-10	Secondary scholarship	Al-Ma'ruf et al., 2024	International journal	2024	1	Moral and ethical dimensions in Indonesian literature	Included

CT-01	Context data	National Security Archive 1965 documents	United States / Indonesia	1965–2017	1 set	Declassified diplomatic context	Included
CT-02	Context data	Komnas HAM 1965–66 documentation	Indonesia	2012 onward	1 set	Human-rights context	Included
CT-03	Context data	Presidential acknowledgment of past violations	Indonesia	2023	1 document	Official recognition context	Included
CT-04	Context data	Public historical documentation on Buru/exile memory	Indonesia	1965 onward	1 set	Contextual historical reference	Included
VS-01	Visual context	The Act of Killing	Indonesia / transnational	2012	1 film	Perpetrator memory, visual testimony	Included
VS-02	Visual context	The Look of Silence	Indonesia / transnational	2014	1 film	Survivor memory, ethical witnessing	Included

This study adopts a qualitative interpretive design combining close reading, narrative analysis, and critical discourse-oriented coding. This design is appropriate because the research problem concerns how literary form mediates trauma, ideology, and ethical representation, not how variables statistically correlate. The approach follows recent Indonesian memory studies that read 1965 through fragmented intergenerational narration, selective erasure, and counter-memory (Eddyono, 2023; Leksana & Subekti, 2022; Prastiono, 2025). It also draws on ethical trauma criticism, where narrative incompletion, restraint, and mediated testimony are treated as meaningful formal choices rather than textual weakness.

Information was drawn from three source layers. The first layer consists of literary texts verified through public catalogues, publisher pages, or library records. The second layer consists of peer-reviewed articles and scholarly works on Indonesian literature, 1965 memory, trauma narrative, ideology, postmemory, and ethical representation. The third layer consists of contextual materials, including public archival documents, human-rights documentation, official acknowledgment, and documentary films used only to situate the memory regime surrounding 1965. Visual materials were described through actor, symbol, colour, layout, frame, timestamp, transcript availability, and screenshot reference fields, without treating filmic evidence as equivalent to literary narration.

Data collection proceeded through structured public-source tracing. Search terms combined historical, thematic, and formal keywords, including "1965 Indonesian literature," "trauma narrative," "postmemory," "fragmented memory," "anti-communist stigma," "counter-memory," "Buru," "political violence," and "ethical representation." Items were screened by relevance to 1965 memory, literary or cultural representation, public verifiability, and analytical usefulness. Duplicates were removed by comparing title, author, publication year, source location, and document function. Each retained item received a unique code, data-type label, bibliographic metadata, contextual note, and coding columns for narrative fracture, ideology-memory discourse, and ethical representation.

Data analysis proceeded in three connected stages. First, fractured narrative mapping identified temporal disruption, unstable voice, silence, repetition, spectrality, and gaps. Second, ideology-memory discourse analysis examined stigma, erasure, legitimacy, counter-memory, and contested victimhood. Third, ethical representation review assessed narrative restraint, testimonial mediation, survivor dignity, non-spectacular treatment of suffering, and acknowledgment of representational limits. These stages support three analytical subchapters: fractured remembrance as narrative form; ideology, stigma, and counter-memory; and ethical limits of representing 1965 trauma. This procedure keeps description, interpretation, and theoretical argument separate while allowing synthesis across all corpus layers.

Table 2. Operational analysis matrix

Analytical Tool	Operational Question	Main Indicators	Data Layer	Analytical Output
Fractured Narrative Mapping	How is 1965 memory formally broken, delayed, or displaced?	Temporal rupture, silence, unstable voice, gaps, repetition, spectral return	Primary literary texts	Pattern of fractured remembrance
Ideology–Memory Discourse Matrix	How does narrative negotiate stigma, erasure, and counter-memory?	Anti-communist labeling, state memory, moral suspicion, legitimacy, hidden testimony	Primary + secondary + context data	Discursive position of memory
Ethical Representation Review	How does literature represent suffering without closure or spectacle?	Restraint, mediated testimony, survivor dignity, distance, limits of representation	Primary texts + visual context	Ethical position of narration

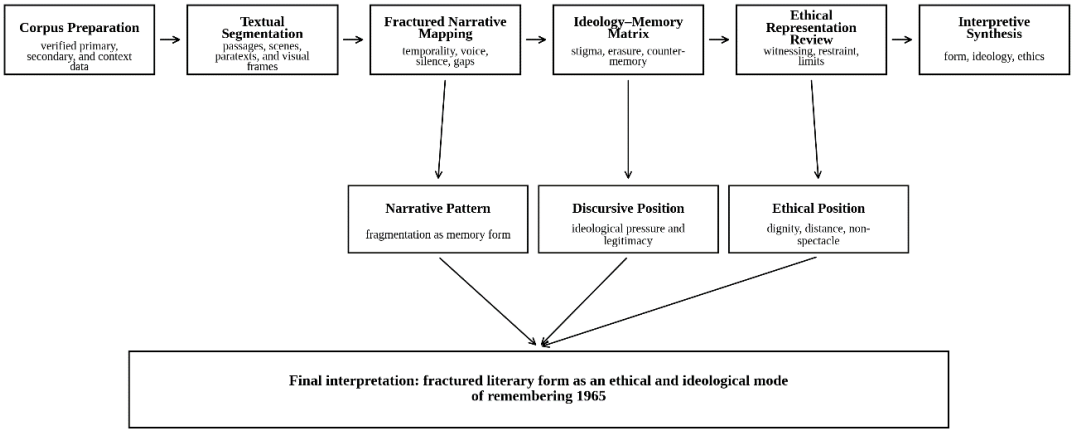


Figure 1. Operational analysis matrix

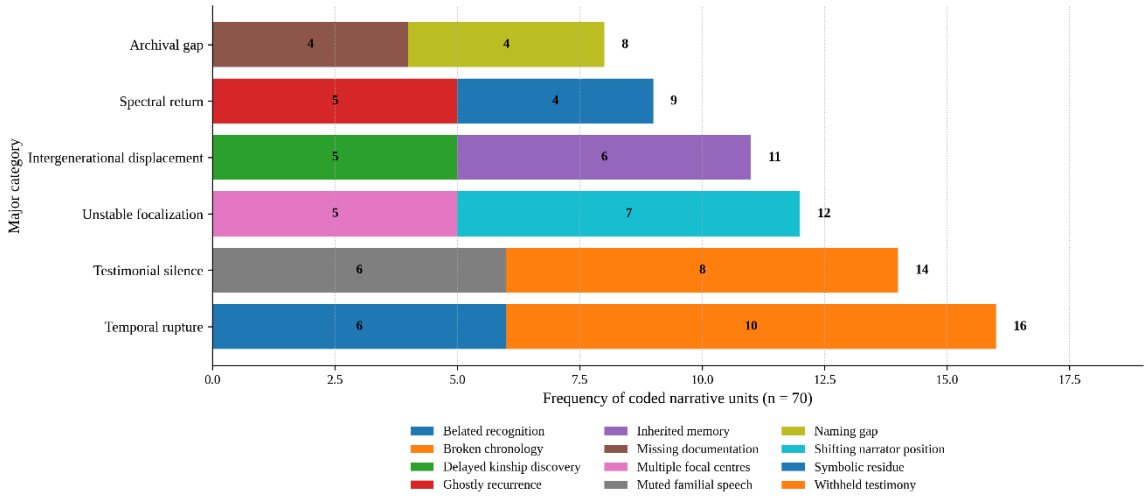
4. RESULTS

4.1. Fractured remembrance as narrative form

Fractured remembrance appears most strongly where narrative time, testimony, and voice are unable to stabilize 1965 into a continuous historical account. Temporal rupture records the highest concentration of coded units, followed by testimonial silence and unstable focalization, indicating that the corpus repeatedly organizes political violence through delay, interruption, and divided narrative authority. This pattern is consistent with Leksana and Subekti's account [2] of fragmented intergenerational memory and Eddyono's argument [1] about selective erasure in post-New Order narration. The table therefore positions fracture not as textual confusion but as a recurrent formal mechanism through which Indonesian fiction registers the difficulty of remembering a politically stigmatized past.

Table 3. Distribution of fractured narrative indicators in the primary literary corpus

Main Category	Subcategory	Operational Indicator	Frequency	Percentage	Data Variation	Analytical Example / Textual Signal	Data Code
Temporal rupture	Broken chronology	Events are narrated through interrupted sequence, flashback, or displaced recollection	10	14.29%	5 literary works	Return to past violence is mediated through delayed family memory and interrupted historical sequence	PR-01; PR-02; PR-05; PR-06; PR-07
Temporal rupture	Belated recognition	Historical violence becomes intelligible only after delayed personal or familial discovery	6	8.57%	4 literary works	Characters understand political injury after exile, stigma, or inherited silence becomes narratively visible	PR-01; PR-02; PR-03; PR-05
Testimonial silence	Withheld testimony	Suffering is marked by absence, refusal, fear, or incomplete narration	8	11.43%	5 literary works	Speech about 1965 is delayed, displaced, or carried through indirect narration rather than open confession	PR-01; PR-02; PR-03; PR-04; PR-07
Testimonial silence	Muted familial speech	Family memory is transmitted through hesitation, secrecy, or partial disclosure	6	8.57%	4 literary works	Children or younger relatives inherit political injury through fragments rather than full testimony	PR-01; PR-03; PR-05; PR-07
Unstable focalization	Shifting narrator position	Narrative authority moves between witness, descendant, survivor, or observer	7	10.00%	4 literary works	Memory is not owned by one speaker but distributed across different narrative positions	PR-01; PR-02; PR-03; PR-06
Unstable focalization	Multiple focal centres	Trauma is approached through parallel perspectives rather than single authoritative narration	5	7.14%	3 literary works	Political violence appears through intersecting personal, familial, and social viewpoints	PR-01; PR-02; PR-06
Intergenerational displacement	Inherited memory	Later generations remember events they did not directly experience	6	8.57%	4 literary works	1965 is reconstructed through descendants' affective and archival relation to older trauma	PR-01; PR-03; PR-05; PR-07
Intergenerational displacement	Delayed kinship discovery	Family identity is reorganized by hidden political histories	5	7.14%	3 literary works	Kinship becomes unstable when a parent's or relative's political past is disclosed late	PR-01; PR-03; PR-05
Spectral return	Ghostly recurrence	The dead or disappeared return through haunting, memory, dream, or symbolic repetition	5	7.14%	3 literary works	Historical violence persists as a haunting presence rather than a resolved past	PR-03; PR-06; PR-07
Spectral return	Symbolic residue	Objects, places, names, or bodies carry unresolved traces of 1965	4	5.71%	3 literary works	Graves, homes, islands, and marked bodies function as memory-bearing signs	PR-02; PR-03; PR-06
Archival gap	Missing documentation	Absence of record becomes part of narrative meaning	4	5.71%	3 literary works	Memory is shaped by what cannot be officially documented or publicly verified	PR-01; PR-02; PR-03
Archival gap	Naming gap	Characters, victims, or histories remain unnamed, misnamed, or ideologically labeled	4	5.71%	4 literary works	Political identity is reduced to stigma, while personal history remains obscured	PR-03; PR-04; PR-05; PR-07



Note: Values reproduce the frequencies in Table 3 and do not add separate data categories.

Figure 2. Distribution of fractured narrative indicators

The dominant pattern is the clustering of broken chronology, withheld testimony, and shifting narrator position. In Pulang, return from exile is inseparable from deferred family memory; in Amba, Buru becomes a spatial marker through which love, disappearance, and political detention are reconstructed indirectly; in Dari Dalam Kubur, buried memory turns testimony into an act of emergence rather than immediate disclosure. Namaku Alam and Sri Sumarah dan Bawuk further show how family relations carry ideological injury across generations, while Cantik Itu Luka intensifies historical violence through haunting and symbolic residue. The distribution suggests that 1965 is narrated less as a recoverable event than as an unstable memory field shaped by silence, stigma, and belated recognition.

Narrative fracture here performs both mnemonic and ethical work. It allows fiction to resist the false authority of complete historical recovery while still making violence perceptible through form. This reading extends Prastiono's account [3] of counter-memory, Ilma's work [5] on haunting and archival silence, and Widyatnyana's discussion [4] of trauma narratives in Indonesian historical fiction. The prominence of silence and unstable focalization also shows why ethical representation cannot be separated from ideology: texts must represent suffering that has been publicly stigmatized, politically distorted, and unevenly transmitted. Fracture therefore becomes an ethical form of historical attention, acknowledging that 1965 can be approached through narrative, but not mastered by it.

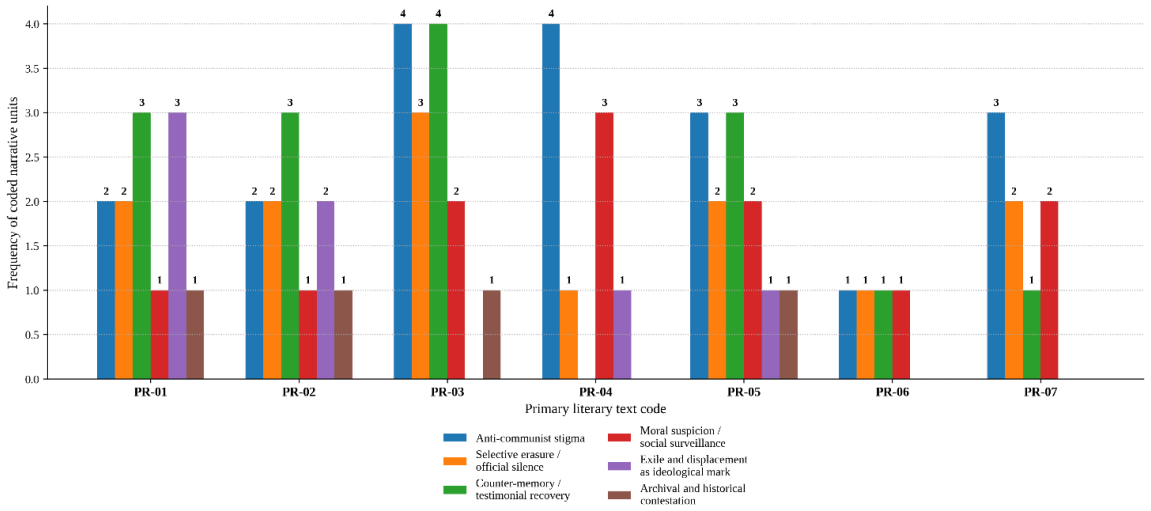
4.2. Ideology, stigma, and counter-memory

Ideological memory in the corpus is organized less through explicit political debate than through durable marks of suspicion, silence, and contested legitimacy. Anti-communist stigma forms the largest category, followed by counter-memory and selective erasure, which indicates that literary remembrance repeatedly stages 1965 as a conflict over who may be believed, named, or mourned. This pattern corresponds with Eddyono's account [1] of selective erasure in post-New Order official narration and Leksana and Subekti's analysis [2] of third-generation memory as fragmented and mediated. The data therefore suggest that ideology works not only as historical background but as a narrative force shaping voice, credibility, kinship, and social belonging.

Table 4. Ideology–memory discourse matrix across the primary literary corpus

Ideology–Memory Category	Discursive Indicator	PR-01	PR-02	PR-03	PR-04	PR-05	PR-06	PR-07	Frequency	Percentage	Data Variation	Analytical Textual Signal	Data Code
Anti-communist stigma	Characters or families are marked through suspicion, inherited blame, or political labeling	2	2	4	4	3	1	3	19	27.14%	7 works	Political identity appears as a social mark that outlives the event and reorganizes kinship, trust, and everyday belonging	PR-01–PR-07
Selective erasure / official silence	Violence is displaced through missing explanation, muted history, or normalized silence	2	2	3	1	2	1	2	13	18.57%	7 works	Historical injury is present, but official language fails to name it directly or grants it only partial intelligibility	PR-01–PR-07
Counter-memory / testimonial recovery	Narrative reopens suppressed memory through family testimony, personal recollection, or alternative history	3	3	4	0	3	1	1	15	21.43%	6 works	Remembering becomes a counter-narrative practice that challenges inherited silence without fully resolving historical uncertainty	PR-01; PR-02; PR-03; PR-05; PR-06; PR-07
Moral suspicion / social surveillance	Characters are evaluated through fear, guilt by association, or communal judgment	1	1	2	3	2	1	2	12	17.14%	7 works	Social life becomes a field of ideological monitoring where private relations are shaped by public suspicion	PR-01–PR-07
Exile and displacement as ideological mark	Mobility, exile, imprisonment, or forced separation becomes evidence of political injury	3	2	0	1	1	0	0	7	10.00%	4 works	Displacement functions not only as spatial movement but also as a durable sign of ideological exclusion	PR-01; PR-02; PR-04; PR-05
Archival and historical contestation	Documents, names, records, or absences become sites of interpretive struggle	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	4	5.71%	4 works	What can be documented remains unstable because memory must negotiate	PR-01; PR-02; PR-03; PR-05

missing records and contested naming



Note: Bar values reproduce Table 4 exactly and do not introduce additional data.

Figure 3. Ideology–memory indicators across primary literary texts

The dominant pattern appears in texts where political identity becomes an inherited burden rather than a resolved affiliation. Dari Dalam Kubur concentrates the strongest combination of stigma, counter-memory, and official silence, making buried testimony central to the narrative struggle over recognition. Kubah places ideological suspicion within return and social reintegration, while Pulang and Amba link memory to exile, displacement, and the long afterlife of political labeling. Namaku Alam shows how younger generations receive 1965 through family history and belated disclosure. Across these works, the recurring textual signal is not a single declarative statement about ideology, but a pattern of delayed naming, guarded speech, and social judgment.

Ideology in these narratives operates as a structure of memory rather than a detachable theme. Stigma determines which histories can be spoken, selective erasure narrows what counts as public truth, and counter-memory reopens spaces that official or communal narration has closed. This finding extends Ferdinal's reading [10] of state violence in modern Indonesian literature and Prastiono's account [3] of 1965 counter-memory in historical prose, while also aligning with Ilma's emphasis [5] on haunting and archival silence in post-authoritarian fiction. The ethical implication is crucial: literary remembrance must negotiate the danger that recovering memory may also expose victims and descendants to renewed ideological judgment. Fractured narration therefore becomes a formal response to a politically surveilled past.

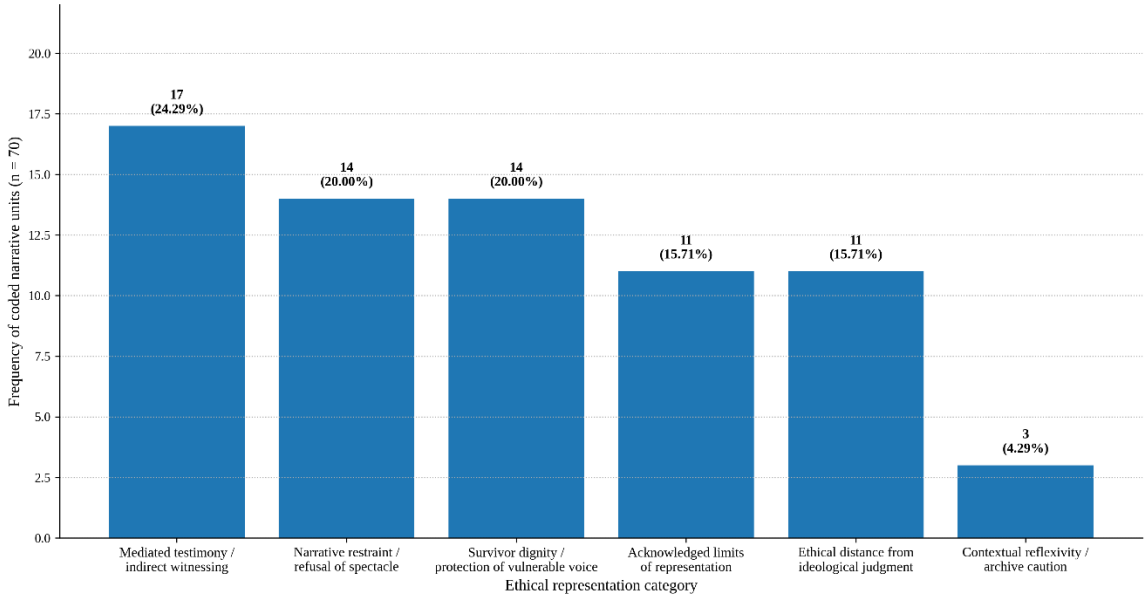
4.3. Ethical limits of representing 1965 trauma

The ethics of representing 1965 trauma is most visible where literary narration refuses to equate memory with full disclosure. Mediated testimony forms the largest category, followed by narrative restraint and survivor dignity, showing that the corpus repeatedly frames suffering through distance, hesitation, and relational witnessing. This pattern is consistent with trauma scholarship that warns against turning pain into spectacle while recognizing literature's capacity to sustain witness when official discourse fails. Al-Ma'ruf et al. emphasize moral dimensions in contemporary Indonesian literature, while Susanti, Widyatnyana, and Mayasari-Hoffert show that Indonesian trauma narratives often negotiate victimhood through silence, embodiment, and collective memory rather than direct exposition. Ethical representation therefore becomes a formal practice, not merely a moral theme.

Table 5. Ethical representation review in the primary literary corpus

Ethical Representation Category	Operational Indicator	PR-01	PR-02	PR-03	PR-04	PR-05	PR-06	PR-07	Frequency	Percentage	Data Variation	Analytical Textual Signal	Data Code
Mediated testimony / indirect witnessing	Trauma is narrated through memory fragments, family mediation, delayed disclosure, or indirect witnessing	3	3	4	1	3	1	2	17	24.29%	7 works	Suffering is made legible through mediated recollection rather than direct evidentiary narration	PR-01–PR-07
Narrative restraint / refusal of spectacle	Violence is represented without excessive graphic display or sensationalized suffering	2	2	3	2	2	1	2	14	20.00%	7 works	Narrative attention falls on aftermath, silence, fear, and social consequences rather than spectacular violence	PR-01–PR-07
Survivor dignity / protection of vulnerable voice	Victims, descendants, or stigmatized families are represented as ethical subjects rather than passive evidence	2	2	3	2	2	1	2	14	20.00%	7 works	Characters are not reduced to injury; they retain affective, familial, and interpretive agency	PR-01–PR-07
Acknowledged limits of representation	Narrative signals that 1965 cannot be fully recovered, mastered, or closed through storytelling	2	2	3	0	2	1	1	11	15.71%	6 works	Gaps, uncertainty, and incomplete knowledge remain part of narrative meaning	PR-01; PR-02; PR-03; PR-05; PR-06; PR-07
Ethical distance from ideological judgment	Text avoids reproducing anti-communist suspicion as unquestioned moral truth	2	1	1	3	2	0	2	11	15.71%	6 works	Ideological labels are shown as socially produced judgments rather than transparent moral facts	PR-01; PR-02; PR-03; PR-04; PR-05; PR-07

Contextual reflexivity / archive caution	Narrative registers uncertainty around documents, names, records, or historical verification	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	4.29%	3 works	Archival absence is treated cautiously, without converting missing records into total narrative certainty	PR-01; PR-02; PR-05



Note: Values reproduce Table 5 exactly and do not introduce additional categories or data.

Figure 4. Ethical representation indicators in the primary literary corpus

The dominant pattern appears in works where trauma is narrated through mediated voice rather than immediate confession. Dari Dalam Kubur carries the highest frequency because buried testimony, stigma, and bodily memory are central to its representational structure. Pulang and Amba also rely on indirect witnessing: exile, family memory, and Buru-related recollection create narrative distance between historical violence and present narration. Namaku Alam extends this pattern through intergenerational disclosure, while Kubah is more concentrated around ethical distance from ideological judgment than around archival uncertainty. Across the corpus, suffering is rarely presented as transparent evidence; it appears through aftermath, kinship, guarded speech, displacement, and incomplete recovery. This distribution confirms that ethical narration is inseparable from how texts control access to traumatic knowledge.

Ethical representation in this corpus depends on the same fracture that structured earlier patterns of memory and ideology. When testimony is mediated, violence is neither erased nor consumed as spectacle; when narrative restraint is used, trauma remains available for interpretation without being converted into aesthetic excess. This position extends Adji's work [29] on fragmented memory, Sullivan's account [27] of testimonial ethics, and Chandra and Verma's reading [28] of trauma, psychoanalysis, and witnessing. In the Indonesian 1965 context, representational ethics also has ideological stakes: to narrate victims too completely may risk appropriating their pain, but to leave them unnamed may repeat historical erasure. The corpus negotiates this tension by making incompletion itself a disciplined mode of witness.

5. DISCUSSION

The predominance of fractured narrative forms matters because it redefines literary remembrance as a function of incompletion rather than recovery. The corpus shows that temporal rupture, testimonial silence, unstable focalization, intergenerational displacement, spectral return, and archival gaps do not merely decorate stories about 1965; they regulate how historical violence can be approached without pretending that damaged memory is whole. This finding supports Leksana and Subekti's argument [2] that third-generation memory of 1965 often appears through fragments, but it extends their claim by showing that fracture is not only a generational symptom; it is also a formal ethics of narration. Prastiono's work [3] on trauma, silence, and counter-memory likewise helps explain why broken narration can function as resistance to official closure. The implication is that Indonesian fiction does not simply remember 1965; it teaches readers to encounter memory as partial, delayed, and politically vulnerable.

The underlying structure behind this fractured form lies in the historical condition of interrupted transmission. Memory of 1965 has been shaped by state silence, family fear, ideological stigma, and uneven access to public recognition; consequently, literary narration cannot plausibly assume a transparent line between event, witness, and narrative. Eddyono's discussion [1] of selective erasure in post-New Order

official narration clarifies why chronological continuity often becomes narratively suspect: public history itself has been organized through omission. However, this finding also complicates trauma theory that treats fragmentation primarily as psychic belatedness. In this corpus, fracture is not reducible to individual trauma; it emerges from the intersection of psychological injury, political censorship, family secrecy, and archival absence. This is why fragmented narration functions structurally rather than ornamentally. Its presence signals that the difficulty of remembering 1965 is produced by social and ideological conditions, not only by damaged consciousness.

The ideology-memory pattern is significant because it shows that 1965 literature does not merely represent victims or perpetrators; it represents the conditions under which memory itself becomes morally risky. Anti-communist stigma, selective erasure, counter-memory, social surveillance, exile, and archival contestation reveal that ideology works as a mechanism of classification. It determines who can be mourned, whose testimony is credible, and which histories remain socially dangerous. This supports Ferdinal's argument [10] that modern Indonesian literature registers state violence, while also resonating with Ilma's emphasis [5] on haunting and archival silence in post-authoritarian fiction. Yet this finding moves beyond identifying ideological content by showing that ideology operates through narrative permission and prohibition. Literary counter-memory therefore has a double function: it challenges official and social erasure, but it also exposes the fragility of speaking from a stigmatized position.

The persistence of ideological pressure can be explained by the afterlife of anti-communist discourse as a social structure rather than a concluded historical doctrine. Even when fiction does not reproduce explicit state propaganda, its characters inhabit a world where political labeling continues to organize kinship, mobility, trust, and moral recognition. This explains why stigma appears not only in overt political conflict but also in family secrecy, return from exile, guarded speech, and delayed identity disclosure. Jamilah's discussion [19] of nationalism, Refai's analysis [20] of political allegory, and Kadamehang's work [23] on dissent suggest that Indonesian literature often negotiates power indirectly, through symbolic and narrative displacement. This corpus confirms that indirectness is not avoidance; it is a necessary strategy within a memory regime where public speech has been historically constrained. Ideological memory persists because it is embedded in everyday social relations, not only in institutions or official texts.

The ethical pattern matters because it demonstrates that representing 1965 trauma requires more than giving voice to the silenced. Mediated testimony, narrative restraint, survivor dignity, representational limits, ethical distance from ideological judgment, and archive caution indicate that literary witness must balance disclosure with protection. This finding aligns with Al-Ma'ruf et al.'s account [11] of moral dimensions in contemporary Indonesian literature and Susanti's attention [6] to victim narrative, but it also sharpens their implications: ethical representation is not equivalent to moral condemnation. A text may oppose violence and still risk appropriating pain if it converts trauma into spectacle or narrative mastery. The corpus instead suggests that ethical narration often works through restraint, indirection, and refusal of closure. Such strategies do not weaken testimony; they protect suffering from being consumed as evidence, sentiment, or political capital.

The reason this ethical restraint recurs is that 1965 remains a field of representational asymmetry. Victims, descendants, exiles, and stigmatized families do not occupy the same narrative authority as official histories, perpetrators' accounts, or dominant ideological labels. Therefore, literature must negotiate the unequal conditions under which speech becomes legible. Adji's work [29] on fragmented memory, Sullivan's discussion [27] of testimonial ethics, and Chandra and Verma's study [28] of trauma and witnessing help explain why mediated narration can be more responsible than direct exposure. At the same time, this finding challenges readings that equate silence with absence or weakness. In these texts, silence often marks ethical pressure: what cannot be said directly may still structure the entire narrative. This study therefore positions fractured representation as a disciplined literary response to political violence, where memory, ideology, and ethics remain inseparable rather than sequential concerns.

6. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Indonesian literary remembrance of 1965 is shaped less by narrative recovery than by formally managed incompletion. Its most important finding is that fractured chronology, testimonial silence, unstable focalization, ideological stigma, and ethical restraint work together as a literary mechanism for approaching trauma that remains historically contested and socially dangerous. The lesson drawn from this inquiry is that broken narration should not be read as aesthetic weakness, but as an ethical and ideological response to damaged historical transmission. This study contributes to literary memory studies by integrating narrative form, ideology, and representational ethics within one coherent analytical model.

This study is limited by its reliance on selected literary texts and publicly verifiable contextual materials, so its conclusions cannot be generalized to all Indonesian representations of 1965. Its coding framework also privileges textual and narrative indicators, while reader reception, publishing history,

translation politics, and classroom circulation remain outside its analytical scope. Future research should expand this corpus across genres, languages, regions, and media, including poetry, drama, memoir, film, and digital archives. Comparative work on Indonesian, Southeast Asian, and transnational trauma narratives would further clarify how fractured representation travels across historical contexts while retaining specific ethical and political meanings.

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Author states no conflict of interest.

AI USE DECLARATION

The author used artificial intelligence tools to assist with the generation of illustrative figures and with the formatting and layout of this manuscript. AI was not used to generate the substantive content, conceptualization, data, analysis, or conclusions of the research, all of which remain the sole responsibility of the author.

INFORMED CONSENT

Not applicable – this study did not involve direct human participants. Data consisted solely of publicly verifiable literary, scholarly, and contextual records.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This research did not involve human or animal subjects; it analyzed publicly verifiable literary, scholarly, and contextual records, and therefore no institutional review board approval was required. Where research does involve human subjects, the author affirms that such research would be conducted in full compliance with all relevant national regulations and institutional policies, in accordance with the tenets of the Declaration of Helsinki, and would be approved by the author's institutional review board or equivalent committee.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The corpus of publicly verifiable literary, scholarly, and contextual records analyzed in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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