Intersections: Gender, History and Culture in the Asian Context
Issue 3, January 2000
doi: 10.25911/0EFH-EK90

Virtual Rape: Vivian's Story

Laura Lochore

1. *Hi Netters, Yesterday I got the opportunity to meet with a friend of mine who was one of the victims of the 14th of May disturbances/riots. She lives in an apartment in Pluit. She has one little sister and one little brother. She lives with her family in this apartment. Around 9:15am the apartment was surrounded by hundreds of people who looked very threatening. They screamed like devils, 'Butcher the Chinese.' 'Let's eat the pigs.' 'Let's party.'*

2. So begins an article Appendix A posted to a newsgroup (alt.soc.indonesia.mature) in Indonesian (the translation, of this and subsequent italicised selections, is my own) on 13 June 1998. [1] It is allegedly a first hand account written by a victim of the rapes of Chinese-Indonesian women which took place in Indonesia around May and June 1998. On 21 July 1998, the *Guardian* (London) Appendix B, and two days later, the *Sydney Morning Herald* Appendix C, published an article which included a 'Vivian's story,' beginning,

   > My name is Vivian and I am 18 years old. I have a little sister and bother and we live in what is supposed to be a 'secure' apartment. At 9:15am on May 14...

3. On comparison, from the extended length and clarity of language of the internet article, it became apparent that the 'story' that appreared in the *Guardian*/*Sydney Morning Herald* was a rather corrupted version of the internet article in English translation. There was no mention in either newspaper of any link with the internet, or of the fact that the article was a translation. Neglecting to mention that the article is not an interview piece or an account written directly for the newspaper has two functions. Firstly, it prevents any disbelief in the credibility of the internet as a source, and secondly, it permits alterations of the account, such as the deletion of Vivian's reasoned conclusion of her account which poses questions about minority politics in Indonesia. As will be shown, moreover, not mentioning that the source is indirect also masks mistranslations and misunderstandings.

4. Vivian's story, articulated via the medium of the internet, was virtually raped. It was appropriated for use by the Western media without acknowledgement of the source. Issues of (post)colonialism[2] and technology in negotiating the Subject in question, especially in the case of the subaltern female, need investigation. The phrase, 'Vivian's Story,' is intentionally ambiguous. In the article as it originally appeared on the internet, it is Vivian who is telling her own story, albeit by the medium of a 'friend' who acknowledges his/her presence right at the start, and the fact that 'Vivian' is a pseudonym. In subsequent versions of the story, as presented by the *Guardian* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the article is told as a story *about* Vivian: the authorial voice is silenced, and Spivak's question, 'Can the subaltern speak?'[3] demands an answer.

5. *Our family was on floor 7. At that time, we were phoned by a family who lived on the third floor, and told that the masses had already gone up to the second floor and furthermore that the*

occupants were being chased upstairs. We immediately felt afraid, but in that fear we prayed and made pleas to God. After that, we prepared to leave the room, and we went up the stairs to the top floor, because it was no longer possible to go downstairs. We went up to the 15th floor and there we stayed in the room of an acquaintance. It wasn't long after that we were surprised by a number of people coming out of the lift at the precise moment we went in, so we quickly went in and locked the door.



Figure 1.

6. The answer to whether or not Vivian speaks is both yes and no. On the affirmative side, internet technology, the democratic-utopian 'medium-of-the-moment,' allows Vivian a voice which she would otherwise have been denied. However, her narrative is constrained by the wider forces of (post)colonial discourse which both inscribes her narrative and circumscribes it, relegating it (and her) to a tiny hole in the information super-highway. On the negative side, the discursive framework within which journalism works, especially the discourse of (post)colonialism, wrests Vivian's voice from her and re-writes her narrative within the reductionist discourse of Colonial White Self/ Non-White Other.

7. *At that moment we heard the door of another room being pounded on and we could hear many screams coming from women and little girls. At that moment we felt extremely threatened in the room, and we were aware that the room we were in would get its turn, so we immediately dispersed and hid in corners of the room. From inside we could hear the cries of girls from around 10-12 years screaming, 'Mummy, mummy, mum, it hurts...' At that moment I didn't know what was happening.*

8. As a white woman, my own position in writing on Vivian has been (and will be) called by some 'epistemologically questionable.' I can not escape the trap of 'speaking for' Vivian, and in some way re-enacting colonialism on a micro-scale. I can however, from my bilingual, white, academic position, offer an analysis of the power structures at play within the translated text, and an alternative, more accurate translation to that offered by the *Guardian*. This sounds an arrogant, ignorant and even elitist statement to make, suggesting that one person's translation or reading of the text is more 'correct' than another. I would like to point out that while alternative meanings are possible, and are made possible by differing ideological and discursive positionings between readers (my translation being bound by my own linguistic, discursive position), a literacy in the sign system being used is still necessary for any 'authoritative' reading to be made. There are numerous instances of mistranslation in the *Guardian* article which stem from an inadequate understanding of elements of the usage of Indonesian. Thus I have no hesitation in claiming to present a 'more accurate' translation.

Media: Power and Technology

9. The internet proves a rich site for analysis in discussion of the spread of information when compared to (and in combination with) the more traditional forms of mass-communication, such as television and print media. Spivak argues that there is a hierarchy to the identification and spread of knowledge, especially in relation to disempowered groups. Often, the experience of the disempowered can only be written about by, and through the

discourse of, the powerful.

> The concrete experience that is the guarantor of the political appeal of prisoners, soldiers and children is disclosed through the concrete experience of the intellectual, the one who diagnoses the episteme ... the intellectual within socialised capital, brandishing concrete experience, can consolidate the international division of labour.[4]

10. Under traditional means of information dissemination, only the intellectual elite who have the power to publicise their findings (in which they identify and thus constitute the subaltern Subject as an Object of knowledge) can speak the subaltern experience. In the case of publishing hard-copy texts or broadcasting via television or radio, - the 'older' media - publication hinges on economic, educational and cultural capital. In Spivak's analysis, the subaltern Subject can neither identify nor speak of their own experience. They can only be selectively *identified* (as influenced by the wider interests of culture and politics, discursively framed) and *represented*. Both the identification and representation are skewed by the subjectivity of the author. The media, who form part of the intellectual elite, play a considerable role in determining the constitution of 'newsworthy objects' and consolidating frameworks of disempowerment via representation, often without looking at questions of politics or responsibility.

11. The direct correlation between the increasing sophistication of information technology and the dissemination of information is well-documented[5], yet it remains an important point in considering the problem of responsibility in representation of the subaltern subject. The question of who represents who (and how) gains new vigour in discussions of the globalisation of technology. At the same time, the practice and ease of news-sharing exacerbate the spread of colonial stereotypes across the globe. Said's argument that the West has created an Orient via the discursive practices of colonial knowledge regains momentum.[6] Stam and Spence argue that colonialism is carried on in the 'struggle over images.'[7] When images are increasingly more mobile and complex, colonialism re-emerges as an issue of academic concern.

12. *After almost half an hour of waiting, when the situation began to abate, and the voices began to recede, we made ourselves have the courage to go and see. And after we left, really what we saw ... can not be mentioned.... We saw many people passed out on the floor, many small children and young girls stretched out.... Oh God ... the things that had happened ... my little sister (Veny) screamed and screamed hysterically seeing it all and she flew into my father's arms. Seeing that, I also cried...*

13. The Vivian article as it is (re-)presented in the *Guardian* is an instance of the continuation of a neo-(post)colonialism via representation. In its simplest terms, the colonial Other is, at the same time, represented both as the downtrodden, non-white, female, victim, and as violent rapists. The East is feminised, and reduced to base instincts. On the more complex level of the dissemination of information, the combination of internet technology and print-media together with the usage of *bahasa* Indonesia, both empower and enable the disempowerment of the subaltern. In Vivian's case, the internet itself and its (relatively) non-elitist nature allows the user greater power over the representation of the Self,[8] yet it also makes possible the appropriation of the voice of the subaltern for neo-(post)colonial ends.

Language, Literacy and Translation

14. Anderson says that 'as a community imagined through language, the nation presents itself as simultaneously open and closed,'[9] and demonstrates his point by presenting an untranslated passage of Indonesian which he argues to be 'closed.' Anderson's analysis of reading practice (reading nations as texts which are open and closed) is useful in examining

the Vivian article. The openness, accessibility or otherwise of an object, be it a nation or a narrative, is dependent on two things - the reader and the textual medium through which the object is represented. Anderson presumes that his audience is not able to read Indonesian, which is a dangerous supposition considering his readership comprises a large number of Asianists. Yet his assumption has grounds because to the majority of Western readers, an Indonesian language text *would* be closed. This is the case with the 'original' Vivian article, since in Indonesian it has a limited audience. Of the (native) speakers of Indonesian, only a small percentage have their own email accounts and access to newsgroups.[10] Thus the combination of the linguistic nature of the text and its medium allow it to be open only to a tiny proportion of people. In Indonesian on the internet, the text remains closed to the majority of Internet-users and to the majority of Indonesian speakers, despite the fact that there has been a dramatic expansion of internet use in Indonesia. It could be presumed that there is very little chance of anyone discovering and 'proving' that the article as presented in the *Guardian* is anything less than completely true and accurate. So little chance in fact, that the risk to the credibility of the publication, either by deliberate or ignorant mistranslation, seems negligible.

15. Changes will inevitably occur between two texts in the act of translation. Because ideology is embedded in language, there will always be a shift in meaning and representation between an original text and its translation.[11] A translator does not merely translate, but, as Said explains in *Orientalism*,[12] teaches the Self how to read and understand the text of the Other by his or her own subjective translation. This brings into question the position of the translator as an In-Between, a Border-Dweller, walking the line between the Self and the Other. In the act of translation, it is the translator's job to (attempt to) render him/herself transparent, (although it can only be a coloured transparency). It remains that the translator cannot escape their own subjectivity nor can they escape the discourse embedded in the language of the translation. Finlay writes that the most important criteria for translating,

> Will, in all cases, be that it should present an *accurate account of the contents of the original, omitting nothing and likewise adding nothing*. This implies a complete understanding of the original, in every way coupled with a corresponding knowledge of the target language... *the readers must be ideally unaware that they are reading a translation* ... the third criterion of a good translation is that it should capture the style and atmosphere of the original ... if the translator has fulfilled all these criteria ... then there is a reasonable likelihood that he [sic] will have produced a good translation [my emphasis].[13]

16. The article which appears in the newspapers is vastly different from the internet article. By Finlay's definition, it can in no way be called, 'a good translation' except for the fact that the readers are 'ideally unaware that they are reading a translation,' because the source of the article as an internet Indonesian language text is never acknowledged. Thus while it is the translator's job to (attempt to) be transparent, the newspaper article oversteps the boundaries of translation ethics by disguising the prior manifestation and author of the text, or by (mis)presenting the translation as the original.

17. The first and most obvious difference between the articles is immediately apparent in the first few lines. As mentioned earlier, the original article[14] posted on the internet in *Bahasa* Indonesia begins in third person, with the following information.

> Hi Netters, Yesterday I got the opportunity to meet with *a friend of mine* who was one of the victims of the 14th of May disturbances/riots. *She* lives in an apartment in Pluit.
> Name: Vivian (pseudonym)
> Age: 18 years
> Gender: Female
> *She* has one little sister and one little brother.
> *She* lives with her family in this apartment. [My emphasis].

It then moves into first-person. However, the *Guardian* article begins,

> *My name* is Vivian and *I* am 18 years old. *I* have a little sister and brother, and *we* live in what is supposed to be a 'secure' apartment. At 9.15am on May 14...

It would appear that the article has been 'translated' into a first-person narrative for the purposes of readability (a story versus a list of 'facts'), for creating an illusion of eye-witness authority, and for masking the actual internet source, which is seen by some as less than reliable and for hiding the third person intervention.

18. Additions which appeared nowhere in the original Vivian article have been made to the translation in the *Guardian*, such as the 'secure apartment' of the above passages. There are other instances of this: when Vivian states in the original, 'I was raped by seven people,' the *Guardian* adds, 'Repeatedly.' When Vivian asks, 'God ... why must this happen?' The *Guardian* turns it into a crisis of faith, adding, 'Where are you, God? Are you still alive?' In the same way, the original states, 'At that moment, I didn't know what was happening,' whereas the *Guardian* article specifies, 'I didn't know then that these little girls were being raped.' Other significant differences between the texts indicate that chunks of text have been edited out, including a large amount at the end of the original, and sentences have been paraphrased. Frequently, personal pronouns and grammatical structure are altered. The original in direct translation reads, 'We were aware that *our room* would get *its turn*.' The newspaper article translation inserts an us-and-them inflection, 'we realised that *they* would come to *us*,' personalising the language for dramatic effect. In many cases, long sentences have been broken up and temporal and sequential clauses, such as, 'at that moment,' have been removed, leaving the sentence to start with 'I' or 'We.' This gives the narrative a much more personal, fragmented and sensational movement, yet loses sequential and cause-effect relationships between events.

19. There are several instances of mistranslation apparent in the *Guardian* article, either for effect or due to lack of fluency in Indonesian, as well as cultural-linguistic translatory errors. One of the most obvious mistakes is the confusion between Vivian and her sister Fenny. When Vivian wakes up in the hospital, the original Indonesian internet article has, '*Ma, kenapa Vinny, ma*?' The *Guardian* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* translate this as, 'Mom, why **Fenny**, Mom?' (referring to Vivian's little sister). Although 'v' is often pronounced as 'f' in Indonesian, it is more likely that 'Vinny' is the shortened version of Vivian, used in first-person to refer to herself,[15] than that she would enquire after her sister immediately on gaining consciousness *and* misspell her sister's name when writing about the experience. The sentences immediately following give indicators of Vivian's physical condition, with no reference to her sister, also indicating that the person in question was Vivian herself. The translation in the *Guardian* further displays a rudimentary knowledge of formal Indonesian in the direct translation of *kenapa* as purely 'why,' and not as the more colloquial Jakartanese, 'What has happened/is happening?' The question would be far better translated as, 'Why me, mum?' or more probably, 'What's happened to me?' than, 'Why Fenny Mom?' The other indicator that the translator is less than fluent in Indonesian is the literal translation of '*Tante Vera*' and '*Om Dodi*' as 'Aunt Vera' and 'Uncle Dodi.' While literally 'Aunt' and 'Uncle,' *Tante* is used to refer to older woman and *Om* to older men as terms of respect yet familiarity. Vivian's article quite clearly states, 'with our **friends**, a newly wed couple,' indicating that Vera and Dodi are not actual relations as the *Guardian* indicates.

20. *Eventually, with our friends, a newly wed couple, we went down the stairs. At the tenth floor, numerous screams for help were audible. Because those screams were so clearly heard, we were moved to enter that floor. But at the moment we turned the corner, we were surprised by the large number of people. And I saw with my own eyes a girl of around 20 years being raped by 4 men. She tried to fight but she was restrained. Seeing that we ran as fast as we could.... But calamity.... Veny was quickly caught by those people. And my family*

and I tried to save her but there were about 60 of them. Finally my family, papa, mama, me, Veny and Doni also as well as the husband and wife, Dodi and Vera, were tied up with torn sheets. They carried us into a room. Dodi at that moment had already asked them what they wanted, but they didn't answer, their appearances were very evil and cruel.

21. There are a number of deliberate changes, as well as many mistakes, in the translation of the article which are less than 'ethical.' These changes have been made to sensationalise a story which hardly needed dramatic effect and to give authority to the article. Decisions made as to exactly which sentences and sections of the article to include, change or leave out have considerable impact on the reading of characters and events. The effect is a re-representation of both Vivian and the original internet article on the terms of the news-media - not the original document's author. The importance of the Indonesian language as the language of expression for the post-colonial National subject should not be overlooked, nor the complexity of Asian languages being 'read' by the Western reader as closed 'languages of the colonies' (as demonstrated by Anderson).[16] The unauthorised act of translation from Indonesian into English is colonisation by language. Vivian's story itself has been raped, pillaged and conformed to fit the needs and structures of journalistic and Orientalist discourse.

The Internet: Truth and Volume - 'We Can't be Shouted Out Here ...'

22. The internet is the 'technology-of-the-moment,' around which utopian visions are enthusiastically spun. Proponents of the advancement of information technology argue a democratic-ideal vision for the internet, whereby all can be equal in their access to information and exchange. Through bulletin boards or special interest area users are able to access and distribute information for all to see, bypassing conventional methods of mass-communication and distribution. The ideas, injustices and hopes of the world's population are available for anyone who has the time and the inclination to view them. It is within this frame-work that computers are seen as potential convivial tools which will open up channels of information exchange to presently, 'disempowered' groups.[17] It is quite clear that this vision overlooks the modes of production and representation determined by economic and political factors, and ignores the desire and interest of the powerful to remain so by exploitation of the disenfranchised. There are contradictions inherent in these claims.

23. The internet does in some ways reach its purported goals of democratic-utopianism in that it has allowed (a form of) on-line equality to those fortunate enough to be on-line. Yet there is still a disparity between the ideal and the real. As Jensen points out, 'An estimated 10% of users of the internet and a distinct minority of users of the major on-line services ... are women.' However, she continues, 'There's never been a better place for women to assert themselves than on-line.... We can't be shouted out here.'[18] People of other marginalised groups are likewise able to publish their views and claim their identity through the internet in a way not possible in 'real life.' It seems quite possible, in some instances (Vivian's being a case in point) that via the internet, the Subaltern speak.[19] However, access to the internet is still inequitable and thus cannot fulfil its idealistic claims to true democracy.[20]

24. Although 'we can't be shouted out here [on the net],' more sophisticated methods of devalidating the spoken experience of marginalised groups are enabled by the internet. Internet 'truth' is called into question precisely because of the paramount importance of the representation, the value of the sign over its object. The 'unreliability' of the internet and the possibility of *creating* a fictitious identity and experience is recalled deliberately to discredit texts such as Vivian's (and the internet itself). This is a very convenient way of silencing unwanted information when the Vivians of the world have no other way of speaking.

25. *One of them grabbed Veny roughly and dragged her onto the sofa, at that moment I knew that Veny was in danger, and I tried to yell as loud as I could and one of them slapped me, then it was my father who also yelled out and was hit with a wooden beam until he passed out, my mother had already passed out from the moment she saw them drag Veny away. At that moment, I just prayed to God, oh God, don't let this disaster come upon us.... Dodi, who at that moment continued to try to persuade them with offers of money but without success. And ... eventually Veny was raped forcibly by them. I couldn't stand to watch that or hear Veny's screams, so I cried and closed my eyes tightly.... There were about 5 people raping Veny, and every one began with the cry, 'My god is great'.... They are sadists.... They are cruel... They appeared furious....*

26. Where the truth of an article cannot be proven, neither can its falsity. This is helpful for groups for whom the article is useful, for instance the media. The news-media interest is to represent themselves as a source of authority and truth, yet they have found the internet incredibly useful for the collection and dissemination of news. An uneasy relationship between forms of traditional news publication and the internet has been forged. By putting an internet article with no traceable source into the form of hard-print or live-news coverage, the media lends the account a perhaps undeserved authority. As the news-media interest is in maintaining their own identity as trustworthy and active in the collection of information from reliable sources, it would be self-defeating to acknowledge the internet as the source of the article. Since there is no apparent way of determining whether the Vivian article is 'actual' or not (and since there is little chance of a Western newspaper reader locating the original Vivian Indonesian language text on the internet) it is expedient for the news-media to represent the article as a first-hand account.

27. *Not long after about another 9 people entered the room and pulled me and I saw Vera also dragged away. At that stage I passed out ... and didn't know what was happening.... I woke up at around 5-6pm, with a headache and I only then became aware that I was naked, and then I cried, I felt very ashamed, I remembered that my family were still there, and I saw with blurred vision my father hugging my mother and Doni. I saw Dodi stretched out on the floor, while Vera cried over his body. I didn't have the strength to arise. I tired eventually and slept again.*

The Article in the West: Orientalism Re-visited

28. What becomes of this '(post)-colonial' article when appropriated by the Western media? In its original form and language, Vivian's story stands little chance of circulation beyond the comparatively tiny Indonesian-speaking on-line community. In English in the print media, however, (disregarding the colonising nature of the language), Vivian's voice has been heard across the globe. Or has it?

29. The key significance of what happened to Vivian's story between the Indonesian internet article and the English language newspaper article lies in the different regimes of knowledge and power relations operating in the two texts. Foucault argues that 'A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved.'[21] This demonstrates the notion of power being exerted via discourse by re-inscribing and representing subjects - a major point of Said's argument for Orientalism being the knowledge of the East by the West.[22] Thus self-empowerment can be seen to be attained by the writing *of* the self *by* the self. In the original article, Vivian writes herself and knows her own experience. Through the medium of the internet forum she is able to re-present her own experience of being known (in a physical, biblical sense[23]) through rape and to implement a knowledge differential of her own through representing her rapists as Other. However, in the Western newspaper article she is (again) known and Othered; aligned with those from whom she distances herself in

her own narrative. In this there has been a movement from real to representation, from representation to re-representation. Thus we enter the field of the simulacra, represented by the media as 'true' and transparent.

30. As a woman, especially as a woman of the so-called East, Vivian must be known, as must the other representatives of the Orient, her rapists. The re-representation of the Vivian article in the English-language media is a new version of an old story, which Spivak captures in the statement 'white men are saving brown women from brown men.'[24] This is the colonial ideal and the colonial justification for intervention, except that this time, the saving takes place from a distance, without direct involvement, without even the journalistic act of physically witnessing or even speaking to the 'source.' It is a virtual salvation - a brown woman's voice is saved from slipping even further into the depths of the internet, into the realm of the unheard and the silenced. It is salvation from a fate worse than rape in the eyes of the media, and that is the ignominy of the mute. The article *almost* appears to be and could be viewed as, 'information retrieval from those silenced areas,' that Spivak proclaims we should welcome.[25] But with the arrogance of the coloniser, Vivian's voice is edited and filtered, her account is reshaped, 'improved,' and moulded, to fit with the orientalist representations of the East already operating in the Western Media.[26]

31. The other trajectory to follow in the move from event to re-representation is the question of who knows who as what. Initially, in the act of rape, man knows woman as an ambivalent object of desire and loathing - to be known, used and thrown away in order to perform and teach male superiority. The woman is Othered in the event as not only Other to man, but as Other to his religion, nation and ethnicity (in this case Christian to Muslim, non-*pribumi* [indigenous] Indonesian to *pribumi*, Chinese to Indonesian) which makes the woman's identity quadruply offensive - at the same time an object of fear and desire. She becomes a blank space onto which all his fear and loathing are projected.[27] It is the aspects of religion, nation and ethnicity (although only nominally) which are picked up by the media, suggesting that the Othering *of* women *as* women is neither unusual nor important.

32. In the second instance of knowledge (the article as written by Vivian herself), the victim knows the perpetrators as Other to Self in terms of family, gender, ethnicity, religion, nation, humanity and power (over her). Othering in terms of humanity is perhaps the most subtle difference drawn, as the rapists are alternately represented as 'devils' and 'animals': non-human.

    The apartment was surrounded by hundreds of people who looked very threatening.
    > *They screamed like devils: Butcher them! Eat the pigs!*
    > *I saw with my own eyes, a young girl of around 20 being raped by four men.*
    > *... like an animal, brutally, repeatedly, slashed at her stomach ...*

    In being termed devils, the perpetrators are given an element of omnipotence, having power over humans. In being termed animals, they are denied both the responsibility of their actions (in terms of motivation and self-control) and the responsibility for the consequences - they will not be held accountable.

33. In the third instance of knowledge, the newspaper article, Vivian is once again known as victim, along with the rapists, and the mode of representation turns to Orientalism - the knowledge of East by West. The shift from knowing to known in the character of Vivian, from subject to object, from Othering to Othered is barely noticeable largely because the framework has already been constructed in Vivian's own narrative. Her account of Others in terms of race, nation and religion uses precisely the same *modus operandi* as colonial discourse. Vivian's article enables the framework of differentiation by race, religion and nation to be recalled in the Western media. Because she represents herself in this way, by these terms, the Western media can throw up its hands and deny any personal

responsibility in the process of Othering. It is a very small step from Vivian Othering the rapists to being Othered herself by a similarly Othering post-colonial discourse. In this we see a retrogression from post-colonial proactive knowing by the (post)colonial Subject to being known in the more traditional colonial East-West binarism.

34. The common element in the statement, 'White men are saving brown women from brown men,'[28] is in colour - the uniform Brownness of the East. This simplification or reduction of identities to a common denominator is one of the standard techniques of colonialism used to define the Other. Yet in Vivian's account, the Self/Other differentiation is far more complex. There are no Brown Men - they are devils, animals, non-Chinese, anti/non-Christian and non-human (men). Vivian and the persecuted are not Brown Women - they are Chinese, Christian, family, friends, human (non-omnipotent - vulnerable). The line between Self and Other falls, in Vivian's account, between her family and 'the masses'/the rapists. The line between Self and Other in the English-language media account however, falls between the reader and Vivian/the rapists. The line between self and other is moved - according to who is telling the story. The problem is that we only tell the story to ourselves. We do not speak to others, or with them, only for them. And in this move, gender becomes an important consideration. As Spivak argues,

    > If in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and can not speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow.[29]

    Vivian's story is no longer Vivian's story. Rather it is a story about Vivian, because Vivian can no longer speak for herself.

35. *The following day I was in the hospital in Pluit. Beside me were my mother and father. Still aching all over, I asked, 'Ma ... why me, what's happened to me, ma?' But I felt very sick when I said that. My cheeks felt swollen. My mother straight away started to cry and couldn't speak. Whereas my father smiled whilst holding back his tears.*

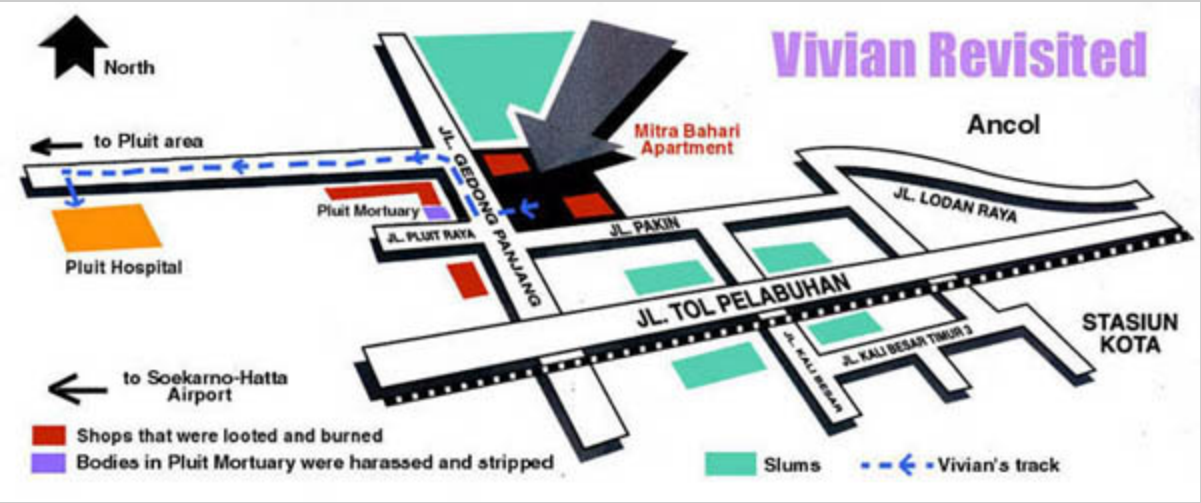


Figure 2

36. Interrogating the statement, 'White men saving brown women from brown men,'[30] is useful in examination of this article and any number of others about 'non-Western atrocities' as presented in the English language media, especially in light of the East = Female, West = Male binary opposition. The sympathy of the reader is designed to be with Vivian as an object of pity; the horror and loathing is projected onto the rapists. The identification of the reader is with the ex-nominated figure of the white man here, as personified by the Western

media. The article is once again rewriting a narrative of female weakness and impotence, and throwing up against the female reader the vulnerability of her own body, in direct contrast with the strength of the male. It is no accident that the men in the article are alternately represented as animals and devils, both having connotations of super-human (definitely supra-female) strength. The brown men in the article are represented more in terms of their colour than gender. They are represented as Brown Other to a white (male) self, as animalistic, demonic and molesters of women and children.

37. *I was nursed for about four days before I started to recover. And my father told me what had happened with a sympathetic expression.... When I fainted, I was raped by around 7 people, my father couldn't see clearly because he was dizzy from being hit with a wooden beam. They raped me, turning my body this way and that and ramming me against the wall. And after that, dad said.... 'Vivian, Veny has gone....' I was confused and didn't know why I started to cry, and maybe my cries could have even been heard outside the room.... 'Why dad????' He didn't reply.... He told me to rest and left the room. Then I cried and cried as though life had no meaning any more.*

Conclusion

38. Foucault demonstrates his notion of the way power is exerted via discourse over people by their constitution as objects, as bodies which are to be bound, disciplined, written on.[31] Vivian's physical body is a text read by the rapists as Other: at the first level of signification (denotative) as female and non-Indonesian (Chinese), and at the second level of signification (connotation) as weak/desirable and rich (economically-oppressive)/non-Islamic. The signification is two-dimensional: Vivian's body is framed by both gender and by race, which allow her use and abuse via Othering.

39. *Once all that had finished, a week ago, I came home from the hospital to my relative's house and only then was I told what had happened. Evidently, when Veny was raped, she tried to fight them, and because of that she was repeatedly slapped by those uncouth people, and the final effort Veny made to fight, she spat on one of them. Upset, he took a knife (I don't know of what sort) and straight away drove the knife into her stomach, and like an animal, brutally, repeatedly slashed the knife into Veny's stomach, until finally Veny drew her last breath with blood flowing all over her body. When I heard that I went into shock, and dad told me that Dodi had also had the same thing happen to him, and eventually drew his last breath watched by Vera who was also a victim of rape. God.... Why must this happen??? Then Vera was taken by her elder sibling to live at her parents' house, and according to the news from her sibling, she is still in shock and has withdrawn into herself, even frequently refusing to eat. And, my mother was also withdrawn. My mother and I until this day, still cry every hour over what happened, and I can not forget that day. Although they are human, their brutality was inhuman.*

40. Vivian reclaims her physical body and control over it by the process of self-representation within the framework of the (post) colonial through the technology of the internet. Her body becomes the body of the text, bound by discourses of language, technology and colonialism, but ultimately she is able to speak her own experience through the internet. Vivian's body of written text is appropriated by the Western media, taken over as an act of possession and mutilated to suit the confines of the English (inherently Orientalist) language and journalistic discourse. The body of the text is not e-raced,[32] rather concerns with gender are removed from the account and issues of race and nation are highlighted, in line with popular Orientalist and patriarchal practices of the media and beliefs of the (overwhelmingly Western) readership.

41. The post-colonial era has seen the development of new identities in spaces between the old binarisms of white and black and male and female. Such identities have been generated and articulated in a variety of ways. Appadurai writes,

> Mediascapes ... tend to be image-centred narrative-based accounts of strips of reality, and what they offer to those who experience and transform them is a series of elements (such as characters, plots and textual forms) out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives, their own as well as those of others living in other places. These scripts ... help to constitute narratives of the 'other' and proto-narratives of possible lives, fantasies which could become prolegomena to the desire for acquisition and movement.[33]

42. The internet for 'Vivian' is a way of creating an on-line persona through whom she can articulate her own experience and mobilise political action. The English language media, however, still operates within the discourses of patriarchy and colonialism, resulting in the reduction of Chinese non-native Indonesian Christian family to brown woman, and native Indonesian Islamic crowd to brown man. The technology of the internet allows previously silenced groups opportunities for (limited) self-representation. It is, however, arrested by the colonising power of the media, and the new identities of the post-colonial snap back into their old frames.

43. *Fellow netters, while I tell of this, there is much which I cannot say in words, and while I am telling it, I can not stop my tears from flowing. And hearing similar stories from a number of other friends, almost all had the same cries of, 'My god is great,' by those evil people. Do they consider their actions a holy war? To you teachers of Islam, your religion is the religion of the majority, but the good people who have love towards others in your religion are in the minority. However with the religions of Christianity, Buddhism and Hindu, which are minority religions, the good people who have love for one another are of the majority in those religions. As a suggestion to you teachers of Islam, we respect your religion just as we respect our own, your religion is a good religion, but the teachers who don't teach love, just listen to sermons on the radio, 98.5FM or 95.4FM if I'm not mistaken. There you hear direct teaching sermons broadcast from a mosque in Jakarta, you know what is taught there by the speakers is that the followers of Islam must rise, revenge, oppose Christians, oppose Chinese, oppose the Government. Oh you hypocritical teachers, if you do not teach mutual love and respect between people of your own religion as well as between religions, I am certain that your religion will stay the majority but with a quality of people which is more and more degenerate and with a people who are more and more volatile. REMEMBER! You who teach, you will receive the strictest judgement from God. [from James 3:1] Repent!*

Endnotes

[1] The (supposed) original and translations of Vivian's story can be found at 'Shrine of Rememberance,' posted by the United Front for Human Rights.

[2] The usage of the term 'post-colonialism' is problematic, due to these far more subtle forms of traditional colonialism via representation. We are beyond post-colonialism. The use of parentheses in (post)colonialism is far more useful in recognising the reality of the structures of colonialism which persist in the post-colonial world, however this still supports the idea of a self-perpetuating colonialism, innocent of political deliberation. At the risk of over-confusing the terminology, what is needed is a clearer understanding of the way in which colonialism is deliberately and hegemonically reproduced under a neo-(post)colonialist project.

[3] Gayatri Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, London: McMillan, 1988, pp. 271-313.

[4] Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' p. 275.

[5] See for example Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities (Revised Edition)*, London: Verso, 1991.

[6] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, London: Penguin, 1995.

[7] Robert Stam and Louise Spence, 'Colonialism, Racism and Representation: An Introduction,' in *Screen*, vol. 24, no. 2, (March-April 1983): 5.

[8] 'Greater power' yet not complete power, as the user is still working within discursive frameworks dictating possible identities (or combinations of).

[9] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 146.

[10] See David T. Hill and Krishna Sen, 'Wiring the Warung to Global Gateways: The Internet in Indonesia,' in *Indonesia*, Cornell University, no. 63, (April 1997): 67-89.

[11] Tejaswini Niranjana, *Siting Translation: History, Post-structuralism and the Colonial Context*, Oxford: University of California Press Ltd., 1992.

[12] Said, *Orientalism*.

[13] Ian F. Finlay, *Translating*, London: Teach Yourself Books, 1971, pp. 89-91.

[14] In order to examine more closely the differences between the article as it appeared in Indonesian and the *Guardian* version, I translated the article into English myself and compared the two versions in English.

[15] Whilst it is not acceptable in formal English to interchange one's name with 'I' this is quite common in Indonesian.

[16] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 146.

[17] Ailsa Barry, 'Who Gets to Play? Art, Access and the Margin,' in *Fractal Dreams: New Media in Social Context*, ed. Jon Dovey, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1996, p. 137.

[18] Kris Jensen, 'A Woman's Place? In Cyberspace,' in *Facing Difference: Race, Gender and Mass Media*, ed. Shirley Biagi, Marilyn Kern-Foxworth, California: Pine Forge Press, 1997, pp. 244-45.

[19] Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' pp. 271-313.

[20] Lyn Nell Hancock, 'The Haves and the Have-nots...,' in *Facing Difference: Race, Gender and Mass Media*, ed. Shirley Biagi and Marilyn Kern-Foxworth, California: Pine Forge Press, 1997.

[21] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, New York: Pantheon, 1977, p. 136.

[22] Said, *Orientalism*.

[23] The verb 'to know' is used in several English language versions (RSV, KJV, NKJV) of the Bible to describe the intimacy of sexual intercourse, as in Genesis 4:1 'Adam knew his wife.' The Indonesian translation of Genesis 4:1 uses the word, '*bersetubuh*,' meaning 'to have one body (together),' underlining the significance of sexual relations - that two become bonded as one flesh (see also Matthew 19:4-6). This oneness is intended to be framed by marriage (1 Corinthians 6:12-20). These concepts give some explanation of the difficulty of the position and the trauma experienced by the victim of rape.

[24] Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' p. 296.

[25] Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' p. 295.

[26] The term, 'Western Media' is problematic given that the same always defines the Self in heterogeneity. However, 'West' as a blanket term is necessarily used in the discourse of Orientalism in relation to the 'East'. Just as the West is enabled by its knowledge of the East, the 'Western Media' as a term is created in its act of speaking about the East. (The 'Eastern Media' does not exist, except as an object of Western knowledge). For this reason, and for the reason that discourse is embedded in language, I will use the term Western Media to refer to the newspapers which published the Vivian article in English. The balance of global media control, ownership and distribution is also heavily enough weighted in favour of the so-called West (CNN, AFP) that 'the Media' can (not unproblematically) be defined as Western. (See Colleen Roach, 'The Movement for a New World Information and Communication Order: A Second Wave?' in *Media, Culture and Society*, vol. 12, London: SAGE, 1990, pp. 283-307.

[27] Parama Roy, 'As the Master Saw Her,' in *Cruising the Performative*, ed. S. Case, P. Brett and S. Foster, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995, pp. 112-29.

[28] Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' p. 296.

[29] Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' p.287.

[30] Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' p. 296.

[31] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

[32]Jennifer de Vere Brody, 'Hyphen-Nations,' in *Cruising the Performative*, ed. Sue-Ellen Case, Philip Brett and Susan Leigh Foster, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995, pp. 149-62.

[33]Arjun Appadurai, 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Economy,' in *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalisation and Modernity*, ed. M. Featherstone, London: SAGE, 1990, p. 299.

Appendices

Appendix A Translation of Indonesian Internet Article Posting
Source : Newsgroup alt.soc.indonesia.mature
[Trans. Laura Lochore]

Hi Netters, Yesterday I got the opportunity to meet with a friend of mine who was one of the victims of the 14th of May disturbances/riots. She lives in an apartment in Pluit.

Name: Vivian (pseudonym)
Age: 18 years
Gender: Female

She has one little sister and one little brother. She lives with her family in this apartment. Around 9:15am the apartment was surrounded by hundreds of people who looked very threatening. They screamed like devils, 'Butcher the Chinese.' 'Let's eat the pigs.' 'Let's party.'

Our family was on floor 7. At that time, we were phoned by a family who lived on the third floor, and told that the masses had already gone up to the second floor and furthermore that the occupants were being chased upstairs. We immediately felt afraid, but in that fear we prayed and made pleas to God. After that, we prepared to leave the room, and we went up the stairs to the top floor, because it was no longer possible to go downstairs. We went up to the 15th floor and there we stayed in the room of an acquaintance. It wasn't long after that we were surprised by a number of people coming out of the lift at the precise moment we went in, so we quickly went in and locked the door.

At that moment we heard the door of another room being pounded on and we could hear many screams coming from women and little girls. At that moment we felt extremely threatened in the room, and we were aware that the room we were in would get its turn, so we immediately dispersed and hid in corners of the room. From inside we could hear the cries of girls from around 10-12 years screaming, "Mummy, mummy," "mum, it hurts..." At that moment I didn't know what was happening.

After almost half an hour of waiting, when the situation began to abate, and the voices began to recede, we made ourselves have the courage to go and see. And after we left, really what we saw.... Can not be mentioned... We saw many people passed out on the floor, many small children and young girls stretched out... Oh God... the things that had happened... my little sister (Veny) screamed and screamed hysterically seeing it all, and she flew into my fathers arms. Seeing that, I also cried...

Eventually, with our friends, a newly wed couple, we went down the stairs. At the tenth floor, numerous screams for help were audible. Because those screams were so clearly heard, we were moved to enter that floor. But at the moment we turned the corner, we were surprised by the large number of people. And I saw with my own eyes a girl of around 20 years being raped by 4 men. She tried to fight but she was restrained.

Seeing that we ran as fast as we could... But calamity... Veny was quickly caught by those people. And my family and I tried to save her but there were about 60 of them. Finally my family, papa, mama, me, Veny and Doni also as well as the husband and wife, Dodi and Vera, were tied up with torn sheets. They carried us into a room. Dodi at that moment had already asked them what they wanted, but they didn't answer, their appearances were very evil and cruel.

One of them grabbed Veny roughly and dragged her onto the sofa, at that moment I knew that Veny was in danger, and I tried to yell as loud as I could and one of them slapped me, then it was my father who also yelled out and was hit with a wooden beam until he passed out, my mother had already passed out from the moment she saw them drag Veny away. At that moment, I just prayed to God, oh God, don't let this disaster come upon us... Dodi, who at that moment continued to try to persuade them with offers of money but without success. And...eventually Veny was raped forcibly by them. I couldn't stand to watch that or hear Veny's screams, so I cried and closed my eyes tightly... There were about 5 people raping Veny, and every one began with the cry, "My god is great"... They are sadists... They are cruel... they appeared furious...

Not long after about another 9 people entered the room and pulled me and I saw Vera also dragged away. At that stage I passed out... and didn't know what was happening... I woke up at around 5-6pm, with a headache and I only then became aware that I was naked, and then I cried, I felt very ashamed, I remembered that my family were still there, and I saw with blurred vision my father hugging my mother and Doni. I saw Dodi stretched out on the floor, while Vera cried over his body. I didn't have the strength to arise. I tired eventually and slept again.

The following day I was in the hospital in Pluit. Beside me were my mother and father. Still aching all over, I asked, "ma... why me, what's happened to me, ma?" But I felt very sick when I said that. My cheeks felt swollen. My mother straight away started to cry and couldn't speak. Whereas my father smiled whilst holding back his tears.

I was nursed for about four days before I started to recover. And my father told me what had happened with a sympathetic expression... When I fainted, I was raped by around 7 people, my father couldn't see clearly because he was dizzy from being hit with a wooden beam. They raped me, turning my body this way and that and ramming me against the wall. And after that, dad said... "Vivian, Veny has gone..." I was confused and didn't know why I started to cry, and maybe my cries could have even heard outside the room... "Why dad????" He didn't reply... He told me to rest and left the room. Then I cried and cried as though life had no meaning any more.

Once all that had finished, a week ago, I came home from the hospital to my relative's house and only then was I told what had happened. Evidently, when Veny was raped, she tried to fight them, and because of that she was repeatedly slapped by those uncouth people, and the final effort Veny made to fight, she spat on one of them. Upset, he took a knife (I don't know of what sort) and straight away drove the knife into her stomach, and like an animal, brutally, repeatedly slashed the knife into Veny's stomach, until finally Veny drew her last breath with blood flowing all over her body. When I heard that I went into shock, and dad told me that Dodi had also had the same thing happen to him, and eventually drew his last breath watched by Vera who was also a victim of rape. God.... Why must this happen??? Then Vera was taken by her elder sibling to live at her parents house, and according to the news from her sibling, she is still in shock and has withdrawn into herself, even frequently refusing to eat. And, my mother was also withdrawn. My mother and I until this day, still cry every hour over what happened, and I can not forget that day. Although they are human, their brutality was inhuman.

Fellow netters, while I tell of this, there is much which I cannot say in words, and while I am telling it, I can not stop my tears from flowing. And hearing similar stories from a number of other friends, almost all had the same cries of, "My god is great," by those evil people. Do they consider their actions a holy war?

To you teachers of Islam, your religion is the religion of the majority, but the good people who have love towards others in your religion are in the minority. However with the religions of Christianity, Buddhism and Hindu, which are minority religions, the good people who have love for one another are of the majority in those religions. As a suggestion to you teachers of Islam, we respect your religion just as we respect our own, your religion is a good religion, but the teachers who don't teach love, just listen to sermons on the radio, 98.5FM or 95.4FM if I'm not mistaken. There you hear direct teaching sermons broadcast from a mosque in Jakarta, you know what is taught there by the speakers is that the followers of Islam must rise, revenge, oppose Christians, oppose Chinese, oppose the Government. Oh you hypocritical teachers, if you do not teach mutual love and respect between people of your own religion as well as between religions, I am certain that your religion will stay the majority but with a quality of people which is more and more degenerate and with a people who are more and more volatile. REMEMBER! You who teach, you will receive the strictest judgement from God. [from James 3:1] Repent!

Appendix B Article in *Guardian* (London), 21 July, 1998.
21 Jul 1998 INDONESIA:

'My father told me what had happened. After I fainted, seven people raped me.'

Riots in Jakarta marked a political crisis in Indonesia. But behind the scenes lay a crime that is only now coming to light: the rape of scores of ethnic Chinese women. Here, one woman tells her story.

My name is Vivian and I am 18 years old. I have a little sister and brother, and we live in what is supposed to be a `secure' apartment. At 9.15am on May 14, a huge crowd had gathered outside. They screamed: 'Let's butcher the Chinese! Let's eat pigs! Let's have a party!'

We live on the seventh floor and we got a call from a family on the third floor, saying the crowd had reached the second floor. We were all very frightened. We prayed and then we left our room and went upstairs to the top floor, as it was impossible to go down and escape. We got to the 15th floor and were surprised because some of the crowd were coming out of the elevators. We hurried into our friends' room and locked the door tightly.

We heard the crowd knock at the other rooms loudly and there were screams from women and girls. Our room was filled with fear. We realised they would come to us, so we spread throughout the room, hiding in the corners. We could hear girls of 10 or 12 years old screaming: `Mommy, mommy ... mom ... mom ... It hurts.' I didn't know then that these little girls were being raped.

After about half an hour, the noise diminished and we plucked up the courage to go out. The scene was indescribable. A lot of people, some of them young girls, were lying on the floor. 'Oh my God, what has happened?' Seeing all of this, we cried and screamed and my little sister Fenny hugged our father hysterically.

With our friends, a newly-wed couple, we started going downstairs. Reaching the 10th floor, we heard a scream for help. The scream was very clear and we decided to go down. But as we turned, we saw a lot of people. I saw a woman in her twenties being raped by four men. She tried to fight back but she was held down tightly.

Realising the danger, we ran as hard as we could. But the mob caught Fenny. We tried to rescue her, but couldn't do anything. There were about 60 of them. They tied us up with ripped sheets, myself, my father, my mother, Fenny, my brother, Doni, Uncle Dodi and my Aunt Vera. They led us to a room. Uncle Dodi asked what they wanted, but they did not reply. They looked evil and savage.

One of them grabbed Fenny roughly and dragged her to a sofa. I knew she was in great danger and I screamed but one of the mob slapped me in the face. My father, who also screamed, was hit with a piece of wood and he fainted. My mother had fainted when Fenny was dragged to the sofa. I could only pray.

Uncle Dodi kept trying to stop them by offering money. His efforts were fruitless. In the end, five people raped Fenny. Before they raped her, they said: 'Allahu Akbar' (an Islamic phrase in Arabic meaning `God is great'). They were ferocious and brutal.

Not long after, nine men came to the room and grabbed me and my Aunt Vera. I passed out and everything went blank. I became conscious at around 5 or 6pm. My head hurt and I realised I had no clothes on. I cried and saw my family were still there. My father was hugging my mother and Doni. I also saw Uncle Dodi lying on the floor and Aunt Vera was crying over his body. I fainted again.

The next day I was in the Pluit hospital. My father and mother were beside me, and I asked: `Mom, why Fenny? Mom?' I felt a stinging pain as I said these words. My cheeks were swollen. My mother cried again and couldn't speak, while my father, holding back his tears, managed to smile at me.

After four days' treatment, my condition improved. With a sad look, my father told me then what had happened. After I fainted, seven people raped me. Repeatedly. Then my father said: 'Vivian, Fenny is gone.' I was confused and cried out: 'Why, Dad?' My father couldn't answer. He told me to rest and went out of the room. I cried over and over again, feeling that my life had no meaning any more.

A week ago, after I was released from the hospital, I was told everything that had happened. When Fenny was raped, she kept on fighting and so she was repeatedly slapped by her rapists. The last time she fought, Fenny spat at one of them. Offended, he grabbed a knife and stabbed Fenny in the stomach over and over again. She died with blood all over her body.

My father told me Uncle Dodi met the same fate, watched by Aunt Vera, who was also raped. 'God, why should all of this happen? Where are you, God? Are you still alive?' My Aunt Vera now stays with her parents. She is in shock. Her face is blank and she refuses to eat. Almost every hour, my mother and I cry over these happenings. I can never forget.

Source: *Guardian*, 21/07/98, p. 5.

Appendix C Article in *Sydney Morning Herald*, Received via email, 23 July, 1998.
"Indonesia" Sydney Morning Herald, Thursday, July 23, 1998

"God is great" cried the five who raped and killed my little sister

President Habibie has appointed an all-female task force to investigate the rapes of Chinese women during the May riots. Human rights groups have detailed at least 168 cases and 20 deaths. This is one woman's story.

My name is Vivian and I am 18 years old. I have a little sister and brother, and we live in what is supposed to be a "secure" apartment. At 9.15am on May 14, a huge crowd had gathered outside. They screamed: "Let's butcher the Chinese! Let's eat pigs! Let's have a party!"

We live on the seventh floor and we got a call from a family on the third floor, saying the crowd had reached the second floor. We were all very frightened. We prayed and then we left our room and went upstairs to the top floor, as it was impossible to go down and escape. We got to the 15th floor and were surprised because some of the crowd were coming out of the elevators. We hurried into our friends' room and locked the door tightly.

We heard the crowd knock at the other rooms loudly and there were screams from women and girls. Our room was filled with fear. We realised they would come to us, so we spread throughout the room, hiding in the corners. We could hear girls of 10 or 12 years old screaming: "Mommy, mommy ...mom ... mom ... It hurts." I didn't know then that these little girls were being raped.

After about half an hour, the noise diminished and we plucked up the courage to go out. The scene was indescribable. A lot of people, some of them young girls, were lying on the floor. "Oh my God, what has happened?" Seeing all of this, we cried and screamed and my little sister Fenny hugged our father hysterically.

With our friends, a newly wed couple, we started going downstairs. Reaching the 10th floor, we heard a scream for help. The scream was very clear and we decided to go down. But as we turned, we saw a lot of people. I saw a woman in her twenties being raped by four men. She tried to fight back but she was held down tightly.

Realising the danger, we ran as hard as we could. But the mob caught Fenny. We tried to rescue her, but couldn't do anything. There were about 60 of them.

They tied us up with ripped sheets - myself, my father, my mother, Fenny, my brother Doni, Uncle Dodi and my Aunt Vera. They led us to a room. Uncle Dodi asked what they wanted, but they did not reply. They looked evil and savage. One of them grabbed Fenny roughly and dragged her to a sofa.

I knew she was in great danger and I screamed but one of the mob slapped me

in the face. My father, who also screamed, was hit with a piece of wood and he fainted. My mother had fainted when Fenny was dragged to the sofa. I could only pray.

Uncle Dodi kept trying to stop them by offering money. His efforts were fruitless. In the end, five people raped Fenny. Before they raped her, they said: "Allahu Akbar" [an Islamic phrase in Arabic meaning "God is great"]. They were ferocious and brutal.

Not long after, nine men came to the room and grabbed me and my Aunt Vera. I passed out and everything went blank. I became conscious at around 5 or 6pm. My head hurt and I realised I had no clothes on. I cried and saw my family were still there. My father was hugging my mother and Doni. I also saw Uncle Dodi lying on the floor and Aunt Vera was crying over his body. I fainted again.

The next day I was in the Pluit hospital. I asked: "Mom, why Fenny? Mom?" I felt a stinging pain as I said these words. My cheeks were swollen.

My mother cried again and couldn't speak, while my father, holding back his tears, managed to smile at me.

After four days' treatment, my condition improved. With a sad look, my father told me what had happened. After I fainted, seven people raped me. Repeatedly. Then my father said: "Vivian, Fenny is gone." I was confused and cried out: "Why, Dad?" My father couldn't answer. He told me to rest and went out of the room. I cried over and over again, feeling my life had no meaning any more.

A week ago, after I was released from the hospital, I was told. When Fenny was raped, she kept on fighting and so she was repeatedly slapped by her rapists. The last time she fought, Fenny spat at one of them. Offended, he grabbed a knife and stabbed Fenny in the stomach over and over again. She died with blood all over her body.

My father told me Uncle Dodi met the same fate, watched by Aunt Vera, who was also raped. "God, why should all of this happen? Where are you, God? Are you still alive?" My Aunt Vera now stays with her parents. She is in shock. Her face is blank and she refuses to eat. Almost every hour, my mother and I cry over these happenings. I

can never forget.

The Guardian

MAIN

This paper was originally published in *Intersections: Gender, History and Culture in the Asian Context*, with the assistance of Murdoch University.

This page has been optimised for 800x600
and is best viewed in either Netscape 2 or above, or
Explorer 2 or above.

From February 2008, this paper has been republished in *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific* from the following URL:
intersections.anu.edu.au/issue3/laura3.html.

HTML last modified: 30 May 2008 1150 by Carolyn Brewer.

© Copyright