

FORGETTING: POETRY AND THE NATION

A Motif in Indonesian Literary Modernism After 1945

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A METAPHOR. My metaphor for the nation is Nyai Ontosoroh, the formidable woman in Pramudya Ananta Toer's novel, *This Earth of Mankind*.¹ As Pramudya Ananta Toer tells it, she was born Sukinem, the daughter of a clerk who had always wanted to become a paymaster in the local sugar factory in the eastern part of Java. To be promoted to the job, which he believed would put him in a better position to help his needy brothers and sisters, he submitted his one and only daughter to the Dutch manager of the mill, whom the factory workers referred to as "The Great, Powerful Tuan." The Tuan made the beautiful girl of 14 his *nyai*, or concubine. After he no longer worked for the factory, he moved to another town, becoming an entrepreneur investing in a dairy farm, with great success, and had two children from the concubinage. Gradually, their relationship worked beautifully: he taught her many skills, gave her the power to manage the family's business, even entrusted her with a large landholding purchased under her name.

Yet things could be irritating, and even odious and hateful for a native woman living as an unlawful housewife of a "pure white" (*totok*) in a racially segregated society like Indonesia in the 20s. It reached a climax when the authorities prosecuted Minke, the native student of a prestigious school, who is the hero of the novel, for having an intimate relationship with Nyai Ontosoroh's daughter. During a court proceeding, the *nyai* came forward, spoke in flawless Dutch – defying the judicial order that prohibited a native from using the language, and ignoring the pounding of the gavel – to protest the injustice of it all: "Europeans are able to purchase the Native women just as I was purchased. Are such purchases truer than pure love? If Europeans can act in these ways because of their superior wealth and power, why is that a Native must become the target of scorn and insults because of pure love?"

Admittedly, Nyai Ontosoroh is in every way an unusual person. She is not the kind of indigenous woman you meet in a typical Javanese surrounding, certainly

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not in the beginning of this century. One can legitimately question my choice of metaphor. Still, her story is the story of Indonesia, which is about a struggle to overcome various kinds of domination in a colonial space: the race-based hierarchy imposed by the white, the ancient familial patriarchy of the Javanese, and the ideology of submission of the lower orders. In her case, the whole quest is tantamount to forgetting, with vengeance, her subjugated past and her previous site in the colonized environment, by learning to write and read, acquiring Dutch, mastering the skill of trade, accumulating wealth, sending her children to good schools, and remaining aloof to the claims of society. In a way, she succeeded; she gained a certain degree of privilege, and maintained an interiority which allowed her to be herself most of the time. In short, a self-respect, or it could also be a half-concealed grudge about the way the colonial world created her. "In the end," she said, "the issue is always the same: European against Native, against me."

But who was she or what was she? She was a *nyai*. And *nyais* or concubines were not *totok* (pure white), not mestizos, and could even be said to be not native. "They are secret mountains," the hero of the novel says.

This struggle to forget the past, or to be free from it, was essentially an unfinished project. The colonial authorities made sure that Nyai Ontosoroh would not need reminding of her genealogy. As the system dictated, her past was indelible, like a cattle brand engraved on her brown skin. Determined to resist, Nyai Ontosoroh created a private realm for herself – her farm, her business, her home with her two children, her own mind. This was a realm all but oblivious to the overpowering scheme of control carried out by the rulers of Dutch-Indies in the early 20th century.

Forgetting was the strategy of the weak to resist the colonialist order. It was also a mechanism to protect oneself from the pain of *apartheid* in which the "Natives" were cast as the natural subaltern. The outcome was a complex personality befitting Pramudya's metaphor. The "secret mountains" is a description of people who lived (either by design or by default) on the shifting cultural and social borders.

Cultural and historical hybridity is therefore not a phenomenon specific to a postcolonial setting, following the fall of European empires and the decline of their global supremacy; it is a progeny of colonial duality. In a different perspective, it is an effort to get around the violence of schematization that the colonial authority wants to perpetuate. It is a strategy to contest but at the same time to inhabit the dominant discourse, since in a way, colonialism is also a hybrid. Colonialism is not about a Western interruption into (or repression of) a supposedly unitary, existing

“national” sphere, but a reinforcement and stabilization of different centers of domination under which certain groups of people, mostly natives, have to suffer, while others have the license to enjoy. A part of these centers was created by the European conquerors; the other parts were remains of the precolonial era.

Therefore, a nation is a mixed bag, and basically it is a process of commutation of different agencies. Nationalism is its longing for coherence. Sometimes it insists on carrying the banner of nativism. Other times it takes “the plunge into the chasm of the past,” as Fanon describes it, which is “the condition and the source of freedom.”²

ON FORGETTING MALAY. However, Fanon’s rhetoric of rupture uses a misleading metaphor. The past is actually never a deep, steep-sided abyss. In fact, it is a closure, conceived by an inventive memory. Hence, Fanon’s warning of “the paradoxes and pitfalls” of “rediscovering tradition.” Nativism, immortalizing native cultural traits, as an opposition against colonialist politics of acculturation, is a décor. It establishes a false presence of an origin and puts it on the center stage. The condition and the source of freedom are somewhere else. The coherence that a “nation” tries to achieve implies a process of exclusion, and also of forgetting. As Renan puts it, “forgetting is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation.”³

In the Indonesian case, the forgetting began with the politics of language. Changing the name of “Malay” – the language of instruction in religious Buddhist schools as well as the language of the court in the 7th century – to “Indonesian” was an expression of nationalist passion typical of the early 20th century, when the anticolonialist movement was in the making.

But it is a little bit dubious to represent the Indonesian language as a purely nationalist invention. In 1908, the government of the Dutch-Indies created a publishing house called “Balai Pustaka” (the Hall of Books). Its major assignment was to train the natives to read and write, and to promote a standardized Malay sponsored by the administration since the end of the 18th century, obviously as a part of bureaucratic efforts to create a rational and efficient method of governing. It was the beginning of the end of *heteroglossia*. A great variety of dialects and local languages had to be put back in one’s mind, silenced. Formal schooling and the advance of print capitalism helped the centering process. As Snouck Hurgronje, a scholar-*cum*-government adviser, once put it, the people’s education was far from strengthening the position of the wide variety of people’s languages and dialects in the archipelago, and had made an important contribution in “partly making them together, partly making them disappear.” He maintained that, “It lies in the character

and aim of this educational system to strive for a centralization and distribution of the knowledge as a single tool of spiritual community over as wide an area as possible.”⁴

Ironically, this line of argument was shared by the nationalists, despite their resistance to the high-handed way the educational bureaucracy and the editors of Balai Pustaka introduced their version of standardized Malay. Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana (1908-1995), who founded the most outstanding intellectual journal before the war, *Pujangga Baru*, and later became an indefatigable advocate of language and cultural reform, loved to ridicule the “old fashioned” (*kolot*) Malay taught and controlled by the government school teachers. At one point, he argued for a more natural tolerance to different uses of Malay (or better, “Indonesian”), including the “ungrammatical” yet lively language of the press written by the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. He was all supportive of a “delightful confusion,” as he wrote in 1934.⁵ Yet in the end, Takdir, a language nationalist *par excellence*, saw the importance of a socially acceptable common Indonesian (*het algemeen beschaafd Indonesisch*) with a unified grammar, spelling and syntax. This was his dream for the future: “to unite the language as part of the effort to unite the nation.”⁶

This nationalist dream was a colonial paradox. It grew from the Dutch penchant for racial segregation in the Indies. The *apartheid* was not only applied to poolrooms in big cities where *inlanders* and dogs were not allowed to enter. The Dutch were probably the only colonial power who prohibited their native subjects to speak the language of the masters. According to the census conducted in 1930, only 0.3% of the natives – who made 97% of the total population – had some mastery of written Dutch, meaning they were thought to be able to write a simple short letter. The colonial authority deemed it unnecessary for the natives to scramble for a better qualification in Dutch proficiency. The argument is, as rephrased by Maier, that ‘Their institutions demanded careful study, their ideology and values should be strengthened, they should only very selectively be touched by the achievements of Western culture.’⁷

This was all done at the cost of the native’s hope to acquire a better skill and have a better life – not to mention prestige – since Dutch was a sure guarantee for upward social mobility. To be sure, at one stage the colonial bureaucracy toyed with the idea of spreading the use of Dutch to the population. They even tried to make it work, for economic reasons or otherwise. In the 1920s, a Dutch scholar actively propagated the use of Dutch in the Indies, believing that it could “help create a future for the Indonesians” and “preserve a past for the Dutch.” According to him, spreading the language of a Western power was a push “to introduce

international culture, to implement a unification on a higher level” – and to perpetuate the Dutch interests.⁸ However, the project was abandoned in no time. The cost to train a great number of natives to speak and write Dutch was beyond the resources of a colonial government hit by the Depression. There might be another reason, as the natives, like Takdir, suspected: a plainly racial consideration.⁹

This is “the curse of this age,” Takdir exclaims.

The “curse” gave rise to an impetus. The natives moved to develop their own tongue. All in all, it was not hard. By the end of 1925, there were more or less 200 newspapers in the Indies, almost all of them used Malay, which was later baptized as “the Indonesian language.”¹⁰ The emergent native elite and the masses belonging to the nationalist movement communicated in this language, and soon it became a symbol of national unity. And as Takdir saw it, the Indonesian language would also bring the quality of the people to “an international standard.”¹¹ Rejected by the Europeans to share the road to modernity, the natives decided to develop their own way. In 1928, in Jakarta (or Batavia), in a congress that later became a historic milestone of Indonesian nationalism, a large group of young people representing many different *sukus* or cultural backgrounds pledged to always use one language, and that was “the Indonesian language.” A later attempt by the Dutch-Indian government to replace “Malay” (or better, “Indonesian”) with a local language as the medium of instruction at public schools was met with resistance in many different provinces. The argument used by the colonial administration that it was better to preserve the invaluable rich and truly native tongue did not ring true to people in the nationalist movement. They perceived it as a *divide et impera* plot and a devious method to keep the natives eternally in their backward, “semi-feudal,” and repressive past – something that people like Nyai Ontosoroh and members of the lower class, particularly the educated ones, were victims. In March 1932, in Kutaraja, a major town of Aceh – a region renowned for its glorious history as well as its tenacity to battle the Dutch colonial intrusion – people organized a big public rally to protest the Government’s decision to use the Acehnese language, instead of Indonesian, in the local native schools. The same opposition took place in Padang (West Sumatra) and Surakarta (Central Java), which were both centers of time-honored cultural traditions.¹²

CHATERJEE’S FORMULA. Accordingly, one can argue that the Indonesian language is an unwanted child of the colonial project to control and exploit the natives through a modernized bureaucracy (which was the rationale of the “Malay” standardization) and simultaneously to keep them in their place, by “protecting” them from the cultural intrusion of the White, the superior race. Small wonder that

the driving force behind the nationalist élan was a double-faced vision; one is an agenda to create a nation and the other is a project of modernity.

Takdir was the leading spokesman of this vision – and he was not the only one, as I will describe later. In the mid-1930s, in the historic debate on what was and should be the nature of Indonesian “national culture,” Takdir argued that the past had nothing to do with it. The Srivijaya empire in the 7th century and Majapahit’s sprawling network of power in the 13th might offer a wealth of intellectual and artistic achievements, or at least a myth that Indonesians could adopt as a point of origin, but they could not be the foundation of the “national” culture. “Both in the Srivijaya and the Majapahit edifices, there was no Indonesian spirit in its truest form,” Takdir wrote, creating an uproar among the more tradition-inclined intellectuals. The Indonesian spirit was something new, he said, and “it is not based on the past.”¹³

Having no base in the past, even rejecting it, (Takdir called the Srivijaya and Majapahit eras as “time of ignorance,” using the Muslim word for the pre-Islamic age, *jahillia*), could be a source of pride and sense of freedom. Minke, the hero of *This Earth of Mankind*, who later became a political activist paving the way for the liberation of his people, preferred to use the derogatory name his former Dutch teacher gave him as a native student. One never heard his Javanese name from his lips. He dodged every opportunity to meet his father, or even to remember him, refusing to be proud of the old man’s position as a high ranking Javanese official in the colonial system. Nyai Ontosoroh despised her parents bitterly, mercilessly, and focused all her energy for the future of her children, although at the end she was forced, by a judicial order, to let Anne, her beautiful daughter, go to Europe, not to return.

Yet both Minke and the Nyai were in an impossible position to push the past to the margin of their being. It was the past that brought them to reach the stage from which they could refuse it. In other words, the past invested in the forgetting of it. In the case of Nyai Ontosoroh, the day she was “sold” to the Tuan was both a moment of humiliation and a grand opening to self-respect. This paradox of the nation continued to inhabit the nation’s quest for coherence many years later.

On that account, nationalism tends to be reductive in one way or another; nationalism can also be a form of anamnesis. It may try to devise an imagined realm of integrity. If I understand it correctly, this is what Chatterjee marks as a nationalist “formula” in Asia and Africa: to invent an “inner” or “spiritual” domain, bearing the “essential” marks of cultural identity, as a way of resisting the interference of the

colonial state in matters affecting “national culture.” It does not mean that the so-called spiritual domain is left unchallenged. According to Chaterjee, “here nationalism launches its most powerful, creative and historically significant project: to fashion a ‘modern’ national culture that is nevertheless not Western.”¹⁴

Chaterjee uses well-selected examples from Bengali language and literature. From an Indonesian perspective, however, the project he describes is problematical at best. It undermines the intertexture of processes that make the nation. To create and protect an “inner” domain as if it had no relation with the “outside,” meaning the “material” world where the West had proven its power, is just short of conceding to the ideal of separation which the colonial policy of *apartheid* promoted. Besides, it assumes a “native,” local, cultural tradition with an economically and politically governing center of influence, since Chaterjee’s “formula” can only work by staking out a border beyond class-divisions, to privilege “identity.” Such a center hardly existed any longer after the European conquest, especially in Indonesia. To hypothesize its actuality is to override the fact that under the rug of identity there is always an internal struggle between different local expressions to achieve a certain degree of social predominance. Some are repressed or assimilated. After all, cultural expressions take place in the contested space of social existence. The winner calls the shots, and makes its own symbols, codes and structure the only legitimate origin of meaning. The loser immediately becomes the unwelcome “Other.” A center is established, sometimes by force, to be the origin of meaning. The “national culture” Chaterjee refers to may bear the “essential” marks of cultural identity, as a way of resisting the interference of the colonial state, but it does not necessarily write off other forms of domination which colonialism prefers to maintain.

Hence the impetus to forgetting. To be sure, the result may be another variety of reductive nationalism; like remembering, forgetting is, after all, a discriminating *modus operandi*. But that is the leitmotif of nation-forming ideology in Indonesia in the first three decades of the 20th century. It implies a project of social change, a call to modernity. In a poem published in *Pujangga Baru* in the mid-1930s, Takdir describes this vision by using the sea as a metaphor: the poet and his generation are heading for the sea, leaving behind the lake that is

... tranquil without a ripple,
Sheltered by wooded mountains
From wind and hurricane
For once we are awakened
From a pleasant dream ..¹⁵

The sea that seduces the poet in his “pleasant dream” is rough, but there is no way back.

THE SEA. The sea as a metaphor becomes a prominent feature of Indonesian poetry in the late 1940s. In a poem published in 1948, Asrul Sani (1926-...), one of the leading writers of the postwar generation tells us a story of “*a boy without a hat who goes to the sea wall where the sun docks.*” He dreams of “*countries, far away*” and

Sands and water mix,
Seemingly. The clouds
Fail to cover his eyes and
He longs to see the sea spread
Its blue.

The shore is the edge on this side, and the sea opens the way to a distant country he dreams of. The sea: something with a large space for journey, adventure, challenge, and more importantly, a universe with no definite and binding boundary.

Like Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana in the 1930s, another poet of the postwar years, Rivai Apin (1927-1995), also writes about leaving, heading for the sea, fleeing from the boredom of the land:

I can't stand this.
Now go back to the sea, to wander.
It's good enough: a star in the sky.

I want a mad hurricane, the gray-and-white clouds
running after each other,
high waves coming strong,
a boat cracking, sails trembling
and the wind, a company and also an enemy, whistling

What do you all have here:
Stones!

The most expressive voice is, of course, that of Chairil Anwar (1922-1949), the genuine *poet maudit* of Indonesian modern writing. His poem of 1946 is an affirmation of freedom, by escaping, even from a (woman's) “ruttish embrace,”

insisting to see the green of the next sea
and be back on board the ship that was here before
leaving the helm to the wind
letting the eyes charmed by a waiting star

Another quatrain, “A Report from The Sea” (also in 1946), asserts the same freedom – a freedom from love and sexual relationship – with a certain kind of aloofness:

I was so foolish then
to have a relationship with you
forgetting a sailor can suddenly return to the sad sea
alone, reconciled to the end in blue

What is striking about the poem is that the way back is not a homeward passage, or to reach a place called the “origin,” but to “the end in blue.” The sea is the home’s other, or maybe its very antithesis. The sailor becomes a romantic figure, a little Sinbad with no story of magic and wonders, but a narrative of defiance, of lonely courage, of proud solitude, of unfettered mobility, of exciting adventures. In a famous poem adapting an obscure legend from the Moluccas, Chairil Anwar echoes the thundering voice of “the Pattirajawane,” who announces, majestically, that when he was born, people brought him “oars and canoes.” He urges everybody to praise his shadowy existence, calling: “Let’s dance! Let’s rejoice! Let’s forget!”

There is an element of revolt in this kind of forgetting. Another youthful poem by Asrul Sani continues articulating the same defiance. It is about a man sent from the mountain to meet the poet and bring him back to his mother. He says:

In the mountain the woods bring flowers all the year around
And love is clean, away from the city.
Mother sends you a message, ‘Don’t be buried in this place,
don’t die at the seashore, for the pirates will swarm
from all the islands, and holy men never come down
from the mountains to this place’
Go home, my friend, go home
Your mother is asking you.

On hearing this, the young poet replies, with aplomb, and a bit of insolence:

Stranger, don’t stand at the door,
I live in front of an open gate,
Behind you there is a road, with no clear stop
You came too late in the evening
Your story is for me simply a memory.
Since you talked about death just now,
Go back
And tell:
The last poem will be buried under the sea.

Like the Pattirajawane in Chairil Anwar's poem, the proud young man in Asrul Sani's verse extols life and voyage at sea and celebrates forgetting. He emerges as someone who rubs out his own footsteps and laughs at the idea of return. To him, the man from the mountains is a stranger, and the words of his mother, entailing a memory, are inconsequential.

POETRY'S DIFFERENCE. Memory is the duty of a narrative, forgetting a hidden component of a lyrical poem. Epic stories wrapped up in the old *syair*-form, read by storytellers, are entirely based on memory or, more elementary, a capacity to remember. The predictable rhyme, the orderly number of syllables, are all part of the task to convey something consistent from a fairly distant past; hence the aura of tradition.

The Indonesian novel, which first appeared in its present form in the beginning of the 20th century, relies on a different intent of memory. You may call it "post-auratic." It arrives at the door of the reader's mind with the power of the first line, with no credential of hoariness. It will be gone with the last word at its end. The readers may like to read it over and over again, but here it has no cohesive community, like the epic story does, to support its perpetuity. Probably it is the absence of aura that makes the novel like a flow of constant negotiations with the individual reader's choice of remembrance. The writer has to strive to involve his/her reader's memory by maintaining a chart of particular events, characters, settings, dialogues – every single one of them has its own weight and significance – as a unitary verbal structure. It is, as it were, his duty. At the same time, the writer has to captivate the reader by introducing "suspense" all the way; hence the arrival of surprises, of the unpredictable, the irregular, the inconsistent, the different, the new, deep inside a single consistency of form.

Accordingly, the novel, particularly the "realist" works typical of Indonesian literature in the 1920s and the late 1940s, becomes a verbal platform that acts like a bridge adjoining different subjects to enable both the writer and the reader to share moments of negotiation. It is marked by its sensitivity to the fact that utterances are socially "circumstable," and that the language it uses does not emanate from a sealed book, or from a sterile, untainted, vocabulary. The novelist is never alone. That is to say he is aware that his language is one of many possibilities. He does not use it without distancing himself from it one way or another. The novelist, to quote Bakhtin, speaks "with quotation marks."¹⁶

This is something that lyric poetry can dispense with. To borrow Bakhtin's force of argument, any sense of "boundedness, the historicity, the social determination

of one's language" is "alien" to poetic style. Whereas the novelist tries to represent, even to exaggerate, *heteroglossia*, "the poet escapes it in order to write in a language that is timeless." More from Bakhtin: to achieve the special richness that only poetry possesses, the poet must first *forget*. Everything that enters the work must plunge into and bathe in one of the five rivers of Hades, Lethe, which is the river of oblivion. The poet's language may remember its previous life only in poetic contexts, and nothing else.

For this reason, I think, the postwar Indonesian poetry – marked by its intense lyricism, underscored by Chairil Anwar's works – finds it natural to free itself from memory and opt for "the sea." You can detect a genuine force within its act of forgetting.

The surprising thing is that it all took place in a period when the poets were through-and-through baptized in a sense of boundary and belonging, coming forth out of the materiality of "the nation." On August 17, 1945, as you all know, Indonesia as a nation-state was born, with euphoria.

The novel is, of course, better equipped to deal with this circumstance. Anderson has persuaded us with his argument that in Europe in the 18th century, it was the novel (and the newspaper) that provided the technical means for 'representing' the kind of imagined community that is the nation¹⁷ – and probably one can also say the same thing about Indonesian modern literary works in general. My reasoning will be more simple: the novel presents not only a vista of a tacitly delineated world, but also an unspoken correspondence, particularly through an interweaving of utterances, tones, positions, memories, and perspectives, among different actors in the text. Out of the process, a particular context shows up.

In two different postwar novels, the first is *Mereka Yang Dilumpuhkan* (The Paralyzed) by Pramudya Ananta Toer and the second is *Surabaya* by Idrus, one can discern this claim of a more definite *de facto* "socio-space." Pramudya's story is a kind of prison notebook, a tapestry of characters consisting of inmates of the Bukit Duri jail. Many of them were Indonesian guerrillas who fell into the Dutch military hands in 1948. Inside the prison walls, the Dutch interrogated, tortured and executed prisoners. The news from the war was not favorable for the Indonesian side. There was no bright hope for freedom: one by one the Indonesian defense lines crumbled. At the later stage of their detention, the inmates were moved to a small island in Jakarta Bay. The place was transformed into a labor camp. Here, the prisoners met with other people chained to oppression, particularly women. One of them was a maid who had to attend to the need of the camp

commander. The tone of Pramudya's writing is vehement, intense, painful, and one can sense that what sustains the novel's suspense is not the plot, which does not really exist, but more than anything else is the vague idea of a republic, albeit a beleaguered one, a shadowy structure somewhere outside the camp which acts as the sole signifier of "freedom." Which is *our* freedom. Interestingly, in the novel, an isolated detention place immediately finds itself encompassing the geography of the newly proclaimed nation that the Dutch came to reconquer.

Idrus' novel is basically a bundle of quasi-journalistic sketches about the famous battle of Surabaya in November 1945, when Indonesian armed militias and students fought to repel the British troops sent down by the Allied Commander to disarm them. The novel is a "carnavalesque" series of anecdotes, with a large dosage of irreverent remarks and sarcastic gibes about young men and women who joined the battle. On no account can it be called a narrative of national solidarity¹⁸ like Pramudya's work, but all the same, it starts from a community of common reference, a certain rapport between the writer, his characters and the readers. His humor would not work so well if there was no such context.

LYRIC AND AMBIVALENCE. Lyric poetry works differently. One can legitimately say: the poet is his own society.¹⁹ He does not need to interact with other consciousness and with other languages to express himself. And yet, a lyric can tell something about the social change that takes place around its hermitic world, regardless of how deep it is bathed in Lethe. The Indonesian poetry of the late 1940s is, in a way, an announcement of freedom following the breakdown of the colonial world. Probably, it is also a part of the euphoria. Just before Sukarno and Hatta, the two most prominent Indonesian nationalist leaders, proclaimed the nation's independence in 1945, Indonesian lived under the Japanese military control.

It was a difficult time, and for intellectuals and people of the art world, it was a time of hard choices. The Japanese set up a "cultural center," *Keimin Bunka Shidusho*, and put a carrot-and-stick pressure to composers, playwrights, writers and painters to cooperate and contribute their works to the idea of "East-Asian Solidarity" and the Pacific War efforts. That is to say, they were called to legitimize the Japanese imperial ambition.

Many signed in, most of them with a belief that they did it for the nationalist cause. Japan, after all, was an alternative power and ideology in a world dominated by the West, and from Tokyo came the promise of national liberation. Meanwhile, the West signified the past – an unattractive past. Sanusi Pane (1905-1968), a prominent poet and playwright of the prewar generation reputed for his veneration

of Indonesia's Indian cultural heritage, became the director of the center. He believed that the West only pronounced "nihilism, negativism, a spirit of *Verneinung* in splendid garb," and it was the "*Dai Nippon* military force" that will "battle the empty soul and the death of hope in the West."²⁰

Most writers and artists made use of the facilities provided by the center and worked, partially believing in the Japanese propaganda. Some paid lip-service to the "cause," pretended to come to heel and honed their skill. A few, like Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, flatly refused to cooperate, moved to a place in the outskirts of the city and in seclusion read Western philosophical works. Later, he condemned his colleagues who complied for behaving like chameleons and unthinkingly overlooked the fact that chameleons "have never had a true life from the inside"; the pro-Japanese writers, he says, did not recognize that their step to work under the Japanese was equal to abandoning the pursuit of "personal freedom."²¹ A composer, Kornel Simanjuntak, later famous both for his short arias and patriotic songs, told Asrul Sani, the poet, about his propaganda pieces for the Japanese: "It was not only a matter of self-betrayal; it was a negation of my own self."²² At one instance, in a radio talk, Chairil Anwar praised, obviously with tongue in cheek, the heroism of a Japanese general. But right after Indonesia's independence, he wrote of "the forced cultural life" under the Japanese military rule. "We lost every sense of freedom," Chairil says. "We turned our back to the Word," he declares, regretting the rule of insincerity in the recent past. One should remember that "words do not serve two masters."²³ In the same short essay, published in 1945, Chairil cries, "Hoppla!," urging the new generation to take a great leap, "as far as possible." The seduction of the sea was an appropriate motif of the time.

One can also make out, from the lyric poetry of the 40s, a mood of life without convergence, a consciousness moving off-center, a sense that space and time were out of joint, and things of significance were things ephemeral, contingent, unfinished, unstructured. A fragment of a Chairil Anwar's verse:

Many scratches stay undone
A little house, white, with a bright rosy light

The sky is clear and the moon perfect...
And I am not sure where I'll be next

In this poem, something peaceful, domestic and permanent, "a little house, white, with a bright rosy light," is brought up in an ostensibly hurried, almost unfinished, sentence. There is a fierce sense of homelessness. The subject, as the center, or the origin, of consciousness that commands meaning, is no longer indisputable.

Both inside and outside the self things are random, indefinable, or even nonsensical, or wild, so close and at the same time so distant. This may explain the ambivalence of Indonesian lyric poetry on the edge of an increasingly imposing entity: the nation.

Rivai Apin's long verse, *Dari Dua Dunia Yang Belum Sudah* ("From Two Worlds Undone"), describes the feeling of incompatibility poignantly. This poem brings you to Jakarta just after the Dutch troops took over the city. People continue their regular business, going to work or doing their usual trade. But there is fear. Men and women walk gingerly on the sidewalk. Trucks full of enemy soldiers come and go, and tanks, ready to shoot, all look huge and mighty. The atmosphere is chilly, benumbed, although not everything is lost: men, things and the air still have a trace of dignity. Among friends, the talk is all about the fall of Yogyakarta, the capital, and the arrest of Sukarno, Hatta, Sjahrir and other leaders. The Republic is on the verge of collapse. Yet you can notice a sense of being together: "All are from a single word and for a single word."

Meanwhile, the poet goes home, feeling desolate.

At home my uncompleted self welcomes me
An open book that I haven't read and the one
I must finish...
For which I have left my father, my brother
Now I remember I just had one meal today – from the rice
Pot, still ajar – now I try to forge
My ego, in the pit of my room
Holed by a candle
In the dark

But you can listen to the boots kicking the thick wall of
Midnight
And after they left you hear a woman, may be his
Mother, or his wife, weeping.
No need to tell me, they just took somebody away.
I just press my head to the table
Haunted by the word, the word that yet to find its orb
And races into
The unfinished world.

More light-hearted, breathing clichés with a hint of playfulness, is Chairil Anwar's poem, "For Gadis Rasjid," from his collection *Yang Terampas Dan Yang Putus* (The Broken and the Looted):

Between the greens-
the open, sunny pastures-

innocent little children learning to run-
 chirping birds-
 fresh, pouring rain-
 of a nation just able to say "I"
 And
 Sharp, dry wind- entirely barren land-
 upsurging, withering sand, emptied space
 Let's flee, my love, and allow the soul be a fowl
 Flying
 to know the desert, with no meeting point, nor landing
 — the only possible non-stop flight —
 and get nothing.

Between a freshly born, optimistic, and innocent nation just able to say "I" and a looming, withering barrenness, "we" are pressed. The poet opts to fly, to flee, hoping to attain nothing in the end. Again, this is another act of forgetting, probably an "active forgetting" that Nietzsche, whom Chairil Anwar admired, speaks of. The flying, the journey, is everything. Another poem, "A Notice," reads like a farewell letter sent from an unspoken territory. There is a note of glum, but the line is decisive: "I am writing this on a ship, in a nameless sea." Address no longer matters.

THE ORIGIN. Even the idea of origin is problematical. Allow me to focus on Asrul Sani's writings for the purpose of this paper, since almost all of them deal with the issue of origin and the nation.

He is a poet and a brilliant essayist critics talk very little about, maybe because he was overshadowed by Chairil Anwar, a more powerful lyricist and more colorful figure, or maybe because his whole work consists mainly of fragmentary writings, never collected and published in book form. Asrul Sani believes that essays are really poetry in the end. It is literature, "not because of its problem," but because something at first "only understood" by the writer becomes "inseparable from his being."²⁴ At the same time, this form of writing reflects a given human condition, and often a collision of ideas of a particular time and a particular place.

In this case, the time is the first decade of Indonesian independence. The place is Jakarta, primarily the life of the city's writers and intellectuals. Somehow, Jakarta has always been a place of special significance for Asrul. Using the name Ida Anwar, he wrote a regular column called "Letter from Jakarta" (*Surat Dari Jakarta*) in 1952 in the magazine *Zenith*, although he stopped writing it after the third letter.²⁵ In a foreword he wrote for *Zenith* in June 1951, he argued that Jakarta is the place "where values 'crash against each other,' " and where people find "a new cultural arena and a new Indonesia."

From this very arena, Asrul wrote an essay in September 1948 entitled “A Man Without Origin” (*Orang Tak Berasal*).” This essay is written in the form of a letter, or more precisely of a polemic, between “you” and “me.”²⁶

I once had the chance to see myself again. At the time, it was a quiet night. I no longer heard the sound of shots. Thoughts of death a little while ago had disappeared. Those who had wanted my death had gone. So far the dangers seen only appeared as darkness meeting darkness. A feeling of repose after a wild conflict. My friends had left their hiding places and were now sitting together. They were silent as well. I stood and looked around. The expanse made my heart shrink. Had my father given me a charm to face this expanse? What form of expression should I hold on to? All his good words had little to do with my current situation. This was a new condition. I must make everything to meet what I need. Because I would not be getting things I could use here.

The legacy that I could ignore or refuse just didn’t exist. Everything about a past life.

So, you have accused me of destroying what’s left of the past. I do not understand this accusation. How can I destroy or grind away these things, when they no longer exist? ... What remains is a point of departure. And this point exists between the ending of the old era which never reached me, and breaking ground for a new house that I will have to build myself.

Written in a slightly exaggerated style and repetitive in places, this youthful piece is a new sally in the long-running discussion about deciding between the old and new in literature – and its connection with the nation. “I do not run from the East and I am not charging wildly towards the rising sun,” writes Asrul. “I do not accept everything from there.” For him, what he has now and what he still accepts “are not just what the Westerner has.” It is life, no matter where that life might be happening. And he stresses, “I only want to go towards life.”

Another part of the essay announces:

I do not want to stay here. I do not want to stay behind with worn-out things. But I do not want to be brought back to [the temples of] Borobudur or Mendut and then scrub all the statues and carvings until they look beautiful and new. Then say to others: “Look how beautiful our ancestor’s sacred treasures are!” and thump my chest with pride. Because this dead thing is still dead and will be dirty again soon – it cannot add on to its life.

Obviously, Asrul sees little connection between the past and himself. He has read about the ancient empire of Majapahit, but “our heirlooms colonize us. They only leave death for me.”

If history does not speak the way we wish, such as in defining a person's origin, so too with geography. At any rate, geographically, "origin" is something contingent, conditioned by a choice of boundaries. In my research I found one of Asrul's manuscripts, but I cannot determine where it was published, presenting a clearer picture of the idea:

To run through different fields of unidentified wild grasses, to take a dream and yearn because the islands are surrounded by a wide sea and blurred by the twilight because of fog on the mountains, then to be aware that this territory is right on the border, and to rejoice because we are part of the small group who can see clearly over and past the limits of our childhood homes. We can see that it is not our relatives who are watching from sea; instead, our relatives are waiting, transfixed not wanting to leave the shore, while we are tossed up and down between the sky and the earth, embarrassed because we do not have our own homes.

Those who understand can join in, and those who don't can just remain proles, and have as many children as possible. This is by no means uncalled for because the country needs soldiers and because the president who hoists the banner of His Royal Highness on the palace and who only removes his supreme commander's attire when he, the king of the universe, wants to retire, has said that development on a grand scale will take place.

As young people just recently free, our hearts are relieved, but problems have thrown us into crisis, to the point where we believe that we are a cursed generation, and to live we must have the strength of a rebel opposing the state, an apostate against religion, an immoralist against morals.

What is interesting is that in this essay you find not only a quotation of T.S. Eliot's "Gerontion" and a charmingly mocking attitude, but also, through the choice of words and the use of landscape, an atmosphere of being at a border between two places. The syntactical structure sometimes reminds you of Dutch or English sentence patterns, but simultaneously the essay uses old Indonesian expressions, such as *beradu* (to retire), and *syahalam* (Lord of the Universe). It is as if Asrul Sani wants to underline his announcement: "I no longer want to talk about East and West, because the images I have known all this time can easily be seen as something implanted in time." He argues further:

Why must we divorce two people who are walking together towards each other... One day we will lose the border markers that disturb our thoughts and actions and we will look at each other without losing ourselves. Ultimately, one must sign the missive of one's time. A choice of locale within time marching onwards.

A choice of locale within time marching onward is also, in the end, a choice of interminable boundaries. "If Indonesia comes this morning, then Asia will come later in the afternoon. If Asia arrives, then the world will come and if this happens then maybe God himself will come." This sentence begins Asrul's essay, "From Notes on Pink Paper" (*Dari Catatan Atas Kertas Merah-Jambu*), published in the magazine *Mimbar Indonesia* in early 1950. The revolution had succeeded in giving birth to a nation, Asrul said, but the "revolution of the soul" was a never-ending one, with the present being "a time of intensive human discovery."

... at this time people become poets, writers, no longer just because of their talent or calling, but because they are compelled to. We have seen and felt and experienced many different things to the point where we have to choose to be poets. The suffering of the world is our suffering, because we are the legitimate heirs of world culture. ...

Some of the words are rather inflated (such as "the suffering of the world is our suffering") but it appears that this is the basis for his attempt to, once again, go beyond the seemingly endless interrogation of "East" vs. "West." This piece also foreshadows a later, more famous, document in the history of Indonesian literature, the "Gelanggang Testimonial of Beliefs" (*Surat Kepercayaan Gelanggang*).

This testimonial was actually a manifesto by a group of writers and painters from the postwar years known as the Gelanggang Artists of Independence,²⁷ although the reason why it was released is still not clear to me. The group was formed on November 19, 1946, on the urging of Chairil Anwar. They maintained a literary supplement called *Gelanggang* in a political weekly, *Siasat*, to publish poems, essays, short stories, book, film and theatre reviews.

It is possible that this testimonial was written to state their fundamental beliefs, even though very great differences then developed among the members. The document was published in *Gelanggang* on October 23, 1950, one year after the death of Chairil Anwar at the age of 27. We can notice traces of Asrul Sani's thinking in its important parts:

We are the legitimate heirs of world culture, and we will perpetuate this culture in our own way. We were born in the masses, and "the people" for us signifies a jumbled hodge-podge from which robust, new, worlds are born.

Our Indonesian-ness does not just derive from our brown skin, our black hair or our protruding foreheads, but rather from what is expressed in the shape of our feelings and thoughts. We are not going to give one word to sum up the culture of Indonesia. When we discuss Indonesian culture, we

are not thinking of polishing what the old culture produced until it shines for us to be proud of; we are thinking of the birth of a robust, new, culture. Indonesian culture is established through a unity of a great variety of catalysts, of voices coming in from all corners of the world and then reflected back later as our own diction. We will oppose all attempts to restrict or obstruct a proper examination of values.

Revolution for us is the establishment of new values on top of the obsolete ones which must be demolished. We maintain therefore that the revolution in our own country is not yet finished.

Our findings may not always be original; what is important to find is humanity. Our way of searching, discussing and analyzing carries along our own temperament.

Our appreciation of the surrounding conditions (meaning the society) is that of people acknowledging the reciprocity of influences between the artists and their society.

This text also shows what Asrul had already discussed: the issue of choosing a locale within time marching onward. Nationality is not something that comes from a certain point of time, and from a certain place, but from “what is expressed in the shape of our feelings and thoughts.” In other words, the legacy of yesterday may be just an imaginary actuality. As far as Asrul is concerned, what does exist is, (to quote his “Man Without Origin”), just “point of departure.” The *Gelombang* testimonial twice mentions the idea of a new and robust life, implying that what matters is not where you come from, but what you want to be.

At the same time, the text is interesting because it does not use the inclusive “*kita*” for “*we*” in Indonesian, but the exclusive form “*kami*.” It is as if the signatories of the document are speaking to people who belong to the “Other,” in a kind of dialogue, maybe even a confrontation. It seems that in putting forth the idea of origin as something moot, Asrul Sani and his colleagues paradoxically bring forth something else: a type of nationalism that is part of a project of modernity and forgetting – something similar, but not quite, to what we have seen in Takdir Alisjahbana’s vision in the 1930s.

THE COSMOPOLITE. “A choice of locale within time marching onward...” A nation’s quest for coherence that defers its own difference is bound to go through a certain uneasiness; one may call it the anxiety of drifting. In 1957, the poet Rustandi Kartakusumah (1927-...), with an amicable but derisive tone, cried out, “You are people of the world!” to Asrul Sani and his fellow *Gelombang* writers.²⁸ Rustandi protested that Asrul’s heart and mind belonged to a tradition

unattached to his homeland. He later wrote caustically that modern Indonesian writings, as produced by Asrul and Chairil, was a hybrid, or *mestizo*, literature, ("*mestiezenlitterateur*" is his word, in Dutch), being neither completely Indonesian or completely something else.²⁹ A few years later, in 1960, a younger poet and critic, Ajip Rosidi (1937-...) in a more biting style accused the '45 Generation of sharing the preference of older writers from the colonial era, which was having "their true spiritual home in Holland and Europe," while they "still ate rice and salted fish." These earlier generations never explained what kind of the new culture they sought, "drowning themselves in 'international' culture without having any roots to stand steadily on their own."³⁰

These were common sentiments at the end of the 1950s, a period that saw the dismissal of Indonesia's parliamentary democracy (fashioned after the European political system) and the introduction of Sukarno's "Guided Democracy" with its impassioned anti-Western rhetoric. In literary discussions and criticisms one talked a lot about "crisis" or "impasse," echoing the prevalent sense of disillusion with the country's lack of aim in managing its integrative power. Words like "roots," "native ground," "motherland," or "national culture" became more frequent. Poetry books like *Priangan Si Jelita* ("The Priangan Land, The Beautiful") by Ramadhan K.H. (1934-...), published in 1958, and *Balada Orang-Orang Tercinta* ("Ballads of the Loved Ones") by W.S. Rendra (1937-...), published in 1957, reflect the mood of this period very well. Poets wrote pastoral poems, re-visited legends, childhood songs and rhymes, as well as ballads about daily life. There was also hardly any mention of the sea, such a common image in earlier poetry. Apparently, romancing the land was more intriguing to this new generation than romancing the sea. A certain narrative quality prevailed, and there was less highly explosive lyricism engaging in subjectivity and sensuality of expression. If lyric poetry gets its energy from forgetting, what was forgotten here was no longer the past but other things, such as a sense of estrangement and dejection from the oppressive atmosphere of tradition.³¹

At one stage, Asrul Sani himself seemed to believe, even before Ajip Rosidi's asailing, that this change in focus would have to come. At a symposium in Amsterdam in 1953, he suggested that modern Indonesian literature was essentially a "literature of the big city." He argued, in well-written Dutch, that artists and writers had forgotten "the hinterland," where the masses lived and a feeling of pessimism was unknown. An impasse had developed, as the connection with the village had been broken while urban life had not yet reached a true form. Spiritually, Indonesia was in chaos, he said, and this chaotic state was only good for short stories limited to embittered comments about current conditions. As long

as writers did not go to the villages, “they will never reach a capacity to know themselves and, willingly or not, will fall into a spiritual impoverishment.”³²

These statements by Asrul Sani are interesting, if not convincing. To be sure, when he speaks of his generation as needing the strength of a rebel, an apostate and an immoralist, I have the feeling that he is not referring to his own works. Compared to Chairil Anwar’s poetry, he is more of a conventional kind: you do not hear dissonance, the unconscious, the chaotic, or unexpected elements. In Asrul’s poems, words are not allowed to be free from the signified and take over the role of creating meanings. Asrul would like poetry to have a certain *Weltanschauung*, a philosophy, or a view of life and of the world. He aspires to an all-encompassing poetry as “a balance from all those emotional scraps which have been flying past us most recently.” He warns poets who “do not care about a certain *gerichtheid* (unity of purpose)” that their journey will only take them back to where they started.³³

In other words, he is not a downright rebel of a radical sort. He even wrote a poem, *Surat dari Ibu* (“A Mother’s Letter”), a call from a mother for her child to leave, yet promising a future welcome on his return:

Go to the open sea, my child
Go to the wide spaces!
While it is not yet sunset
And the twilight has not reddened
closing the door to the past

If shadows fade
and the seagull returns
and the wind blows to land
masts will dry on their own
and the captain will find the compass
Then you can come to me!

The question is: will the child return to the mother? After the Amsterdam symposium, we do not know exactly how Asrul Sani took steps to “go back into the hinterland.” He published three village portraits from Sumatra in a special edition on Indonesia in *The Atlantic Monthly* and a short story about the life of peasant women, with a trace of gloom, in *Panen* (Harvest) in 1956.³⁴ In fact, Jassin, the critic, is skeptical about Asrul’s rural idyll and sees it as life being viewed “not from the perspective of a true man of the village, but as an urbanite and a cosmopolite who has been halfway around the world.”³⁵

It is an apt comment on Asrul's writings. His is the elegant prose of a big city's intellectual. The style unfolding in his "Letter From Jakarta" is engaging and bright, sarcasm is readily apparent, sometimes funny but always civilized, and his attitude is of someone watching an amusing scene and reluctant to get involved with anything.

At heart, this is the writing of a *flâneur* who walks and observes with curious and inquisitive eyes and is in no hurry. A *flâneur*, as Walter Benjamin says, is the product of an urban environment, to whom the enjoyment of observing is paramount, even when, as in Asrul's "Letter from Jakarta," what he writes and observes tells us more about him than about the city itself. Hence, Asrul Sani writes about Celine's *Voyage au bout de la nuit* and in passing mentions Melville and Miller and the poems of Amir Hamzah. In the text, he appears to have no time constraints, he keeps on going in his walks and observations, generally criticizing and rarely praising. He seems to know many things, such as what is delicious, what is good, what is proper. He tells a Dutch poet he met that "grilled mutton satay dipped in a glass of gin is quite tasty." He ridicules the wives of intellectuals who "act like peasant women" (a comparison which, of course, implies a disdainful view of women, particularly peasant women) and at an unexpected juncture says "so far no one has been able to tell me what is meant by putting the word 'national' together with culture."³⁶

What we fail to see here are other sights, such as the folk theater in lower class areas, or the social setting of peddlers, shopkeepers or street musicians. Such sights are far below the letter writer's notice. That is why it is difficult to see what "going home" means to him, especially if going home is tantamount to returning to the village, to your birthplace, to the past. He knows he has been depicted as a person whose spiritual home is in a foreign continent and that he has no firm native roots. But like everybody else living in the 20th century, he can never reclaim complete purity of himself, since his "self" is also in a process of negotiation with the outside world, whose discourse he cannot totally prescribe. In his case, an original security rooted in subjectivity is a fiction, but that does not mean that his is "colonized."

In fact, one can see him as a part of the past legacy he tries to forget – the tradition of *rantau*, something his Minangkabau background offers to validate man's life on the fringes of an established cultural milieu, unattached to the homeland.³⁷ This may explain his bias for cultures "in-between" and his distaste for clearly defined territorial boundaries. He sees the East and/or West question as a matter of time, not of space. We remember what he said earlier that the images of East and West

“can easily be seen as something implanted in time.” For this reason, he praises Takdir Alisjahbana’s view above others. Takdir sees the West, or Europe, as something separate, but he wants “to resolve the problem [of this dichotomy] more according to time than based on geographical borders.”³⁸

Yet by saying this, Asrul distances himself further from previous Indonesian intellectuals, Takdir included. There was a predominant perception of the West as something separate and has a particular “essence.” Both Hindu-loving writers like Sanusi Pane and profoundly Westernized political thinkers like Takdir and Sjahrir shared such a view. The East is depicted as the ascetic hero Arjuna who holds fast to meditation and the West drawn as Faust endlessly seeking knowledge and power.³⁹

Asrul’s position is different; interestingly, it echoes what would be brought up decades later by Edward Said in *Orientalism*. He challenges the way “the Orient” is conceptualized as something unitary and immutable, as part of a unified project of knowledge and power. Expressing his generation’s anger on this subject, he wrote, about 25 years before Said, that the whole “description” about the unchanging, undifferentiated “East” came from “some experts already wobbly in the knees who let their romantic feelings loose on this country.”⁴⁰

In 1955, this argument was brought up again in a more measured style. “Our meeting with Europe,” said Asrul, “was out of balance, because we had reached ‘the stage of muteness:’ ”

We never returned the call, because we were in no position to answer it... let alone become a partner or adversary in a conversation ... The Europeans frequently tried to keep us in one permanent position and in that way believed that they would be able to predict how we would react to different things, based on their knowledge of our old books.⁴¹

Statements such as these are at heart an insistence on freedom, which Asrul Sani’s critics like Ajip Rosidi fail to notice. It is freedom from the very basis, i.e. from “the stage of muteness” as well as from the ruling discourse of the colonial powers, represented by the wobbly-kneed colonial “experts.” This may explain the use of the exclusive “we,” *kami*, in the *Gelanggang* testimonial. In a sense, the cosmopolite underlines his Indonesian-ness. But the ambivalence persists when the issue is nationalism, since for Asrul Sani, nationalism in Indonesia “is a sense of nationhood still looking for its own reasoning.”⁴² This nationalism may be strong but it is not so certain of its future or of its permanence:

Because it is something which has yet to have “its own reasoning,” and because it has no source, where its inner feelings are held and from where strength may flow and be brought to life. People often say that his source is a culture or a tradition. But one has to vindicate this first.

There Asrul Sani stops short at explaining how he would vindicate tradition. He also does not say if he would return afterward. He is by no means a perfect rebel like Chairil Anwar.

But what differentiates Asrul Sani is that the freedom I am referring to only has meaning if it is also a type of creativity, or something created. Any creation, though, cannot continue from an attitude of defensiveness. Europe is an unavoidable historical fact. As Asrul says, “every nation or every human on this earth,” willingly or not, “must enter a world created by modern European civilization.” It does not matter if Europe retains its dominance or not. In Asrul’s opinion, “Europe can crumble into dust but the world it has made through its civilization will remain and we must face this fact, in our thoughts and in our daily lives.”⁴³

This kind of world, in which the cultures of East and West are pitted against each other, “looks for its power in negativity, as our revolution as well derived its strength from the same source.” This conflict seeks a defense but “defense,” to Asrul “no longer means a re-creation.” He explains his ideas further in another essay,

... culture does not recognize geographical boundaries in any form. A poem may be born in South Africa but an Indonesian reader can feel it the same way as if it had been written by someone in Indonesia. If this is the case, then this poem becomes his property and so something happens among the nation’s citizens, in a given era. A nation will have a certain character at a certain time in terms of its relationship with and attraction to foreign places.⁴⁴

Asrul does not make it very easy for those who want to “speak of culture and nationalism in the same breath.” For him, linking these two concepts without questioning them is both “a tragedy and a victory.”⁴⁵ Others, though, see this subject as being at the root of his perceived lack of loyalty, or at least lack of clarity in his attitude towards the national character.

This problem emerged when Asrul, Chairil Anwar and Rivai Apin ran the magazine *Gema Suasana* in 1948. In the first issue in January of that year, the editors stated their intention to “break through the fog and stale air” held to by the press and writers in Indonesia who “rage on and on with no clear destination.” In the February issue, the magazine included a long excerpt from an Indian intellectual,

Shrimati Sarojini Naidu, who opposed “a certain ugly element in literature,” that of the writer “giving voice to nationalist and racial feelings.” This excerpt said that a writer stood before the entire world and so must “affirm the essence of humanity, the spirit of cooperation, of unity and brotherhood.”

In a letter dated December 15, 1951, the critic H.B. Jassin critiques this attitude. At that time, the revolution for independence from the Dutch was underway and so Jassin felt that the opinions of Chairil, Asrul and Rivai “unwittingly played into the hands of the Dutch.”⁴⁶

Jassin was not being entirely fair, however, if we keep in mind that *Gema Suasana* also included an obituary of the revolutionary hero and composer Simanjuntak written by Asrul who called the man a patriot with warmth and respect. Simanjuntak, said Asrul, was not just able to arrange music but also to fight the Dutch until he was severely wounded. What interests me is that Asrul quotes Simanjuntak as saying he was willing to put his music aside because, “I don’t want to lose my sense of freedom. If our independence is taken away, freedom will disappear as well. Now there is a battle for this freedom. I am a part of it.”⁴⁷ The freedom depicted here is more in the form of freedom as experienced by a single human being, even when a war for national independence is underway.

Asrul’s ambivalence in this debate can be seen in a number of ways: he denigrates Takdir for writing “for those people who think this revolution is a fistfight on Sunday.” He maintains this opinion because the revolution, for him, is not a wasted effort. The revolution has brought forth something he calls “a change in values” with its establishment for mankind pointing towards a truer place.⁴⁸ On the other hand, Asrul also sees that what has been achieved after the revolution is merely “what has been formed by the revolutionary-state.”⁴⁹ It is only a beginning, and finally a disappointment, because an independent government has been created but he himself has become irrelevant.

If you ask a poet, this government is already dead. Many responsibilities still held close to the heart, accepted as the consequences of his own actions – from the country whose hand also builds – have vanished. In this situation the poet can actually be happy because he has never been so free. He has not killed the government, the government, acting as the majority, has treated him (the poet) as the majority treats the minority, and so nullified his duty to them, therefore freeing him from his responsibilities. Poetry claims that those in power do not want to see themselves as the enemy. So the poet is reluctant to place his hopes on those in power. Poetry can only interpret each government action as false and as part of an effort to cover up what cannot be hidden away.⁵⁰

This excerpt could only be a single expression of disappointment coming at a particular moment in time, but the basic argument shows something consistent about Asrul, i.e. freedom. Freedom, in the end, is personal freedom, and more specifically, freedom of self-expression for an artist.

The idea of freedom may also be what makes him defend those who use "I" in their writing. He rejects collectivity. He is scornful of those who "line up to get into a political party." Meanwhile, the pronoun "I" hides easily behind the use of "we." Slogans which used to be painted "on every outhouse and bathroom wall and which later could not be fulfilled" are replaced by party discipline "to cover up the inability to search alone." Writers can accept the invitation to state "their feelings in line with other citizens by providing the confession: anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism." But this should only be said by the "socialist salons" to "housewives who think of themselves as emancipated." In the end, he says, individual feelings "speak in their own way," and do not "follow the wellworn path, using a dull pencil..."⁵¹

With great eloquence, Asrul discusses individualism:

For me, individualism in literature provides new respect to humanity, almost already wiped out by machines, by the routine and by politicians who know only generalities and not variations. It is a refusal of those who want to turn us into a group of soldiers who can be urged on to the left or the right. It is a safety net within a type of democratic society that wants to choke off nobility of spirit. It is a cry from those who are born alone and who will be buried alone.⁵²

For Asrul, individualism of this kind is not negative. It emerges only after there has been "an acceptance of community life." But it is only within his individual self that "a poet can find his strength," "that he has his own heartbeat." This individualism fits together with freedom. Chairil Anwar's poems are an example of "the consequences of freedom" and which "must be faced by every person who has begun to become self-aware" even though his awareness "brings solitude along with it."⁵³

I think it is precisely at this point that Asrul Sani separates from Takdir, explaining why then that the poetry of the Generation of '45 takes a different literary direction than what was developed earlier. Indonesian literature from 1920 until 1945, wrote Asrul in 1950, was "literature of the establishment." He concluded that this earlier period, with what was published by Balai Pustaka and/or appeared in the journal *Pujangga Baru*, was "bureaucratic literature." Or as he puts it, literature that "smells like ironed shirts and champions a superficial kind of life."⁵⁴

These attacks by Asrul and others on the pre-1945 generation of writers do not include examples: it would appear that close readings were not a fashionable activity in those years. But I think that Asrul intuitively hit upon something. Although with some exceptions, most of the literature appearing before independence talked about things which could really only happen among the established or educated classes.

I like to compare the poem about the Jakarta coast by Amir Hamzah, from the prewar generation, with Chairil's poem "Twilight in a Small Harbor." In his poem, Chairil jumps from one thing to another, and he mixes everything simultaneously with lines of soliloquy about what he is feeling. He also uses words which seem discordant or stops unexpectedly in the middle of a sentence. The outside reality and what is inside of him flows together, and this meeting happens spontaneously and directly, and individually, without being classifiable.

Amir Hamzah's poem, on the other hand, follows a more consistent pattern. The sentence length is uniform with 9 to 10 syllables in each related line. His description moves forward in an orderly way, moving from one perspective to the next.

Berdiri aku di senja senyap
Camar melayang menepis buih
Melayah bakau menurai puncak
Berjulang datang ubur terkembang

I stand in the stillness of the twilight
 The seagull flies, skimming the ocean foam
 The mangrove tree bends over, revealing its crown
 Carried along by the waves comes an unfurled jellyfish

Finally, at the end, there is room for what is in the poet's thoughts, as if there is a special place in the poem for a conclusion.

Dalam rupa maha sempurna
Rindu sendu mengharu kalbu
Ingin datang merasa sentosa
Mengecap hidup bertentu tuju

In this perfect beauty
 Sad longings touch the heart
 Seeking to feel safe
 To taste life with a firm goal

Takdir thought this poem to be "extremely beautiful."⁵⁵ His writings as well

never venture into wild places, into nonsense, into the accidental. He does not play with an uncontrolled imagination or allow the impulses seen in Chairil's poems to run free. The atmosphere is that of a life with "a firm goal." In Asrul's opinion, these writers of the *Pujangga Baru* "do not want anything" artistically.

What Takdir wants is something outside of an artistic sense, in line with his agenda promoting social modernization. Literature, for Takdir, must be part of the work of development. It should not be trendy. Art cannot be for art's sake, it cannot be individualistic or decadent.⁵⁶ He criticizes the postwar poems, particularly those of Chairil, for being a reflection of the pessimism that is only a copy of what is happening in Europe. These poems can be refreshing, he says, but we "cannot continue to struggle against everything and everyone." He compares Chairil's poems to "a pungent, spicy fruit salad" in an interview in 1947, saying:

We should be happy with the invigorating atmosphere in our country, as long as we keep in mind that a pungent, spicy fruit salad with anchovy sauce is useful for making us sweat, but cannot become the main ingredient in human life.⁵⁷

What is interesting with this debate is to see the influence of lyric poetry. Takdir seems to see literature from the perspective of the novel, while what he is actually coming into conflict with is lyric poetry. In literature, according to Asrul, "poetry is the form which holds very little ideology, and which rarely bases itself in problems." Poetry, according to him, is "the most primitive form of literature" and it is "not a good source for understanding the story of an era." Asrul seems to want to show that lyric poetry does not have to be closely linked with the post-independence atmosphere in Indonesia which, according to Takdir, "must bring forth lively and inspirational poems."⁵⁸

Takdir's word "must" would erase something, which Asrul holds to be quite important: being honest in the writing process. Asrul says, "It is not the poet's business if his work follows a particular movement. He has acted honestly. What has been part of himself, that is what is brought out again."⁵⁹

In this sense then, it is not surprising that Asrul questions the propaganda songs written by Simanjuntak during the Japanese Occupation. The composer, however, had not seen this work as treason because he had negated his self while doing so. For him, these songs were not art.

There is also something paradoxical in Takdir's position on this issue. He has harsh words for those artists who worked for the Japanese and saw the process

as “surrendering the soul.” H.B. Jassin was one of those criticized, but he defends this collaboration by comparing himself to a chameleon which, although it changes color depending on the situation, does change its actual self. Takdir, however, sees that Jassin does not then understand the problem of art and culture. A chameleon, says Takdir, “would never live from inside.” But for anyone aspiring to “personal freedom,” the highest achievement is “being true to one’s nature and character.”⁶⁰

But is not this personal freedom something that cannot be part of an expression designed around the word “must”?

Takdir here represents a contradictory impulse in society, in which the urban middle class, particularly those found in the early stages of modernization and capitalism, require, on the one hand, an expansive sense of privacy as well as room to move forward. On the other hand, they are also worried about what the consequences will be of this openness and expanse of space. This fear tends most often to be directed towards art, where the imagination acts without boundaries. Takdir sees that modernism and in experimental art – which actually seeks to create new sensibilities – that what is visible is a certain subversive power. He is anxious with Picasso and Rimbaud. He doubts Hemingway and Kandinsky. And we know he is worried about Chairil’s “pessimism.” Modern art, for Takdir, has already collapsed into commercialism on one side, and into “aimless and irresponsible rebellion” on the other. It “cloaks itself in obscurity using almost impenetrable language, not accessible by the ordinary person, to the point where its social and cultural functions become weak and insubstantial.”⁶¹

Takdir always urges forth the issues of “responsibility,” “goals,” “function,” and “use.” He is a reactionary and wants to return to the period of the Renaissance when literature and art were still an integral part of the belief in humanity and in hope. This viewpoint, in the end, is similar to Sanusi Pane’s, his old adversary, who saw the West as bringing “nihilism, negativism, a *Verneinung* spirit in shining clothes.”⁶² What Takdir does not seek, however, is the return of an autocratic system, as Sanusi had hoped would result from the Japanese Occupation. On the other hand, his interest in establishing a type of agenda for art similar to social-realism “that is optimistic and positive” is not far from the Stalinist line.

Asrul and Chairil draw the line here. As Chairil wrote in an essay in 1945, his generation wants to leap away from the time when art was directed, under the Japanese. That time, when “words were betrayed” can now be put behind them. This kind of leap was never envisioned by the prewar generation of writers.

Takdir heads towards the sea. He knows his journey is difficult but his poems show a sea imagined "in an enjoyable dream" where the waves are "lively" and the ripples on the water look like "shining pearls." Chairil, on the other hand, flies from a place both cramped and threatening. And he knows that there is the possibility of something unpleasant ahead of him, that he will not reach what he seeks.

In 1957, the poet Rustandi Kartakusumah cried out, "You are people of the world!," to Asrul Sani and his generation.⁶³ Rustandi protested that Asrul's heart was not in his homeland, that he wanted something which had no connection with Indonesian-ness. He later wrote that modern Indonesian literature, as produced by Asrul and Chairil, was half-caste, being neither completely Indonesian nor completely something else.⁶⁴ In 1960, Ajip Rosidi also accused both the *Pujangga Baru* generation and the '45 Generation of having the same characteristics, that while they "still ate rice and salted fish," "their true spiritual home was Holland and Europe." These earlier generations never explained the new culture they sought, "drowning themselves in international culture without having any roots to stand on their own."⁶⁵

These sentiments were very common at the end of the 1950s in Indonesia after Parliament was dissolved and Sukarno's Guided Democracy was imposed, with strong anti-Western rhetoric. The poems of Ramadhan KH in *Priangan Si Jelita* published in 1958 and *Balada Orang-Orang Tercinta* (Ballads of the Loved Ones) by W.S. Rendra published in 1957 reflect this period very well. During this time, poets wrote pastoral poems, re-visited legends, childhood songs and rhymes, as well as ballads about daily life. There was also hardly any mention of the sea, such a common image in earlier poetry. Apparently, land was more inspirational to this new generation, many of whom were born in cities and so had no real experience with the sea voyage taken to seek one's fortune. If lyric poetry gets its energy from forgetting, what was forgotten here was no longer the past but other things, such as alienation, the sea voyage and the oppressive life in the small village. Ajip said that his generation had clearer roots than Asrul and Chairil's generation, meaning, they were based in Indonesia's different regions. A general feeling at the time was that "poets nowadays are looking for a foothold in the earth."⁶⁶

Asrul himself seemed to believe that this change in focus would have to come and at a symposium in Amsterdam in 1953, he suggested that modern Indonesian literature was an "urban literature." He also said that artists had forgotten the hinterland where the masses lived and where pessimism was unknown. An impasse had developed, as the connection with the village had been broken, even as urban

life had not yet reached a true form. This chaotic state was only good for short stories, he said, limited to critical comments about current conditions. As long as writers did not go to the villages, “they would never know themselves and, willingly or not, would be spiritually impoverished.”⁶⁷

These statements by Asrul are interesting, if not convincing. I get the feeling that if he speaks of his generation as needing the strength of a revolutionary, an apostate and an immoralist, he is not referring to himself. In his poems, such as *Mantra*, you do not hear dissonance, wild sentences, the unconscious, or wild or unexpected elements. In Asrul’s poems, the words themselves are not allowed to take over the role of creating the meaning. There is no chaos, or nonsense.

King of the black stone
Behind the dark forest
Dragon of the night
Come here!

I am an admiral of the sea pounding the night
I am a commander of all the eagles
I close all cities, I spread all fires
I make a dense forest, become dead
But I ensure that widows are not raped
Slaves sleep in their mothers’ laps
who knows me, will know happiness
Not afraid of vertigo
Not afraid of darkness
Vertigo and darkness are mine

Asrul would like poetry to have a certain *Weltanschauung*, a philosophy, or a view of life and of the world. He aspires to an all-encompassing poetry as “a balance from all those emotional scraps which have been flying past us most recently.” He warns poets who “do not care about a certain *gerichtheid* (unity of purpose)” that their journey will only take them back to where they started.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, Asrul’s poetry is fairly conventional itself, meaning that he can still go home, in returning from his voyage of departure to the village he has forgotten. He has not rejected it 100 percent, or broken his promises. His poem, *Letter from My Mother (Surat dari Ibu)*, in fact, is a call from a mother for her child to leave:

Go to the open sea, my darling child
Go to the wide spaces!
As long as it is not yet sunset

and the twilight has not reddened
Close the door to the past

If shadows have faded
And the sea eagle returns to its nest
the wind blows to land
Masts will dry on their own
and the ship's captain knows the way
Then you can come to me!

The question is: will he return to his mother? After the Amsterdam Symposium, we do not know exactly what steps into the heartland Asrul took, except what is revealed in the three village portraits from Sumatra published in translation in the *Atlantic Monthly* and the short story *Panen* (Harvest) in 1956.⁶⁹ Jassin, in fact, is skeptical about Asrul's rural idyll and see it as life being viewed "not from the perspective of a true villager any more, but as an urbanite and cosmopolitan person who has been halfway around the world."⁷⁰ I think the *Atlantic Monthly* sketches and the short story, as with Asrul's other stories, tend to reflect an aesthetic experience more so than a social one. And the space there is more a unique world, without parallel, as opposed to being a place of social action. As Rustandi said of Asrul and his compatriots, "Ah, you are people of the world."

Reading Asrul's prose is to read the elegant prose of someone from a big city. The sentences are involving and bright, sarcasm is readily apparent, sometimes funny but always civilized, and the general attitude is of "I-see-you-all-as-clowns," of someone watching an entertainment and who is reluctant to get involved.

At heart, this is the writing of a *flâneur* who walks and observes with eyes that want to know and are in no hurry. And a *flâneur*, as Walter Benjamin says, is the product of an urban environment, in which "the enjoyment of observing is paramount." This holds true even when, as in Asrul's "Letter from Jakarta," what he writes and observes tells us more about him than about Jakarta itself.

So this letter writer talks about how he reads *Voyage au bout de la nuit* by Celine, while he touches on Melville and Miller, and the poems of Amir Hamzah. He talks about going to the movies at the Metropole (maybe one of southern Asia's largest movie theaters at that time), a conversation with Rosihan Anwar and Usmar Ismail, and of boredom. A quote from Herzen is inserted here, and a negative review of a local art exhibit. There is also a meeting with the Dutch poet Mies Boukhuis and with the composer Amir Pasaribu who heard a civil servant saying, "No! Jakarta is a-national."

What we don't see here are other sights, such as the folk theater at Senen. Such sights are far below this writer's notice. Although he appears to have no time constraints, he keeps on going in his walks and observations, generally criticizing and rarely praising. He seems to know many things, such as what is delicious, what is good, what is proper. He tells the Dutch poet that "goat satay dipped in a glass of gin is quite tasty." He ridicules the wives of intellectuals who "act like field workers" (a comparison which insults field workers) and at an unexpected juncture says "so far no one has been able to tell me what is meant by putting the word 'national' together with culture."⁷¹

It is actually hard to see what "going home" means to a writer like this, especially if going home means returning to the village, to your birthplace, to the past. He knows he has been depicted as a person whose spiritual home is in a foreign continent and that he has no firm roots. But he probably must live with many paradoxes, as does every person touched by the 20th century. Those who build up their self-respect do so in a collective called the "nation" while at the same time they feel themselves being watched by other people, watching other people, watched by their self, watching their self. This is what happens with the character of Minke, or more pointedly with Nyai Ontosoroh, in Pramoedya's *This Earth of Mankind* (*Bumi Manusia*), "She was not Chinese, not Eurasian, and it could be said not a native either. She was a storehouse of secrets."

Asrul wrote in 1955 that Indonesia "was a nation still looking for its foundation."⁷² As mentioned earlier, Indonesian nationalism is claimed to have as its source a culture or a tradition, "but this tradition or culture has to be corrected first."

Asrul does not explain what can be used to correct tradition, before we acknowledge it as true. He also does not say if he would return after it has been corrected, if this were indeed possible. One metaphor frequently used by Asrul is that of the "house." A house, as is also true with a place of origin, a tradition, a region, a hinterland, roots, a self, is not something long identified within one's self, not always whole. There are always cracks, unacknowledged nooks and crannies, forgotten and missing elements, and also things that can be put out in front – but maybe only as window dressing.

Sitor Situmorang, a poet of the same generation, wrote a poem called "The Missing Child" (*Si Anak Hilang*), describing the day when a young person returns home from a distant land. But does this reunion really happen? As night falls, the shore by the lake whispers, "You know the child did not come home."

What is probably most honest is to accept the loss, and in this way, give it meaning. “The poet, Fadjria, is someone who has suffered a loss and is aware of that loss. Others have also suffered it but they have covered this missing place as tightly as possible, decorating their daily lives. The rest are not aware that what they have covered up is an empty space where the missing things once were.”

These sentences are taken from a well-known essay of Asrul’s called “A House for Fadjria Novari” (*Perumahan Untuk Fadjria Novari*).⁷³ It begins with the story of the return of the poet to her birthplace for the funeral of her father who has just passed away. In this essay-cum-story-cum-poem, the interrelationship and tension between forgetting and remembering is closely and intensely felt, and this paradox, which has become a major theme of poetry and human life today, resonates here:

A particular certainly has brought me here, a certainty of forgetting a past – people have made it so that I have to forget it – and the certainty of finding a new place. It was a beautiful day when I first saw this path and I enjoyed the shade from the dense foliage, and was able to pay attention to almost every stone I passed. I could clearly hear the sand being run over by the bicycle wheels. I did not even think about the one who had just died.

Hope can wipe away much bitterness. My birthplace will move. I will build a new house and the piece of history at my back will not be passed on to the children I will eventually have. The house I give is the story of life... This house does not exist any more for me. My connection with it has been extinguished.

Yes, what I have from before is already very old and almost indecent. Everything there is in its place. If a picture is taken down, the wall will look white in that place and the spot clearly visible. And if the chair and table in the middle of the room are moved, the room will look like one in a house possessed by spirits. The heavy cloths at the door and the narrow windows prevent anything from getting in or getting out. Thoughts live in that house that does not want to know what mine are. Every corner holds rules for living wrapped up and given a veil of sanctity. Even so I was told that this is my house.

I think this is as good an ending as any for this piece.

Notes

¹ For this paper, I am using the translated version by Max Lane, (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1991).

² Frantz Fanon. "Racism and Culture," in *Toward the African Revolution* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 42.

³ In Homi K. Bhabha (editor), *Nation and Narration*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 11. Renan also says: "...the essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things."

⁴ Quoted in H.M.J. Maier, 'From Heterglossia to Polyglossia: The Creation of Malay and Dutch in the Indies,' in *Indonesia 56* (Cornell University, October 1993), pp. 37-57. For more details on the transformation of Malay to Indonesian language, see A. Teeuw, *Modern Indonesian Literature*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967), pp. 4-9.

⁵ Republished in Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, *Dari Perdjjuangan dan Pertumbuhan Bahasa Indonesia* (Jakarta: Pustaka Rakjat, 1957), pp. 55-64.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 48 and p. 92. The second quote is from the title of his essay published in July 1948. "*Mempersatukan Bahasa dalam lingkungan mempersatukan Bangsa*" in which he also says: "It is a matter of time before this archipelago is unified under a great nation-state (*negara*)" (my translation).

⁷ Maier, *op. cit.*, p. 41ff. Maier also mentions that Snouck Hurgonje suggested that native officials should not be allowed to speak Dutch to their superiors. A case in point is an incident related by Kartini, the pioneer of women emancipation in Java in the 1920s, in her famous correspondence with her Dutch friends: A young native, most probably a member of the local aristocracy, was graduated from a Dutch school with distinction. He returned to his home town and had an audience with the highest ranking Dutch official in the area. He spoke reverently in Dutch to the person, which was a mistake. Soon he was demoted to a low-class job under the supervision of a Dutch bureaucrat who only spoke bad Malay to him. See Raden Adjeng Kartini, *Letters of a Javanese Prince*. (New York: The Norton Library, 1964), pp. 56-60.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

⁹ Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, *Dari Perdjjuangan*, p. 10: "The spread of Dutch among the natives would reduce the disparity between the Dutch and the native populations. The racial superiority of the Dutch would disappear" (my translation).

¹⁰The number of newspapers is quoted by Teeuw, *Modern Indonesian Literature*, p. 7.

¹¹Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, *Dari Perjuangan*, p. 43.

¹²Quoted by Semangat Muda (a pseudonym of S. Takdir Alisjahbana), in an article published in *Soeara Oemoem* (Surabaya). 7 Maret 1932. See also, *Dari Perjuangan*, p. 6.

¹³The debate was later put together and published in book form. See Achdiat K. Mihardja, (editor), *Polemik Kebudayaan*, (Jakarta: Perpustakaan Perguruan Kementerian PP dan K., 3rd printing, 1954), pp. 14-15.

¹⁴Parha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments, Colonial and Postcolonial History*, (New Jersey: Princeton University, 1993), p. 6.

¹⁵The English translation of the poem is by A. Teeuw, in *Modern Indonesian Literature*, p. 261.

¹⁶Gary Saul Morson & Caryul Emerson. *Mikhail Bakhtin, Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 320-321. See also pp. 311-317, and p. 347.

¹⁷Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities, Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso Editions, London: 1983), hl. 30-37.

¹⁸In one of his books, H.B. Jassin, the critic, points out that. "There are people who say that the writer's sneering attitude is morally unacceptable vis-à-vis the great sacrifice that took place in the battle" (my translation). See *Kesusasteran Indonesia Modern Dalam Kritik dan Esei* (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1962), p. 103.

¹⁹Gary Saul Morson & Caryul Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, p. 320.

²⁰Quoted by Kees Snoek, "Tanpa Baju Besi: Tentang Pengarang Belanda Eddy Du Perron dengan Sutan Sjahrir dan kawan-kawannya," in *Kalam*, 8th edition, 1996, hal. 92.

²¹In his foreword for *Pudjangga Baru*, The 10th Anniversary Issue. The magazine was actually published for the first time in June 1933, but during the Japanese occupation and several years after, it disappeared.

²²Asrul Sani's obituary of the composer was published in a monthly literary journal. *Gema Suasana*, June 1948.

²³*Pembangoenan*, Year I, No. 1, 10 December 1945. Reprinted in H.B. Jassin,

Chairil Anwar, Pelopor Angkatan '45, (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1956), p. 119.

²⁴“Surat Singkat Tentang Essay,” *Gelanggang, Siasat*, 1 April 1952, p. 9.

²⁵ Almost 20 years later, in 1968, he published another series in the magazine *Budaja Djaja*, called, rather ungainly, “Our Mother is Jakarta” (*Ibu Kami Adalah Jakarta*), consisting fragments of his thoughts on various matters.

²⁶*Siasat*, Year II, No. 80, 18 September 1948.

²⁷ According to Ajip Rosidi. *Ichdisar Sedjarah Sastra Indonesia*. (Bandung: Binatjipta, 1969), passim.

²⁸ In “Sebuah Pembelaan,” *Siasat*, 20 May 1951, p. 9.

²⁹ See the two parts to his piece on “Ciliwung” in *Siasat*, 25 September and 11 January 1957.

³⁰ Ajip Rosidi, *Kapankah Kesusasteraan Indonesia Lahir?* (Bhratara, Jakarta: 1964), pp. 34, 36, 38.

³¹ This was the main theme at the Poetry Day Symposium in Solo, Central Java, 11 January 1956. It was published in *Budaja* (Yogya), February-March 1956.

³² In *Cultureel Nieuws Indonesia*, 30, 1953, pp. 817-825.

³³ “Deadlock Pada Puisi Emosi-Semata,” *Mimbar Indonesia*, 25 September 1948.

³⁴ *Konfrontasi*, 10, pp. 2-15.

³⁵ H.B. Jassin, *Kesusasteraan Indonesia Modern Dalam Kritik dan Esei*, II (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1962), p. 8.

³⁶ *Zenith*, July 1951, p. 391. The other quotations have been taken from this issue of *Zenith* and from the August issue, pp. 457-460.

³⁷ On the *rantau* tradition of the Minangkabau (from West Sumatra) and its influence on the cultural outlook of Indonesian intellectuals and nationalist leaders, see Rudolf Mrazek, *Sjahrir, Politics and Exile in Indonesia* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1994), pp. 10-20.

³⁸ In “Fragmen Keadaan II,” *Siasat* 29 October 1950. For his opinion of Takdir on this subject, see “Kita dan Eropah,” *Konfrontasi*, January-February 1955, p.12.

³⁹ Sjahrazad (Sutan Sjahrir), *Renungan dan Perjuangan*, translated from the Dutch by H.B. Jassin, (Jakarta: Djambatan, 1994), p. 158.

⁴⁰ "Sumber-sumber ketjil ditengah air," *Siasat*, No. 342, December 1953, p. 9.

⁴¹ "Kita dan Eropah," pp. 6-7.

⁴² *Konfrontasi*, January-February 1955, p. 13.

⁴³ *Siasat*, 13 May 1951, p. 4.

⁴⁴ Editorial, *Zenith*, June 1951.

⁴⁵ "Fragmen Keadaan II"

⁴⁶ See Goenawan Mohamad, *Kesusastraan dan Kekuasaan* (Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus, 1993), pp. 48-49.

⁴⁷ In *Gema Suasana*, June 1948.

⁴⁸ "Fragmen Keadaan, *Siasat*, December 1950.

⁴⁹ "Dari Catatan Atas Kertas Merah-Jambu," *Mega Mendung*, 20 December 1949. Printed in *Mimbar Indonesia*, January 1950, p. 19.

⁵⁰ "Tidak dengan Pemerintah," *Siasat*, 13 September 1953, pp. 14-15. In "Fragmen Keadaan I," *Siasat*, 22 October 1950, he writes that if "politics are carried out in accordance with the meanings of power, then it becomes "a system where the personal and the individual disappear into the abstraction of the state."

⁵¹ "Fragmen Keadaan V," *Siasat*, 4 March 1951.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ "Pembahasan Orang-orang Jang Kenes," *Siasat*, 4 October 1953.

⁵⁴ "Fragmen Keadaan III," *Siasat*, 5 November 1950.

⁵⁵ Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, "Puisi Indonesia Zaman Baru," reprinted in H.B. Jassin's *Pujangga Baru*, p. 87.

⁵⁶ See Takdir's essay, "Kesoestaseraan di Zaman Pembangoenan Bangsa," *Pujangga Baru*, commemorative edition covering 1933-38, p. 43. Also "Individualisme en Gemeenschapsbewustzijn in de moderne Indonesische letterkunde," *Pujangga Baru*, No. 10, Year IV, April 1937.

⁵⁷ See *Di Tengah-Tengah Perdjuaan Kebudayaan Indonesia* (Jakarta: Pustaka Rakjat, 1949). Reprinted in *Perjuangan Tanggung Jawab dalam Kesusasteraan* (Jakarta: Dunia Pustaka Raya, 1977), pp. 174-5.

⁵⁸ "Sebuah Pembelaan," *Siasat*, 20 May 1951.

⁵⁹ *Siasat*, 29 October 1950.

⁶⁰ *Pujangga Baru*, 10th anniversary edition, 1949, pp. 5-6.

⁶¹ Takdir, *Perjuangan Tanggung Jawab*, p. 177.

⁶² Quoted by Kees Snoek in "Tanpa Baju Besi: Tentang Pengarang Belanda Eddy Du Perron dengan Sutan Sjahrir dan Kawan-kawannya," *Kalam*, No. 8, 1996, p. 96.

⁶³ In "Sebuah Pembelaan," *Siasat*, 20 May 1951, p. 9.

⁶⁴ See the two parts to his piece on "Ciliwung" in *Siasat*. 25 September and 11 December 1957.

⁶⁵ Ajip Rosidi, *Kapan...*, p. 36, 38.

⁶⁶ This type of discussion was carried out at the Poetry Day Symposium in Solo, Central Java, 11 January 1956. It was published in *Budaja* (Yogya), February-March 1956. See also Goenawan Mohamad, "Puisi Yang Berpijak di Bumi Sendiri," in *Kesusasteraan dan Kekuasaan*, pp. 67-69.

⁶⁷ In *Cultureel Nieuws Indonesia*, 30, 1953, pp. 817-825.

⁶⁸ "Deadlock Pada Puisi Emosi-Semata," *Mimbar Indonesia*, 25 September 1948.

⁶⁹ *Konfrontasi*, 10, pp. 2-15.

⁷⁰ H.B. Jassin, *Kesusasteraan Indonesia Modern Dalam Kritik dan Esei*, II (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1962), p. 8.

⁷¹ *Zenith*, July 1951, p. 391.

⁷² *Konfrontasi*, January-February 1955, p. 13.

⁷³ Published in *Siasat*, 13 May 1951.