

BUMI MANUSIA AND ANAK SEMUA BANGSA:
PRAMOEDYA ANANTA TOER ENTERS THE 1980s*

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After fourteen years' detention without trial, Pramoedya Ananta Toer was released from Buru Island at the end of 1979, along with the last 105 B-category political prisoners held since October-November 1965. Recalcitrant to the end, Pramoedya was quoted as telling reporters on his release that he intended to continue to write, and was unconcerned about his prospects for publication.¹ He brought with him from Buru a number of manuscripts completed during the last years of his imprisonment, including four historical novels entitled *Bumi Manusia* [Man's World], *Anak Semua Bangsa* [Child of All Nations], *Jejak Langkah* [Steps Forward], and *Rumah Kaca* [Glasshouse]. All of these novels had originally been composed as oral literature, stories related to fellow prisoners in the early years of his imprisonment when Pramoedya was unable to write. (This was the time when a top Indonesian general is reputed to have said, "He is allowed to write; but he has no pen and paper."²) In August 1980, the first of these novels, *Bumi Manusia*, appeared throughout Java. It was published by PT Hasta Mitra, a company headed by the former director of the newspaper *Bintang Timur*, Hasyim Rachman, who was himself a political prisoner released with Pramoedya in 1979. Within two weeks, the first printing of 10,000 copies was sold out. It was clear that Pramoedya was "back." Not only had he survived fourteen years of extreme mental and physical deprivation with his spirit intact,³ but in *Bumi Manusia* he had produced the novel which so much of modern Indonesian literature had struggled towards for more than fifty years. Here, for the first time, was an Indonesian writer's attempt to make the historical circumstances which had produced the complex reality of "Indonesia" and "the Indonesian" the framework for a novel. In a sense, it was a novel to explain why other novels had come into being.

Bumi Manusia was written with a clear purpose and audience in mind. Pramoedya had said that he aimed through the novel to confront young Indonesian readers with the historical forces which had shaped their present, and that he had consciously written in a manner he knew they could understand.⁴ It deals with the struggle of the generation of Indonesians to which R. A. Kartini belonged to

* I wish to thank Doug Miles of the University of Sydney, and Paul Tickell of Monash University, who first gave me access to the material reviewed here.

1. David Jenkins, "Freed, the Last of the Many," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, January 4, 1980.
2. Quoted, for example, in Brian May, *The Indonesian Tragedy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 32.
3. See Pramoedya's own story of his arrest and imprisonment, as told to Hamish McDonald, *Suharto's Indonesia* (Blackburn: Fontana, 1980), pp. 221-24.
4. Interview in *Tempo*, August 30, 1980.

reconcile their rejection of those indigenous cultural mores they perceived as "feudal" and humiliating to human dignity, with their growing awareness that the very Western culture which had so "liberated" their consciousness was holding the people of the Netherlands Indies in a continuing grip of exploitation and oppression. Their own struggle for personality definition thus involved an attempt to reconcile fundamental contradictions within the liberal colonial ethic. In *Bumi Manusia*, this struggle is played out on the enormously broad canvas of East Java on the eve of the twentieth century, and at all times it is the interaction of individuals with this cultural and historical environment that is the essence of the novel.

To convey this complex historical picture, however, Pramoedya adopted the racy, spoken-language style of the popular commercial literature which had evolved in Indonesia during the period of his imprisonment, and which he had learned from the light "innocuous" reading material [*majalah hiburan*] permitted to Buru prisoners.⁵ The linguistic facility needed to accomplish this is remarkable.

Pramoedya's use of a contemporary language style introduces the problem of anachronism into the world of the novel, but it was crucial to the realization of his aim. For without its popular style, *Bumi Manusia* might have been condemned to the isolation which, for example, the work of St. Takdir Alisjahbana has suffered in modern Indonesia. (Takdir's passionately held vision of "modern Indonesian man" stagnated between his *Layar Terkembang* of 1936 and *Crotta Azzura* of 1970 in a laborious prose that must have been considered unreadable by so many of the audience he aimed to reach.) Pramoedya, the writer who was one of the leading formulators of the aesthetic doctrine of Indonesian socialist realism in the early 1960s, was still, it appears, guided by an understanding of the dynamic relationship between art and society. *Bumi Manusia* was for modern Indonesia; it had, therefore, to be written in terms understandable to the widest possible audience. In subsequent works, Pramoedya said, he could perhaps begin to adapt his style again, enlarging the linguistic sensibility and appreciation of his audience once he had won them on their own terms.⁶ Similar, perhaps, was the motivation behind the character portrayal in *Bumi Manusia*, described by one reviewer, as *berbau pop. Toko lelaki yang cakap dan super, tokoh wanitanya yang cantik dan cerdas* [has a pop flavor. A male protagonist who is "super" and good-looking, a female one who is pretty and intelligent].⁷ Indeed, his characters do appear at times to be descended from the folklore conventions of prince, princess, and demon, which in their modern guise people the semi-fantasy world of contemporary Indonesian commercial literature. Together with Pramoedya's fluent narrative ability, they make *Bumi Manusia* a remarkable fusion of the linguistic conventions, character types, and narrative style regarded by critics as the hallmarks of "popular" literature, with the wide-ranging intellectual analysis of social and cultural issues which those same critics assign to "serious" literature. It is a novel of ideas, which a wide audience of Indonesian readers has deemed a success, because it acknowledges the conventions of contemporary Indonesian linguistic and literary culture.

The basic narrative framework of *Bumi Manusia* is a first person account of the life of a young Javanese student at a Dutch secondary school (HBS) in Surabaya during the years 1898 and 1899.⁸ We know him only as "Minke," a nickname

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. This makes Minke a member of an extremely small educated elite. In 1900,

derived from a teacher's once cursing him with the English word "monkey." He is the son of the (soon to be) Bupati of B. [Bojonegoro] from C. [Cepu], and at the beginning of the novel we see him infatuated by the wonders of science and learning, with the beauty of the Dutch princess soon to ascend the throne, and the promise of the dawning new age of the twentieth century. Through a Eurasian friend (born on a Dutch ship in port, so that he would have Dutch nationality), Minke is introduced into the home of a woman known as Nyai Ontosoroh, the Javanese concubine of a Dutch businessman named Herman Mellema, and her two children, Robert and Annelies. We learn subsequently that Nyai Ontosoroh (her real name is Sanikem) was literally sold into concubinage by her father, as a way of ingratiating himself with his Dutch superiors and advancing his position. Mellema assumed responsibility for "educating" her, and taught her all she needed to know to become a confident and competent businesswoman in the European style. Eventually she assumed more and more the management of his agricultural enterprise at Wonokromo (the *Borderij Buitenzorg*, whence the name "Ontosoroh" is derived). Many years after their de facto marriage, and the birth of the two children, who were registered by their father, giving them the right to his name, Mellema was confronted unexpectedly with his son by the wife he had deserted in Holland. Unable to support the guilt occasioned by this meeting, he turned to dissipation and, contracting syphilis suffered the gradual disintegration of his mental capability. As this happened, Nyai Ontosoroh took over the running of the house and business, treating Mellema as a despised and ignorant outsider, with Annelies declaring allegiance to her mother and her *pribumi* blood, and her brother, Robert, choosing to follow his father. When Minke meets the family, Annelies is a beautiful, child-like creature, sequestered from the world ever since her father's fall into depravity. Minke is infatuated with her--she is more beautiful than the Dutch princess--and Nyai Ontosoroh encourages the match. She sees the relationship with Minke as an important step towards emotional stability and maturity in her daughter.

As soon as Minke moves into the *Borderij Buitenzorg* household, he begins to feel pressure against his association with the family there, from both his own Javanese *priyayi* background, and the moralistic environment of his Dutch school. His association with a woman of *nyai* status is deplored by Dutch and Javanese alike, and he struggles to resolve his personal sense of morality, his growing commitment to Annelies, and the social pressure on him. In this state, he receives a summons from the police and is returned to the feet of his father, who has just been appointed to the position of Bupati. Outraged at the humiliating means his father has used to bring him home, Minke undergoes what, for him, are the trials of Javanese *priyayi*-dom at its full, acting as translator at the official reception after his father's appointment. During this reception, he comes into contact with a prominent Dutch liberal, Assistant-Resident Herbert de la Croix, and his two daughters. They, together with one of his Dutch school teachers, become his promoters, seeing him as the type of *pribumi* who alone can change the condition of the people of the Indies and bring the Indies into union with Holland as a self-governing territory. At one point, the image of the *gamelan* is used to foreshadow a prominent role in Indonesian history for Minke. Miriam, one of the daughters of de la Croix, speaks of Java as awaiting its *gong*, just as all the sounds in the *gamelan* move

there were only thirteen Indonesians enrolled at HBS throughout the Indies. (S. L. van der Wal, *Het Onderwijsbeleid in Nederlands-Indië 1900-1940* [Groningen: Wolters, 1963], p. 697.) Of these, one person alone, on average, graduated in the years 1900-1904. (Paul W. van der Veur, *Education & Social Change in Colonial Indonesia (1)* [Athens, Ohio: Southeast Asia Program, Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1969], p. 14a.)

towards, and await the sound of their gong. She asks whether he may fill that role, as the thinker and leader Java's future awaits. The issue of Minke's future, and his relations with his family, are both left unresolved at this point, and Minke returns to Surabaya.

After some intrigue and adventure connected with Robert Mellema, Nyai's disolute son, Minke takes up residence again at Wonokromo, and with Nyai's encouragement, begins to cohabit with Annelies. Through his own relationship with her, and his discussions with her doctor, Martinet, who is exploring the new world of psychoanalysis, Minke begins to understand that the fragility of Annelies' personality relates to Nyai Ontosoroh's attempt to express through her daughter a part of herself, and keep it protected from the world. Moreover, at some point in the past, Annelies' own brother had raped, and attempted to murder her, and this repressed experience acts as a constant psychological disturbance to her.

At this stage, the lives of all those at Wonokromo are shaken, and the book's denouement is announced, by the death of Annelies' father, Herman Mellema. He is found poisoned in the Chinese brothel where he has spent his days, and whither his son has followed him. Although the inquest exonerates Nyai Ontosoroh, Minke, and Annelies of complicity, the circumstances of their private lives are exposed to a haughtily disapproving colonial society. Minke is first dismissed, then later reinstated at school. He plans to marry Annelies after his graduation, and, to the delight of his Dutch liberal supporters, the marriage occurs just after the announcement of Minke's winning second place for the whole of the Indies in the HBS final examination. As Nyai has known to expect all along, however, disaster strikes six months after the wedding and the sense of victory associated with it: Mellema's son by his legal Dutch marriage, a young naval engineer named Maurits Mellema, lays claim, on behalf of himself and his mother, to all of Mellema's property and the guardianship of his daughter, Annelies. As Mellema and Sanikem (Nyai Ontosoroh) were never legally married, Nyai has no claim whatsoever under Dutch law, either to the property which de facto is her own, or to her own daughter. According to the letter of the law, she, and Minke as Annelies' husband by a Moslem marriage, simply do not exist. Knowing the cause is hopeless, but determined to fight, Nyai Ontosoroh and Minke wage a spirited battle both in and outside the courts, to expose the crime being perpetrated against them. It is here that the many contradictions being pointed to throughout the novel reach their culmination. Annelies, in a state of sedation throughout the proceedings, finds her dignity, if not any sense of vitality, as she leaves Surabaya for Holland in accordance with the orders of the court. Minke is left deserted, shouting through his tears at the very end of the novel, "*Eropa! kau, guruku, begini macam perbuatanmu?*" ["Europe, my teacher, is *this* what you have done?"].

Woven into the course of this narrative are numerous character portraits and situational anecdotes which, though incidental to the main story, give *Bumi Manusia* its texture as an historical novel. Many of these are in themselves gems of narration, finely and simply described stories showing a great mastery of suspense technique, interpolated into the mainline narrative. An example is Nyai Ontosoroh's description, which she relates to her daughter, of her "sale," and the beginning of her life with Mellema. Her fear and trembling before the huge white man who is to be her sole master is totally convincing:

Tuan Besar Kuasa keluar. Ia tersenyum senang dan matanya bersinar. Ada kudengar suaranya. Dengan bahasa isyarat yang asing ia silakan kami naik. Sekilas menjadi semakin jelas bagiku betapa tinggi-besar tubuhnya. Mungkin beratnya tiga kali Ayah. Mukanya kemerahan. Hidungnya begitu mancungnya, cukup untuk tiga atau empat orang Jawa sekaligus. Kulit

*lengannya kasar seperti kulit biawak dan berbulu lebat kuning. Aku ker-
takkan gigi, mununduk lebih dalam. Lengannya itu sama besarnya dengan
kakiku.*

[The Administrator appeared. He smiled contentedly, and his eyes shone. I heard his voice. Gesturing to us in a foreign language, he invited us up the stairs. I saw in a flash how large and tall he was. He was probably three times my father's weight. His face looked red. His nose was so prominent it was enough for three or four Javanese people put together. The skin on his arms was rough, like an iguana, and covered with thick yellow hair. I ground my teeth together, and bowed lower. Those arms were as big as my legs.]⁹

Pramoedya's research in preparation for *Bumi Manusia* dates, according to his own comments, from before his arrest in 1965.¹⁰ There are many topical references to Surabayan society at the turn of the century, right down to current books and magazine articles, as well as references to the broader Indies environment (the young aristocrat from Banten who is studying law in Holland [Ahmad Djajadiningrat] and the daughter of the Bupati of J., who is able to express herself in Dutch and publish in a scientific journal [R. A. Kartini]). One reviewer has referred to Pramoedya's accurate description of the gas lighting system of the period.¹¹ Yet all this incidental detail does not obscure the focus on the struggle to define the Indonesian consciousness. The interaction of the Dutch and Javanese in the nyai institution is used to encapsulate the essential forces at work in colonial Java, and the contradictions which they pose. Minke progresses from innocence and expectation to a full knowledge of his powerlessness to close the gap between his own ideals and the reality of his historical condition. In the early stages of the novel, Nyai Ontosoroh and her environment represent an assurance for him that the admiration he feels for the modern (Western) world contains potential seeds of significant change for Java. He responds approvingly to details like Nyai's unaffected dress, and the absence of "feudal" behavior in her servants. The reader observes, however, his sense of her marginality, the lack of a cultural definition by which he can place her:

Dan aku ragu. Haruskah aku ulurkan tangan seperti pada wanita Eropa, atau aku hadapi dia seperti wanita Pribumi--jadi aku harus tidak peduli? Tapi dialah justru yang mengulurkan tangan. Aku terheran-heran dan kikuk menerima jabatannya. Ini bukan adat Pribumi; Eropa! Kalau begini caranya tentu aku akan mengulurkan tangan lebih dahulu.

"Tamuan Annelies juga tamuku," katanya dalam Belanda yang fasih. "Bagaimana aku harus panggil? Tuan? Sinyo? Tapi bukan Indo. . . ."

"Bukan Indo. . . ." apa aku harus panggil dia? Nyai atau Mevrouw?

[I hesitated. Should I extend my hand, as to a European woman, or should I approach her as a native woman--meaning take no notice of her? But she, in fact, extended her hand to me. I took it awkwardly, unable to conceal my astonishment. This wasn't native custom; it was European! If I had known, I would have extended my hand first.

9. *Bumi Manusia*, pp. 71-72.

10. "Pramoedya: Saya Ingin Membuat 'Shock Therapy' Terhadap Kebudayaan Jawa," *Kompas*, August 29, 1980.

11. *Ibid.*

"A guest of Annelies is a guest of mine," she said in fluent Dutch. "How should I call you? Tuan? Sinyo? But you're not Eurasian. . . ."

"No, I'm not Eurasian . . ." what should I call her? "Nyai," or "Me-vrouw" ?] ¹²

The condition of his life begins to be formed by the type of potential which Nyai appears to embody, and a repudiation of his Javanese priyayi background. When berated and humiliated for his failure to be aware of his father's forthcoming appointment as Bupati, he asserts that the world of priyayi-dom (conceived as *jabatan, pangkat, gaji dan kecurangan* [office, rank, wages and fraud]), ¹³ is of no concern to him. He himself rejects the suggestion that one day he will also become a Bupati, and tells his mother that his only ideal is that instilled by his education, to become *manusia bebas, tidak diperintah, tidak memerintah* [a free man, not ruled, not ruling]. ¹⁴ When, in the same episode, Minke discovers his brother reading his diary, he responds to his brother's accusation that he is *bukan Jawa lagi* [no longer a Javanese person] ¹⁵ by asserting angrily that what is the point of being *Jawa*, if it is only to have one's individual rights infringed in such a way. The point is to escape his Javanese world, into that which guarantees individual rights, and introduces the notion of "free man." When his mother commends the Javanese values of *mengalah* before one's elders and superiors, he replies passionately:

". . . itulah nyanyian keliru dari orang Jawa yang keliru. Yang berani mengalah terinjak-injak, Bunda. . . .

"Berbelas tahun sudah sahaya bersekolah Belanda untuk dapat mengetahui semua itu. Patutkah sahaya Bunda hukum setelah tahu?"

[" . . . it's the mistaken song of mistaken Javanese people. Those who bravely surrender all the time, are always being trodden on, mother. . . .

"I've studied for years in a Dutch school to be able to understand all that. Is it right for you to punish me now I do understand?"] ¹⁶

This "shock therapy" on Javanese culture ¹⁷ and the corresponding formation of the forward-looking "Indonesian" consciousness in its place, forms the basis for most of the narrative. The sense of liberating potential and the bravery inherent in being forward-thinking is stressed continually, in order to throw into sharper relief the blinding defeat of the end. For Pramoedya's point is to drive home the marginality of the young Minke's consciousness, and its powerlessness in the face of real power structures. Education, in *Bumi Manusia*, is beginning to challenge the exercise of hegemony in Indies society. Pramoedya knows, however, that education and changed consciousness are *by themselves* not enough: other ideological components of the society, here, morality, and the law, remain in their place, shoring up the political and economic realities of colonialism against the liberal challenge to it. And as this becomes felt in the novel, we see the "Indonesian" consciousness beginning to reassert more of its pribumi characteristics. It is in the context

12. *Bumi Manusia*, p. 15.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

17. The words are Pramoedya's own. See note 10.

of his humiliation before colonial society that Minke for the first time identifies with a state of feeling he expresses as purely "Javanese":

Apa yang kurasakan sekarang ini, perasaan rendah begini, adalah yang nenek-moyangku menamai nelangsa--perasaan sebatang kara di tengah sesamanya yang sudah menjadi lain daripada dirinya, di mana panas matahari ditanggung semua orang, tapi panas hati ditanggung seorang diri.

[What I felt now, this low feeling, is what my ancestors called *nelangsa*, the feeling of being all alone in the midst of one's fellow men, who are no longer like oneself. Where the heat of the sun is borne by all men, but the heat of the heart is borne alone.]¹⁸

The metaphor used to describe the state of *nelangsa* (*panas matahari . . . panas hati*) is a purely indigenous construct, which at this point introduces a completely different tone in Minke's portrayal of himself.

Equally important is the role of Annelies, who all along sees herself as pribumi. She is portrayed throughout almost all of the novel as a beautiful and delicate toy, offsetting the capable Westernism of her mother and Minke, and is given her maturity and dignity only at the very end, when the others stand defeated. Her symbolic gestures of "pribumi-ism"--her wish to spoon-feed her husband "once in her life," and her determination to depart with the battered suitcase her mother had carried when she was sold into concubinage--represent the assertion of the indigenous identity as the valid point of challenge, when the potential offered by the West is shown to be hollow.

It is at this point that Nyai Ontosoroh commands Minke to write newspaper articles about the affair, not in Dutch, which is the language that comes naturally to them both, but in Malay, the language of challenge. (Minke is unable to write Malay; she tells him to have his Dutch translated.) The question of language, in fact, serves throughout the novel as a way of underlining the wider concerns of the narrative. The plurality and diversity of the environment are stressed throughout by reference to linguistic plurality. Speech is narrated along with a note about the language spoken, whether Dutch, French, Javanese, Madurese, or Malay, and characters find themselves looking for the language appropriate to particular circumstances. The pribumi characters speak "flawless Dutch" in the face of the coarse bazaar Malay which their Dutch challengers use to humiliate them. Nyai Ontosoroh is denied permission to speak Dutch in court. Commanded to use Javanese, she refuses, and speaks in Malay. Minke's mother, who knows he has a reputation as a writer (in Dutch) asks why he cannot write Javanese *tembang*, if he is a writer, so that she, and his own people, can read his thoughts. Minke, for his part, knows he is incapable of using Javanese for the thoughts he has to express:

". . . Coba, kata orang, kau sudah jadi pujangga. Mana tembang-tembangmu yang dapat kunyanyikan di malam-malam aku rindukan kau?"

"Sahaya tidak dapat menulis Jawa, Bunda."

"Nah, kalau kau masih Jawa, kau akan selalu bisa menulis Jawa. Kau menulis Belanda, Gus, karena kau sudah tak mau jadi Jawa lagi. Kau menulis untuk orang Belanda. Mengapa kau indahkan benar mereka? Mereka juga minum dan makan dari bumi Jawa. Kau sendiri tidak makan dan minum dari bumi Belanda. Coba, mengapa kau indahkan benar mereka?"

18. *Bumi Manusia*, p. 262.

"Sahaya, Bunda."

"Apa yang kau sahayakan? Nenek-moyangmu dulu, raja-raja Jawa itu, semua menulis Jawa. Malu kiranya kau jadi orang Jawa? Malu kau tidak jadi Belanda?"

[" . . . Look, people say you're a writer now. Why haven't you written *tembang*, so that I can sing them at night, when I'm missing you?"

"I can't write in Javanese, mother."

"Well, if you were still Javanese you would be able to. You write in Dutch, my boy, because you don't want to be Javanese any more. You write for Dutch people. Why do you pay them so much attention? They live off the earth of Java. You don't live off their earth. So why take them into account all the time?"

"Yes, mother."

"What do you mean, 'yes'? Your ancestors, the kings and princes of Java, they all wrote in Javanese. Are you ashamed at being Javanese? Are you ashamed you aren't Dutch?"¹⁹

The cumulative effect of this constant reference to language is to point the reader towards the use of Indonesian in the text itself, and to the realization that Indonesian is *the* appropriate language of narration, the linguistic bridge which ties the world of the novel together. Whereas so much Indonesian prose represents a transposing of a regional language and thought world into Indonesian, *Bumi Manusia* is a genuinely Indonesian novel. It is about the unresolved tensions in the struggle to be Indonesian, and the language of the book stands in a dynamic and dialectical relationship with its subject matter:

Dan duduklah aku di tepi kasur, tak tahu apa harus kuperbuat di dekat dewi kecantikan yang mulai sehat ini.

"Ayoh, mulai saja cerita yang indah. Lebih bagus dari Pulau Emas dan Terculik-nya Stevenson itu, lebih indah dari Sahabat Karib Dickens. Cerita-cerita itu tidak bersuara, Mas."

Betapa aku harus selalu mengalah untuk kesehatannya.

"Cerita apa, Ann? Jawa atau Eropa?"

"Maumu sajalah. Aku rindukan suaramu, kata-katamu yang diucapkan dekat kuping, sampai terdengar bunyi nafasmu."

"Bahasa apa? Jawa atau Belanda?"

"Sekarang kau sudah jadi bawel, Mas. Ceritai sudah."

Dan aku mulai mencari-cari cerita. Tak ada persiapan. Tak bisa datang begitu saja dalam pikiran.

[And I sat down on the edge of the mattress, not knowing what to do near my lovely goddess who was beginning to recover her health.

"Come on, tell me a beautiful story. Better than Stevenson's *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*. More beautiful than Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*. There's no lovely sound when you tell those stories."

How I always had to give in for the sake of her health!

19. Ibid., pp. 281-82.

"What kind of story, Ann? Javanese or European?"

"Please yourself. I just want to hear your voice, to hear your words right next to my ear, till I can hear you breathing."

"What language? Javanese or Dutch?"

"Now you're being difficult. Just give me a story."

And I started to look around for a story. No preparation. It wouldn't come just like that.²⁰

Bumi Manusia appeared, and its first edition was sold out, in August 1980. There were numerous reviews and commentary on the book during August and September which were, it seems, almost unanimously enthusiastic. They appeared in newspapers and magazines throughout Java and included a commendation from the Vice-President, Adam Malik. It came as a surprise to many, therefore, when on September 27, a circular signed by Gen. Sutanto Wirjoprasonto, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Education and Culture, announced a prohibition of the book, to apply to all employees of his department. Confirmations of the ban appeared in regional centers, and from the administrative secretary of the ITB in Bandung. The reason for the ban was said to be that *Bumi Manusia* contained elements of "class conflict," and, as a result, was a potential hazard to society. The Supreme Court was said to be investigating the novel, without as yet having come to any decision about it. A cleverly-worded statement in response to the "ban" was issued by the publisher, PT Hasta Mitra, on October 17. It pointed to the legality of its own procedures, the frequency with which ex-political prisoners had already published in a variety of magazines and newspapers, and, referring twice to *teori Marxisme yang terlarang*, suggested that anyone having a proper understanding of the theory of class conflict ("undoubtedly fully mastered by the Government, the Minister of Education and Culture, and Kopkamtib") would simply be embarrassed by the suggestion that it was to be found in *Bumi Manusia*.

It appeared, indeed, that "class conflict" had been brought forward as an appropriate pretext for removing Pramoedya and his novels from public attention. The right-wing daily *Merdeka*, in an editorial of October 23, carried the accusations a step further by suggesting that *Bumi Manusia* was part of a carefully-planned new stage of Communist strategy in Indonesia, which involved reestablishing the respectability of Communism under the mask of humanism and liberalism. Pramoedya's situation, less than twelve months after his release, once again appeared precarious. Nevertheless, the sequel to *Bumi Manusia*, *Anak Semua Bangsa*, second in the planned series of four, was on open sale by the end of the year.

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No less significant than *Bumi Manusia*, *Anak Semua Bangsa* appears nevertheless at first sight to be a "slower" novel. It is more discursive in style, the language becomes more "literary" (as Pramoedya's comments on *Bumi Manusia* suggested would be so), and it is without the cumulative pace which establishes such tension as *Bumi Manusia* races towards its inexorable conclusion. In contrast to the earlier book, the conclusion to *Anak Semua Bangsa*, which has Nyai, Minke, and their supporters successfully confronting Maurits Mellema, the young Dutch naval officer who has come to claim his inheritance, appears forced, and almost melodramatic. Viewed in terms of an overall design, however, *Anak Semua Bangsa* is a necessary and indeed powerful sequel. It traces Minke's life through the year

20. Ibid., p. 213.

1899 and shows him struggling to come to grips with the contradictions which defeat him in *Bumi Manusia*. The struggle involves a reappraisal of his attitude to the West and his early faith in its promises, as well as his own place in relation to Java and its people. Nyai Ontosoroh, and other characters from *Bumi Manusia*, principally Jean Marais, the French painter and ex-mercenary, who lost a leg and his faith in Europe in the Aceh war, and Kommer, the Eurasian journalist who is modeled on an historical figure of the same name, stand about him, seemingly one step ahead, knowing the answers and almost goading Minke in his own struggles towards an historically true sense of himself. By the end of the book, Minke is aware of his historical condition and his responsibility within it. The novel charts his slow and often painful progression towards this heightened state of consciousness.

The recourse to a more Javanese frame of thinking, which is initiated in *Bumi Manusia* as the West exercises its betrayal, is continued as the tonal framework of the opening of *Anak Semua Bangsa*. Annelies has gone, and Minke speculates on the workings of the great god Batara Kala who, in the tales of the old people, moves each person on a separate time line through existence, never permitting a return to the starting point. The news comes that Annelies has died, in Holland, in a manner which is deeply appropriate to her Javanese-ness: right from the time she was put aboard the ship, she simply ceases to live. She dies as a Javanese person, showing that the body cannot sustain life when the spirit is truncated and the emotional life suffers massive disequilibrium. Minke's response belongs to the same world: "We must pray, Mama, it is all we can do." But Nyai Ontosoroh remains defiant, in a passionate burst of clear-sighted secularism:

"Tidak, Nak, ini perbuatan manusia. Direncanakan oleh otak manusia, oleh hati manusia yang degil. Pada manusia kita harus hadapkan kata-kata kita. Tuhan tidak pernah berpihak pada yang kalah."

[*"No, my son, this is the work of human beings. Planned by human beings, by stubborn human hearts. It is to them that our words should be directed. God is never on the side of the losers."*]²¹

Nyai survives the loss and the death of her daughter with her intellectual and cultural orientation quite intact. Minke does not, because his enthusiasm for the brightly dawning vision of modernity was a fragile thing, produced solely within the realm of ideas, and not yet grounded in the reality of life about him. From early in the novel, however, he begins the process of reestablishing himself on a new basis.

The first important influence in this process is the example of Japan, and then China, as alternative models of modernization. Minke comes into contact with a young Chinese man, an illegal immigrant in the Indies, who is risking his life to appeal to overseas Chinese communities to join the struggle for regeneration in their homeland. Khouw, the Chinese youth, presents Minke with a world he knows nothing about, full of examples of political activism, and imbued with the alien yet profoundly exciting notion of *kebangkitan suatu bangsa* [the rise of a nation].²² Nyai commends the relationship to Minke:

21. *Anak Semua Bangsa*, p. 36.

22. The figure of Khouw appears to be derived from the Chinese Reform Movement of 1898, which involved both conservative-reformist and radical views on the need for Western-influenced modernization in China. Though its chief proponent, the radical K'ang Yu-wei, was defeated and in exile by the end of 1898, the movement was an important influence on the Boxer Movement and was an early precursor of

"Sambut dia dengan baik, Nak. Tentu adat-kebiasaannya akan lain. Tapi kau tetap bisa belajar dari dia, dari pikiran lain yang bukan Eropa."

["Receive him well, my son. His customs and habits will be different. But you can learn from him, from different ideas which are not European."] ²³

She admires Khouw because:

"Anak Cina itu tahu mengambil pelajaran dari Eropa, dan tahu menolak penyakit Eropa. . . ."

["That Chinese boy knows how to draw lessons from Europe while at the same time rejecting its evils. . . ."] ²⁴

This is the lesson which at this stage Minke still has to learn. Nyai tells him:

". . . Jangan agungkan Eropa sebagai keseluruhan. Di mana pun ada yang mulia dan jahat. Di mana pun ada malaikat dan iblis. . . . Dan satu yang tetap, Nak, abadi: yang kolonial, dia selalu iblis. . . ."

[". . . Don't glorify Europe as a totality. Everywhere there is the fine, and there is the evil. Everywhere there are angels and devils. . . . And one thing is sure, my son, for ever: whatever is colonial is always a devil. . . ."] ²⁵

The word *kolonial*, just like the expression *kebangkitan suatu bangsa*, is new, and indeed puzzling, to Minke. He longs to know more. The seeds of political awareness, which is to be the key to Minke's changed consciousness, have been sown.

Meanwhile, as alternative models of modernization are being posed, Minke is confronted from other quarters by the accusation that he is failing in a duty to know his own people. Whereas, in *Bumi Manusia*, the idea of being Javanese was associated with all that was to be laid aside in the pursuit of modernity, Minke by this stage is less sure of himself. He still struggles against the challenge to write in Malay and Javanese:

. . . pribadiku tak bisa berpisah dengan tulisanku, sedang tulisan tak dapat berpisah dengan basa Belanda. Perpisahan antara ketiganya hanya akan membikin orang, yang bernama Minke ini, sampah jalanan belaka kurang-lebih.

[. . . my personality is inseparable from my writing, and my writing is inseparable from the Dutch language. Any division between the three of them would only make this person called Minke not much more than a heap of rubbish beside the road.] ²⁶

But some time later, he is offended by the accusation (from Marais and Kommer), that he does not know his own people:

Tak kenal bangsa sendiri! Ucapan yang sungguh berlebihan, dan menyakitkan, seperti pukulan mata kapak tumpul. Lebih menyakitkan karena berasal

the rise of Dr. Sun Yat-sen. See Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 2nd ed. (New York & London: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 433-67.

23. *Anak Semua Bangsa*, p. 70.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

dari orang-orang bukan Pribumi: Indo dan Prancis. Aku tak kenal bangsaku sendiri pada mata mereka. Aku!

[Not know my own people! That was really too much. It hurt, just like being struck with a blunt axe. And all the more so, coming from people who were not Pribumi themselves: Eurasian and French. In their eyes, I didn't know my own people. Me! ²⁷

This is a crucial moment in Minke's struggle. The challenge which Marais and Kommer pose is specifically a challenge to Minke's class position:

". . . Dari karangan-karangan Tuan sendiri, nampak Tuan lebih tahu tentang orang-orang Belanda dan Indo."

"Itu tak benar. Aku mahir berbahasa Jawa."

"Belum berarti Tuan mengenal bangsa Jawa lebih baik. Pernah Tuan mengenal kampung dan dusun orang Jawa, di mana sebagian terbesar bangsa Tuan tinggal? Paling-paling Tuan hanya melaluinya saja. Tahu Tuan apa yang dimakan petani Jawa, petani bangsa Tuan sendiri? Dan petani adalah sebagian terbesar bangsa Tuan, petani Jawa adalah bangsa Tuan."

[" . . . From your articles it is clear that you know more about the Dutch and Eurasians."

"That's not true. My knowledge of Javanese is excellent."

"But that doesn't mean you know the Javanese people any better. Have you ever known the Javanese villages and hamlets, where most of your people live? At most, you've only passed through them. Do you know what Javanese peasants eat, the peasants of your own people? And the peasants make up the majority of your people, the Javanese peasants are your people."²⁸

Prior to this point, "being Javanese" meant aligning oneself with the priyayi world of Minke's family. This he has confidently rejected, in favor of the European alternative. Now, just as China and Japan have shown that the West is not the only model of progressivism, so too is it being pointed out that the bureaucratic and feudalistic world of the priyayi is not the only model of what it means to identify oneself as Javanese.

Nyai and Minke then retreat into the countryside for a visit to Nyai's family. (Minke suspects that she wants to marry him to her niece, and his heart cries out that she must not expect him to marry a *totok* Javanese woman!) It is during this visit, however, that he determines to disprove the accusations made by Marais and Kommer and to convince himself that he knows his people, now seen as the Javanese peasants. His experiences are related in two long interpolated stories, presented as articles which Minke writes, still in Dutch, for newspaper publication. They represent in many ways the high point of the novel, where Pramoedya's passionate narrative style is once again given full rein, and produces vigorous, fast-moving stories with great emotional power. The first concerns Surati, Nyai Ontosoroh's niece, who deliberately contracts smallpox, in order to infect the Dutch administrator to whom she is being sold, rather than suffer the same fate as her aunt. This leads on to the story of Trunodongso, Minke's encounter with a peasant family who are struggling against the encroachments of the Dutch sugar

27. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 107.

plantation onto their land. Though the family is at first suspicious of him (and Minke for his part is affronted by the lack of proper respect in their manner of addressing him!), Minke ends by staying two days with the family, learning about their life and their struggle, and discovering for the very first time the basis of the peasant mentality, the fear and suspicion of all that is not peasant. Minke is deeply moved by all he experiences, and determines to stand by them in their struggle. Later, when Trunodongso is severely wounded in defense of his land, and appears at Wonokromo, seeking the protection of Nyai Ontosoroh and Minke, it is Minke who goes in search of his family. He finds them in the care of a ferryman, and struggles through the barriers of class and education which separate him from them to bring them in turn into the protection of his house. Through this experience, Minke's nascent political consciousness begins to take form. A sense of his own identity now involves a rejection of imperialism as well as a rejection of his own class. Whereas the focus of *Bumi Manusia* was "anti-Dutch," in *Anak Semua Bangsa*, it swings round to be increasingly "pro-peasant":

Tukangrakit telah sediakan apa yang ia dapat sediakan pada penompang-penompang pelarian itu: atap, ubi, ambin, juga keselamatannya sendiri. Di tempat lain Insinyur Mellema, terpelajar dan cukup berada, justru menghendaki milik orang lain. Dan tidak lain dari Tuan Mellema yang telah ikut serta menyebabkan orang-orang seperti Trunodongso dan keluarganya jadi kapidan seperti ini. . . .

Trunodongso, sekali ini aku gagal. Lain kali kau toh akan jadi tokohku--kau, yang tak tahu-menahu tentang jaman modern. Tak pernah bersekolah. Tak bisa baca-tulis. Melihat orang bersepatu pun gentar, curiga, takut, kuatir! Kau juga, tukangrakit, kau pun akan jadi tokohku. Mungkin pula kau petani yang kehabisan tanah, sekarang mencangkuli air Kali Brantas.

[The ferryman had given everything he had to give to his fugitive guests: a roof, cassava, somewhere to sleep, and even his own safety. Somewhere else Engineer Mellema, educated and comfortably off, was seeking the property of others. And it was none other than this man's father who had been party to the reduction of people like Trunodongso and his family to nothing more than outcasts. . . .

Trunodongso, this time I've failed. But another time, it will be you that I make the focus of my writing--you, who know nothing about the modern age. Never schooled. Illiterate. Even at the sight of a person in shoes, you tremble, feel suspicion, fear, anxiety! And you, ferryman, I will write about you, too. You too are probably a peasant driven off the land, now plowing the waters of the Kali Brantas.]²⁹

Minke makes one more important discovery before *Anak Semua Bangsa* reaches its somewhat disappointing conclusion. Bidding an emotional farewell to Surabaya, he sets sail for Batavia and STOVIA, which has accepted him as a student. He is never to reach Batavia, for when the ship docks in Semarang, he is returned to Surabaya for further court proceedings in the aftermath of Mellema's death. But during the early voyage between Surabaya and Semarang, he converses at length with a fellow passenger whom he calls Ter Haar. Ter Haar is a Dutch journalist, leaving the Surabaya *Nieuws van de Dag* for *De Locomotief* in Semarang. He explains to Minke that the Surabaya paper exists solely to support the interests of sugar, and thus it is not surprising that it refused to publish Minke's attempted exposé of Trunodongso's struggle. Ter Haar lectures Minke at length on the power

29. Ibid., p. 234.

of capital, posing concepts and possibilities which are as confusing and exciting as the notions which had come from China some months before.³⁰ Minke wonders at his decision to enter STOVIA: what is the point of becoming a doctor, if it is merely to serve the interests of capital? Europe has appeared again as a teacher. This time, however, Minke is more aware, more confident in his dealings with it:

Rakus! Rakus! Bukan lagi kata, juga maknanya bertalu dengan otakku sebagai landasan. Rakus! Tapi itu masih lebih baik daripada perang, pembunuhan, penghancuran. Apalagi perang tanpa harapan menang seperti di Aceh, seperti di Filipina, seperti Trunodongso. Tidak, Ter Haar sang pengusik, aku masih membutuhkan guru Eropa, termasuk kau. Hanya dengan kekuatanmu sendiri orang dapat hadapi kau.

[Greed! Greed! Not just the word, but the whole meaning of it pounded like a hammer on my brain. Greed! But better this awareness than war, murder, destruction. Let alone a war with no hope of victory, as in Aceh, in the Philippines, as with Trunodongso. No, Ter Haar, you meddler, I do still need European teachers, you included. Only with your own powers can you be successfully confronted.]³¹

What has occurred, in fact, is a return to the early *Bumi Manusia* position on a new basis. Europe has suggested the possibilities of change, and they continue to be enthusiastically, if also confusedly, embraced. But the basis now rests not on personal liberation as such, but on a consciousness of the real struggle in hand, a national political struggle in the interests of the peasant and his needs. Minke has attained a sense of himself as an historical being, and of the responsibility that accompanies it.

Anak Semua Bangsa does not appear to have excited the same type of official response which caused the banning of *Bumi Manusia*. The continued sale of the book seemed at times to be uncertain in the early part of 1981, but it was apparently widely available.³² Nevertheless, it is demonstrably a much more "subversive" ideological statement in the context of contemporary Indonesia than is *Bumi Manusia*. For *Anak Semua Bangsa* is the fullest and most powerful statement ever to appear of the notion of *turun ke bawah* (*turba*) enunciated as a political and cultural principle by the PKI in the early 1960s, and proposed as a touchstone of the literature of "revolutionary realism" up until 1965. By this principle, it was held to be the responsibility of all workers for socialism in the political and artistic fields to be aware of their middle class or bourgeois origins, and consciously to strive to learn from the peasant and to know the reality of the peasant's life and

30. Pramoedya hints that, like other characters in the book, Ter Haar is also an historical figure, whose identity Minke conceals by giving him this name. He appears very like the Dutch socialist Henk Sneevliet, founder of the Indies Social Democratic Association (ISDV), even though Sneevliet did not arrive in the Indies until 1914. Note the following detail in the discussion by Ruth T. McVey: "[Sneevliet] first joined the editorial staff of the *Soerabajaasch Handelsblad*, the principal newspaper of East Java and the voice of the powerful Sugar Syndicate. Shortly thereafter a fellow socialist, D. M. G. Koch, left his job as secretary of the Semarang *Handelsvereniging* (Commercial Association) and got Sneevliet appointed his successor." (*The Rise of Indonesian Communism* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965], pp. 13-14.)

31. *Anak Semua Bangsa*, p. 278.

32. This review was written before May 29, 1981, when Prosecutor-General Ismail Saleh issued a ban on both novels.

struggle. Minke's self-discovery, through *Anak Semua Bangsa*, rests decisively on the exercise of this principle. It makes the book a clear statement of the responsibility of intellectuals to be aware of the national political struggle against imperialism, and of the struggle of the oppressed classes within Indonesia itself. Viewed in this light, *Bumi Manusia* and *Anak Semua Bangsa* may be said to have revived the socialist alternative view of the novel which was current in Indonesia before 1965.

The debate between "commitment" and "detachment" in the arts, which was pursued in the context of an overt ideological struggle in literature in the pre-1965 period, is thus alive again in Pramoedya's novels and the critical reception they have received in Indonesia. The debate is an important one, no less so in the 1980s than the early 1960s. It is to be hoped that Pramoedya has yet to make his final contribution to it.