
REVOLUTIONARY STINK AND THE EXTENSION OF THE TONGUE OF THE PEOPLE: THE POLITICAL LANGUAGES OF PRAMOEDYA ANANTA TOER AND SUKARNO

A commentary on "My Cell Mate,"
by James T. Siegel

"If one wanted to bring an *Urbemensch* to life in a prison, that is, a man
free of good and evil, it would of course be futile"

Sukarno, 1931

In Pramoedya's "My Cell Mate," the narrator's impression of his cell mate depends on their forced association. The story begins with the immediate circumstances of that association—with the cell—for its measurements emphasize its rigidity and smallness. But at the same time the descriptions suggest that the cell is a mouth; its shape, with a relatively small width and large height, is that of a mouth. What we expect to be a ceiling is termed a palate; the barred opening onto the outside is said to "gape" or "yawn." This opening (like the smaller one on the opposite side) is called by the strange name "*kelangkan*" which means "balcony" or "balustrade" rather than window. As such it suggests the forward thrust of the mouth with its rows of teeth.

By associating the cell enclosure with a mouth, the narrator reveals something of his own wish or desire that, as we will see, centers upon the "speech" of the deaf-mute. We note that the narrator's desires do not focus on his life outside of prison. We are told nothing of what he would do if he were released; we do not know if he dreams of joining the revolutionary forces, of seeing his family again, of going about his daily life or of indulging any special desires. His thoughts instead concentrate on his cell mate, but he does not wish for the removal of this incomprehensible body which seems to pack the cell with motion, noise and stench. It is as though enforced association has led him to meditate on the mute, transforming the cell mate's activities into gestures which are amplified by the cell. This situation effectively confers on the deaf-mute a special sort of power of speech. Simultaneously, the cell itself gains a new function; no longer merely a place that forces on the two men the "unbearable torture of crampedness," it becomes a kind of amplifier or transmitter that enlarges the mute's powers.

The narrator of "My Cell Mate" lives with his fellow prisoner for two weeks, but the cell mate's "chatter" is never clear to him. "Each of his words had first to be thought about for some time. Only then could one perhaps understand. But most were incomprehensible." Initially the narrator believes the mute to be miming. Si Gagu seems to him to be reenacting the scene of his torture, then tracing the figure of a woman and warning the narrator not to think of women. The narrator understands Si Gagu's gestures and sounds by the information others have given him about the mute. He reads what he already knows into the man's motions or extrapolates from previous knowledge. For whatever reason, the narrator thinks that Si Gagu intends to communicate something, but his gestures are like the six repeated words which are said "slowly as though whispered" but with the volume of a scream; their meaning is not conveyed by the gestures themselves but only by their energy, supplemented by previous knowledge, pity, and wishfulness. When Si Gagu is finished, the narrator, in gestures of equal vacuity, "smiles and nods his head."

The narrator becomes most convinced that Si Gagu is capable of speech when he is temporarily relieved of his own efforts to interpret the meaning of the mute's actions because for a time the mute clearly appears to be praying. As he lies on the floor, the narrator sees Si Gagu making certain gestures and hears him screaming the six "words" and "recognizes" in these actions the movements of the Islamic daily prayers. These movements are precisely defined; to pray in Islam is, in the first place, to repeat certain prescribed gestures as accurately as possible. The motions do not act as individual symbols of particular meanings. Nonetheless repetition of the entire series of postures and motions is essential to prayer. The same could be said of the words of the prayer; for it is not essential that the words be understood; it is more important that one recite them precisely as possible. The narrator wonders how the mute could have been taught to pray and says, "What was it he uttered with his mouth which could only utter those six words?" He guesses that the mute must sense that his prayer expresses an image of the Lord identical with that of the mute himself. Yet whatever it is Si Gagu has in mind need not be expressed through the stereotyped motions of prayer and is thus not important in assessing whether the mute is actually praying; whether, in other words, his gestures constitute language. The narrator asks, "What is the sense contained in his language?" and decides the question not only cannot be answered ("the question remained only a question") but, since the prayer functions

even when the words convey no meaning and imply no understanding, it need not be answered ("a question which needed no answer").

In the narrator's view, the mute's language continuously transforms signs into gestures with minimal sense. We are told that the mute's "accent and his language were strange enough though he came from an area only sixty kilometers from the cell. And he was an Indonesian too. But he could not speak Sundanese, Javanese or Indonesian. He had his own language." This language is motion and sound: "As he started speaking his whole body moved." Several times in the story this series of motions is linked to the incomprehensibility of his words: "All his words were accompanied by his motions and all his motions were followed by his words, '*dja-uuh, tlatot, euweuh, paèh, plèr, and eeh.*'" The narrator remarks that the mute "liked to read the Indonesian and English writing on old newspaper wrappings he came across." His reading is "always accompanied with small smiles and rough shakings of the head one after the other" so that the script generates sound (presumably the six sounds of the mute's words) and motions freed of the script's original meaning. The narrator understands the mute's "name" in the same way. The mute writes something copied from a scrap off a Phoenix cigarette pack. The narrator comments only that "When I gave it my attention, it sounded like this: *Entjip alias Gagu.*" "*Entjip*" however is not a name but a term of address in Sundanese for someone younger than the speaker, equivalent to "kid," while "*Gagu*" means "mute" in Indonesian. The "name"—"Kid, alias The Mute"—is actually a string of substitutes for a name. The narrator simply accepts these suppressions as appropriate to the mute for whom, since he knows no Indonesian or Sundanese, the three words function as a single unit unburdened by meaning.

When the narrator tries to attribute sense to the words of the mute he becomes bewildered. When, however, the narrator gives up his attempts to assign sense to the utterances, the incoherence of the mute disappears: "All this was told to me in extremely limited language to which was added signals, motions of the hands, head and feet. And it was certain too that revenge would not be carried out with his ill-fated (*tjelaka*) tongue but with his hands whose power was now stored in his strong muscles. It was clear to me that he did not have many desires. Therefore his aims were coherent rather than piece-meal." Thus the mute's "language" of senseless gestures communicates a simplicity of desire that makes his intentions, as the narrator imagines them, likely to be fulfilled. This union of gesture and power is expressed in the mute's striking of *pentjak* postures. *Pentjak*, which is part dance and part wrestling, is performed with highly stylized postures or gestures which signify nothing but the potential for striking.

To the narrator the motions of the mute are part of a special language. There is an original sense to the gestures which, however, is not conveyed by them. The motions are merely triggered by the mute's original intentions, not by his desires or any decision to try and communicate a specific message. They are the residue of the original sense, what is left over of it, as the mute tries to speak. But this language is effective nonetheless, the narrator believes, not because it says what the mute means but because it suggests the eventual fulfillment of the mute's desires. However, the Dutch beat the mute not because they fear his effectiveness but because they will not accept his language as mere residue. They believe him to be "shamming," that is, they

think that he must have something to say and will not say it; they cannot believe that his words are all he has left of whatever he might have in mind. His appearance is deceptive; he looks like a "bachelor of art" (in English in the text) or like a "cashier who is abstracted by [thinking] too long about sums of money." But "if he were to open his mouth and move his hands and body noisily, their supposition would vanish." Dutch "sympathy" for the mute "vanishes" when the source of his "abstraction," his thoughtful look, fails to reveal itself. Dutch torture, aimed at making the victim speak in order to reveal himself, attempts to define his look as the expression of something (learning and concern with money), rather than as a residue or, what is the same thing, as the absence of any true, human expression. The Dutch tortured the mute, according to the narrator, "Because he looked like a bachelor of arts and besides he was mute." His appearance and sounds deceive not because they say something untrue, but because they promise to say something.

The Dutch find it impossible to accept the mute's signs as mere residues. The narrator, however, finds this a source of hope. The mute writes his "name" with the stub of a pencil on the remains of a cigarette package called "Phoenix." The name is thus linked with resurrection from the ashes. The Dutch response is to copy this man's name not on a cigarette package, but on a sheet of paper that is twice called "clean." The Dutch read these letters very differently from the mute, who when he "reads" the cigarette pack and the newspaper remnants, simply leaves the meaning of the words behind.

The meaning of the Dutch writing is actually a threat. The narrator, however, feels that the mute takes pride in seeing his name simply copied on this sheet of clean paper because it indicates he will be released. Freedom [*merdeka*] "is the right of every human" the narrator tells us. The Dutch, in the process of releasing the mute, effectively impoverish him. They have forbidden him his home, his land, and his family and given him in return only shorts, a pair of Bata shoes, and a "sheet of paper with three centimeters of signatures." The mute's pride in this bargain (distinguished from a simple delight in being released) can only be aroused, the narrator muses, if he "assures himself that these goods were as valuable as his rice fields, his house, and his family." The mute's pride has been quickened not because he received any material advantage, of course, but merely because he saw his name inscribed on a sheet of paper. The narrator believes the mute to be "proud" not only of his name written on the clean sheet of paper, but also of his name written on the cigarette pack. It is the narrator's view that is important here. For the narrator, the mute's "pride" indicates that the man identifies himself with the writing of his name. When the mute identifies with and is proud of his own signature, the narrator tends to think of his writing as effective, and the narrator then becomes hopeful and muses that Si Gagu might actually be a freedom fighter. But when the mute associates himself with his name as written by someone else (the imaginary Dutch girl with curled hair, for instance), the narrator considers him a figure fixed by a language with content and therefore pathetic, politically neutral, and doomed to impoverishment.

The stench that fills the cell is an expression of its unbearable crampedness. The narrator insists on the "original aroma" (*aroma jang orisinal*) thus associating the smell with the "unique language" (*ia punja bahasa sendiri*) of the mute. The narrator's assimilation of the smell with the gestures of the mute rests also on his assumption

concerning the original meaning from which these gestures arise. The narrator constructs a chain of identifications between the mute, Dutch food, flatulence, and the torture of the mute. The farts are said to be practically continuous, but at one point they are attributed to food. When the pair has finished eating, Si Gagu having eaten not only his own portion but everything on the narrator's plate, the mute "wiped his mouth on his arm. And the farts which were always noiseless began."

Food, in turn, is associated with the torture of the mute. It is while they are eating breakfast that the narrator thinks the mute acts out the beating the Dutch gave him. The narrator had been told earlier by others that "the mute was stomped on. Blood came out of his mouth. Those six words were repeated waveringly. The torture was intensified. He made his voice louder. But only his mustache moved. Not the hair of his arm-pits—his arms were tied." In the mute's "telling" of this episode food is used as a diacritic to mark off his own role in the episode from the role of the Dutch. The narrator describes the mute's performance of the story this way: He "beat his ribs hard. Interspersed with the drinking of coffee and the taking of bites of stale bread. His index finger accused the red-colored jelly. His right hand flew to his mouth as if though he were catching spit. His neck stretched out. He was beaten with a Thompson till he vomited blood." According to this report or interpretation, the mute could move no part of his body except his mouth as he was being tortured. All other descriptions of movement tell what was done to him while his arms were tied. The movements of his mouth while he eats thus replicate the motions of his mouth as he was beaten. The motions of the mute at breakfast are thus divided into two parts which are conjoined in the frame of the story of torture. In this story, food is associated with the mute himself, with his torture and, by prior association, with the mute's flatulence.

All of this information derives from the narrator's interpretations, which are based on what he knew before the mute began his motions. This act of interpretation is even applied to the smell itself. The narrator interprets the smell as a product of the mute's flatulence and hence as part of his language *not* because it is mimetic or precisely expressive, but rather because it seems to continue a chain that runs from original meaning directly to effect, with the usual middle step—transmission of meaning—eliminated. The narrator finds the smell "a new kind of torture" which is "not to be borne." The smell is thus identified as the residue of Dutch food, as what is left over after the stale bread is digested, and at the same time is thought to stem from the torture of the mute, a torture then relayed to his cell mate and, by implication, to others as it drifts out of the cell openings. The farts are thus language whose sense, the destruction of food and body, is lost in the way that Si Gagu's meaning is lost behind his six words and wild gestures. Nonetheless the effectiveness is not communicated but replicated. The narrator, in interpreting what he takes to be the mute's speech, thus wishes for a language that escapes sense but continues as motion and effect.

When the narrator interprets the gestures of the mute as meaningless, but effective, he is surely being influenced by his own desire for political effectiveness. He hopes that when the mute speaks he will repay the Dutch by joining in the fight for freedom. This explanation accounts for the hopefulness of the narrator as he is pictured in his cell, but it also raises several problems. For instance, if a wish for freedom does survive in that cell, why is it shown through the mute? The answer to this question might be best discovered if we refer to the model of the Freudian wish. The mute's language is

effective to the extent that it obscures its meaning or origin since it thereby evades neutralization by the Dutch. If this is true, then the transfer of energy rather than the conservation of sense becomes most important. The Dutch, in this interpretation, act like the censor who can be evaded if one manages to transfer the energy of the wish onto other signifiers. There is a linearity to this interpretation; one can trace the path of energy from the scene of torture to the hope for freedom.

The role of the narrator, however, makes this understanding problematic. The narrator is as much a victim of torture perpetrated by the mute as someone who dreams of liberation through him. It is worthwhile, then, to look again at the points of connection between the two.

The song "Lamenting Heart" is one connection linking the narrator and the mute, for the narrator sings it each time he smells the presumed flatulence of the mute. The transfer of energy of the wish would take the form of the narrator's reception of the stimulus (odor) which triggers an expenditure of energy (singing). The question is how this triggering is imagined. "Lamenting Heart" is a love song about the loss of the beloved.¹ The connection between putrid odor as flatulence and the singing of the song is thus not to be found in the meaning of the lyrics, as we should expect. There is, however, a connection between flatulence and the song at the level of the signifier. When the song is set off by the odor, it is said to "seep" into or "penetrate" (*meresap*) him. Used to mean "penetrate," *meresap* is frequently found in the phrase "*meresap kedalam hati*" (penetrate into my heart). The title of the song in Indonesian is "*Meratap Hati*." When the farts set off the song, the narrator sings it despite what it means, and when the mute is absent from the cell, he continues to sing the song, however then he sings it, he tells us, "contently." By implication he was not "content," not satisfied, when he sang earlier. Rather he sang then because he had to, because the mute, via his farts, compelled him to do so.

The song behaves like the presumed flatulence in several respects. "The farts stormed every night. Before that foul air disappeared through the barred opening it visited my nose. And the song 'Lamenting Heart' drifted up too." The song, then, follows the same course in the same way as the noxious smell. Also, the word for "penetrate" used in the song means as well "to ooze out," "to disappear" and "to evaporate," all words which could apply to the odor when it is thought to be flatulence. The narrator, then, when he conjoins his song with the odor, believes himself to be possessed by the mute and to be replicating his products.

The replication, however, is not exact. Rather the song is to the presumed flatulence as the farts are to Dutch food. In each case there is a penetration and a transformation. What is left of the food taken in through the mouth is noxious odor just as what is left of the farts taking in through the nostrils is the emission of song. The unbearable smell, understood as the effect of eating Dutch food, recalls the phrase used for those who collaborated with the Dutch. They were said to "*makan roti Belanda*" or "eat Dutch bread." The mute's "language" is the effect of such consumption. It shows "Dutch bread" to leave a trace powerful enough to be itself a weapon, and to suggest that the mute will use his strength against the Dutch.

¹ I am indebted to Soeseno Kartomihardjo for this information.

The noxious odor is torture to the narrator. When he finds the source of this stench in the mute it alleviates this torture. Insofar as the song duplicates the properties of the farts and has its own origin in them, it replaces them. If his song were only an expression of what he felt (as it clearly is not) the cause would still be there. If the song were merely an automatic reaction to the odor, then no substitution would be possible. It is by attributing the odor to the mute, however, that penetration and reduplication are imagined. Reduplication here does not mean plain copying, but refers to a process that leaves only the song. Where the noiseless farts were, now, drifts the melody. There is of course an organic process in the conversion of food into flatulence. No such metaphor is carried forward into the conversion of odor into song. It is not that the odor strikes his nose and then is transformed (or translated) even instantaneously into song. One can postulate no "triggering" process at all. When the odor is detected it is already too late. The "replacement" is imagined to occur before the pain. The wishful attribution of the song to the mute's flatulence (and thereby of the odor to the mute) depends on this.

When the narrator feels himself to be possessed by the mute and sings "Lamenting Heart" he also reads the motions of the mute as effective gestures. He is able to do so because he believes his voice acts by the power of the mute. Possessed by him, he has become the voice of the mute, proving that the mute has language. His song, expressing nothing the singer feels or intends, is to its source just as the mute's six words are to their source. The possession is itself an indication of the power of the mute's language and thus enables him to see what the mute "says" as a linear series—torture-residue-revenge. When he can see his song as equivalent to the mute's language as residue, he can also obscure the unthinkable temporal dimension of the residue occurring before its origin.

This brings us to another connection between the narrator and the mute. The narrator sees himself as like the mute because both are tortured and imprisoned without cause. "I because I got a letter with the greetings 'Merdeka' [Freedom]. And he because he looks like a bachelor of art and was mute." It is not that they were both freedom fighters and were imprisoned for what they did; rather both had labels attached to them which did not express what they were. We never learn the name of the narrator. The word "Merdeka" on a letter serves to the Dutch to designate him; it is all they need for a name and all the reader ever gets.

"Merdeka" then is a label for the narrator and for the wish read into the gestures of the mute. "Merdeka" is also, at the end of the story and at the various points within it, associated with the barred opening to the cell. In the first paragraph this is described simply as a "gaping four-sided barred opening." At the end of the story the narrator, when he thinks of the mute, "looks as well at the night sky, viewing the free world [*alam lepas merdeka*]." The narrator adds that his vision is "no longer thwarted by [the mute's] violent motions." When the mute is not there, the infinitely deep gaps between the slashes of the barred opening have been filled in with "merdeka," a word that designates the narrator himself.

To see another political use of thinking about "freedom" [*merdeka*] we can turn to Sukarno. It was President Sukarno's custom to give an address each year on August 17, the day on which independence [*ke-merdeka-an*] was proclaimed. In 1963 the speech was given in the vast new stadium called *Gelora Bung Karno*, the Turbulence of Bung

Karno. The address touched on topics of neo-colonialism: continuation of the policy of confrontation with Malaysia; support for the Games of the New Emerging Forces (Ganefo); and improvement of the economy, which was in disarray. On the economy, Sukarno said:

To solve the economic problems of a nation that has already been formed, especially for nations that are called "nations arrivées," perhaps persons of outstanding skills in the routine of economics would be required, very highly technical, very "expert" knowledge of economics would be required.

But, Praise be to God, I know that economic problems do not have to be resolved in routine fashion. Our economic problems are the problems of the economy of a Revolution. We are indeed a Nation in a Revolution, and Revolution is not routine, none of its problems are routine, its economy is not routine.²

The revolutionary path to economic betterment would preserve Indonesian autonomy. Quoting an earlier speech of his own, Sukarno repeated:

Our economy will be Indonesian . . . and will be securely founded on our own cultural and spiritual heritage. That heritage may be fertilized [or "manured"] by assistance from beyond the seas, but its fruits and flowers will be our own. Thus, please do not expect that any forms of assistance will produce a mirror image of ourselves.³

The revolutionary path that avoids coercion and duplication was marked by the Economic Declaration of that year which, Sukarno reported in his speech, "Says 'stop' [original in English] to deviations in the economic field."⁴ Sukarno explained how he knew the Economic Declaration (or *Dekon* in its acronymic form) to be the proper means for escaping coercion:

I am now paying full attention to the voice of the people with regard to the execution of Dekon. I have often said . . . that I am merely the extension of the tongue of the People. When I am convinced of the genuine voice of the people, then, God Willing, my own tongue gives sound to the conscience of the common people.⁵

Indeed, the anniversary of Independence was, according to President Sukarno, the occasion when he became the Extension of the Tongue of the People:

At present I am not in the first place speaking as President Mandatory, or as President/Prime Minister, as President/Supreme Commander— I speak here as

² Quotations from Sukarno's speech are from the translation entitled, "The Resounding Voice of the Indonesian Revolution: Independence Day Message by H. E. President Sukarno, Djakarta, August 17, 1963." (Djakarta: Director of Foreign Publications, Department of Information, n. d.), p. 44. The Indonesian version can be found in Sukarno, *Dibawah Bendera Revolusi*, 2nd edition, vol. II (Djakarta: Panitia Penerbit Dibawah Bendera Revolusi, 1965), pp. 519 - 597.

³ Ibid., pp. 47-48.

⁴ Ibid., p. 47. The translation makes the phrase "extension of the tongue of the people" into "mouthpiece of the People." However, Sukarno used the English phrase "mouthpieces of democracy" to speak pejoratively of small parties in the era of parliamentary democracy. p. 24.

⁵ Ibid., p. 16.

the Extension of the Tongue of the People of Indonesia—as President Great Leader of the Revolution.⁶

He identified himself fully with the people on this occasion:

In every Seventeenth of August meeting. . . it is as though I held a dialogue. A dialogue with the People. A two-way conversation between myself and the People, between my Ego and my Alter Ego. A two-way conversation between comrade-in-arms and comrade-in-arms. A two-way conversation between two comrades who in reality are One . . . That is why, every time I prepare a Seventeenth of August address . . . I become like a person possessed.⁷

When Sukarno titles himself “Extension of the Tongue of the People” he speaks for those who cannot speak for themselves. The “people” whom he addresses and on whose behalf he speaks are “my brothers and sisters whose tongues cannot speak for themselves.”⁸ But to speak as the Extension of the Tongue of the People is not to express ideas already present in the minds of the people. In a sentence which preserves the distinction between “I” and “Us” he says: “I must formulate all of our ideas, crystallize all our ideas, condense all our ideas.”⁹ The ideas come from Sukarno, the self opposed to the People. The movements of Sukarno, Extension of the Tongue of the People, are controlled by “the people” causing him to utter sounds. It is these sounds and not whatever ideas might be expressed through them, that is the indication of the people’s control. What we see here is the equivalent of the language of “Lamenting Heart,” the meaning of which is merely what is left after the narrator is, presumably forced to sing by the mute. Sukarno’s tongue is governed by the people not because it says what they have in mind but simply because it moves in response to them.

Sukarno’s 1963 speech has been translated as “The Resounding Voice of the Indonesian Revolution.” This, however, is by no means a direct translation of the Indonesian title *Genta Suara Republic Indonesia*. “Genta” is a bell, usually a cow bell or sometimes a church bell. The remainder of the phrase means “Voice [or noise] of the Indonesian Republic.” The phrase suggests that the Republic makes itself heard in the way a bell does. If there is any message conveyed by this ringing, it is at most an alarm or a summoning of attention in the way that a cow bell lets one know the whereabouts of the bearer.

Sukarno describes himself this way when he is possessed by the people:

Everything invisible in my body seethes (or overflows); My thoughts seethe (or overflow), my feelings seethe, my nerves seethe, my emotions seethe. Everything unseen in my body then vibrates, becomes spirited and shakes and for me, fire is as though not hot enough, the sea is not deep enough, the stars in the heavens are not high enough.¹⁰

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., p. 17. The word used for possessed is “*kerandjingan*.”

⁸ Ibid., p. 18.

⁹ Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 17.

The interesting feature of this quotation is that the verb forms of vibrate (*menggetar*) and shake (*menggempa*) are intransitive as well as transitive, thus making Sukarno like the clapper of the bell which is caused to move and thus causes sound to carry through distance and difficulties.

Sukarno began his speech with an image of "face to face" intimacy between himself and the Indonesian people which he later developed into the picture of himself and the people as a united whole. This blurring of distinction of self and other, however, gives way immediately in the speech to a picture of himself as likeness and sound disseminated to the entire world:

I am standing before the Indonesian people—face to face . . . The Indonesian people, both those who are gathered here in this stadium, those throughout the whole of the Indonesia via the medium of radio and television as well as those abroad also via the medium of radio and television. And I am aware, too, that on every 17th August I am also facing the outside world which is not Indonesian, whether as a friend facing a friend, or as enemy facing enemy.¹¹

These two pictures of himself oscillate throughout the speech. Whenever Sukarno thinks of himself as one with the people, he terms himself, "Extension of the Tongue of the People" and when he does so he becomes the source of a powerful broadcasting.

What we see in the far-reaching dissemination of Sukarno's voice, the "resounding voice of the revolution" as the Department of Information translates it, is a certain political language, that of slogans, always written larger than is necessary to be read, or rallies, where sound it amplified beyond the need to comprehend. But what we are dealing with here is not an attempt to intimidate the audience into accepting the message. By the terms of the possession Sukarno claims for himself, ideas are marginalized. They are his "own" while the productions of his tongue control "the People." There is no way to judge the modulation of his voice as fitting or not fitting to his ideas. Rather we have the language of the mute which is judged not by its sense but by its origin (which Sukarno claims to be in the "sufferings of the Indonesian people") and its effectiveness as it carries up to the enemy.

The acceptance of the notion of possession means that Sukarno's words are also those of his audience and that desires and hopes weave through these statements; they are wishful. The source of this wishfulness is apparent. Sukarno wishes for escape from a coercion that would make Indonesia a duplicate of the West; he hopes Indonesia will gain power and autonomy. One expects these desires would appeal to the audience directly, on their own terms, and obliquely, if they were translated into the terms of every day life so that they referred to personal power, personal autonomy. In either case, the attractiveness of the notion of possession to the audience and the potency it offers in confronting one's enemies is clear.

Like the narrator, Sukarno is possessed. His possession, like the narrator's, is fictional. Unlike the narrator, however, he announces it to the possessors. They, the audience, know themselves to be the possessors, indeed, only because and only when he tells them. To see Sukarno's words as effective gestures and accept them as one's own words is also to hear one's own words spoken not after one has intended them

¹¹ Ibid., p. 9.

but before. Sukarno, as he says, speaks not as President Mandatory, not as a contractual leader empowered to speak on behalf of the people. Rather he speaks as Great Leader of the Revolution, possessed by the people. These people who, sharing his hopes, believe they control his words, can only know this control after he has spoken. It is by allowing Sukarno to speak for them, by revising the place of possessor and possessed and surrendering their power of speech to him, that this bewildering moment is obscured. The political character of his speech lies just in that movement and is seen in the dissemination of his voice.

Sukarno's own voice and image are disseminated, yet this process does not split the man from his image and thus somehow diminish him, but rather the opposite. He is fully present to those in the stadium: "As usual on every 17th August, I stand face to face with you all. This time it is in the Main Stadium of the Turbulence of Bung Karno . . ." ¹² He is also fully present to enemies distant from the stadium. ". . . I am also facing the outside world which is not Indonesia, whether as friend facing friend, or as enemy facing enemy. . . . With enemies it is as if I am confronting them without hiding [literally, without any intervening disguise or screen] anything: 'Here I am; where are you?'" ¹³ The doubling and redoubling of the image of himself and his voice does not, then, diminish the value of any particular manifestation of himself. He is magnified in a way which does not distinguish the value of the magnified image from the original of those images. He is identical to his language whether it issues directly from his physical being or from a television set. What makes this possible is not the identity of his physical being and his television image or his voice heard in the stadium and his voice heard on the radio or over loud-speakers, but the power of dissemination that comes from being possessed by the people. Yet if they are the energy for his presence in his language, that presence itself assures his control. He is not "carried off" by them, not moved against his wishes, but is only intensified.

The political dimension of Sukarno's language rests in the control it asserts over the language of the people. The intensification of his voice is, in this respect, no different from the soft singing of the narrator which also marks escape from the coercion of an assumed possession and thus his control of his language. There is, nonetheless, a difference. The narrator fears the mute's wild motions until they are made into language. Sukarno however appears in no way to fear the people. It is just this lack of apprehensiveness that makes one feel uneasy about Sukarno's claim to be possessed. One can, however, find another source of possession in the following passage from the same speech. Sukarno has asked "What is neocolonialism" and answers by quoting a prewar speech about Imperialism:

Imperialism can also be merely a lust to exert influence upon the economy of another country or nation. It does not need to be effected by sword or rifle or cannon or warship, it does not need to be in the form of 'expansion of territory by force of arms' as interpreted by von Kol; it can also operate through '*a twist of the tongue*' [or tongue twisting] or by means of subtleties alone; it can also operate by means of '*penetration pacifique*.' [in French in original] (emphasis supplied).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., pp 9-10. Translation modified

The phrase translated as “twist of the tongue” (*putar lidah*) can also mean “to distort words.” The Indonesian translators of the speech have preferred the more literal sense perhaps because of the extensive imagery of tongue and mouth in the address. The concern about speech and penetration parallels concerns of the narrator in Pramoedya’s story; both are apprehensive that language is not “their own” and that they are, therefore, possessed. Sukarno’s displacement of the source of possession from “neocolonialism” to “the people” should not obscure the fact that it is apprehension about “one’s own” language that initiates the scenes of possession. It is by duplicating the apprehensiveness in his audience that Sukarno captures their language for himself. His ability to displace the source of possession is perhaps the mark of his strength as a political leader, but without the apprehension there would be nothing to say.

The displacement of the imagined source of possession from Imperialism to “the people” is complicated because Imperialism threatens to penetrate not only Sukarno but “the people” as well. “The people” thus join Sukarno in confronting Imperialism. There is never a triangular relationship described in Sukarno’s speech. It is always either Sukarno speaking directly to “the people” or Sukarno confronting the enemy through possession of the people’s power, with the first becoming the second.

Sukarno’s insistence on being possessed is the condition by which these binary relations are maintained. The narrator of “My Cell Mate,” by contrast, ends his story by exposing the fiction of his possession. Insofar as the narrator captured the voice of the mute, he could become the teller of the story and present himself as Sukarno does to his enemies, saying “Here I am” and “I am identical to my words.” The exposure of the fiction means that the “I” who tells the story cannot be identified with it. Instead, the story is broadcast through the barred opening to an audience which may be hostile and which may not be there at all.¹⁴ Only if the story is received, which is wholly problematic (and yet never elaborated), would “I” possibly be reconstituted.

Sukarno himself, we have seen, took responsibility for the ideas of his speech. Whatever the specific content of his words, however, he thought of them as embodying the experience of the people, though the people themselves may not have been aware of it:

All of us today who stand here must feel ourselves to be the Bearers of the Message of the People’s Sufferings! Do you, my Sisters and Brothers, you and you and you and you . . . do all of you really consider yourselves to be Bearers of the Message of the People’s Sufferings, are you really aware that you are the Bearers of the Message of the People’s Sufferings, do you really comprehend that you are the Bearers of the Message of the People’s Sufferings. . . ?¹⁵

The elevation of the people’s suffering into a message which Sukarno embodies is, of course, dependent on Sukarno speaking with the power of the people. The figural quality of his language is thus parallel to his control over the people’s language. By contrast, when the narrator exposes the flatulence of the mute as fiction and puts his own language into question, what is left is stench. To move from Pramoedya’s political language to Sukarno’s is to see the language of revolution brought under control.

¹⁴ One recalls the writing of Pramoedya in prison which had to be smuggled out.

¹⁵ Sukarno, “The Resounding Voice,” p. 10. Initial ellipses in text.