

MAN AND SOCIETY  
IN THE WORKS OF THE INDONESIAN PLAYWRIGHT  
UTUY TATANG SONTANI

by  
Harry Aveling

And

AWAL AND MIRA  
by  
Utuy Tatang Sontani

Southeast Asia Paper No. 13  
Southeast Asian Studies Program  
University of Hawaii

1979



UTUY TATANG SONTANI

CONTENTS

	Page
MAN AND SOCIETY IN THE WORKS OF THE INDONESIAN PLAYWRIGHT UTUY TATANG SONTANI	
1. Utuy Tatang Sontani . . . . .	1
2. The Degradation of Indonesian Society . . . . .	5
3. The Failure of the Outsider . . . . .	17
4. Retreat to the Subconscious . . . . .	26
5. The Salvation of Indonesian Man and Society . . . . .	38
Notes . . . . .	49
Bibliography . . . . .	54
AWAL AND MIRA . . . . .	59

Copyright 1979

by

Southeast Asian Studies

Asian Studies Program

University of Hawaii

## CHAPTER 1

### UTUY TATANG SONTANI

One morning in 1948, a young man newly arrived in Jakarta went to visit Idrus, an author already established as a highly influential prose stylist in Indonesian writing. The young man was thin, untidy, and without extra clothes or money--these may have been stolen, may simply have been left on the train, or perhaps they had not existed for some time. The young man brought the manuscript of a novel, which Idrus had one night to read and prepare an opinion for Pembangunan, considered a likely publisher. Pembangunan rejected the novel; it was later accepted by Balai Pustaka and published in 1949 and again in 1952. By the time it appeared, the young man had a job with Balai Pustaka, which had also published two of his plays. Although the young man now had some money, he nevertheless continued to ignore his appearance. He spoke but seldom, but once he started he could talk at great length, although almost never about himself.

The young man was Utuy Tatang Sontani. The book was *Tambera*, which had first appeared as a serial in a Sundanese newspaper and then been published as a book in Sundanese in 1942. The *bahasa Indonesia* form of *Tambera*, and *Atheis* by Achdiat Karta Mihardja, also published in 1949, were the first two novels published by the "Generation of 1945." *Atheis* deals with themes common to that Generation: death and fate, spiritual meaninglessness, and moral uncertainty. *Tambera*, despite its popularity, does not, and was criticized as lacking in profundity in vision.<sup>1</sup> Sontani's plays came, especially during the early 1950s when he was a prolific dramatist, closer to those concerns. Pramoedya Ananta Toer praised him as "the greatest giant among contemporary playwrights" (*raksasa dramaturg yang terbesar di masa ini*).<sup>2</sup>

Sontani justified his concentration on one-act dramas as a way of exploring "human problems at a specific time, human problems at a specific time during man's long life" (*persoalan manusia di dalam suatu waktu, persoalan manusia pada suatu waktu di dalam hidupnya yang begitu panjang*). He saw this as the closest approach to real life, which is itself composed of experienced moments. His comment on the play *Sayang Ada Orang Lain* can be taken as a general comment on all his plays at that time: the theme of the play is *Tragedi manusia (dalam pengertian "t menselijke") di tengah-tengah bukan manusia (bukan manusia berarti "t onmenselijke")*.<sup>3</sup> "The tragedy of man in the midst of inhumanity" is an approach that provides a useful insight into the work of Utuy Tatang Sontani, as I hope to show by concentrating on the ideas of man and society that are to be found in his work.

Before discussing his works in detail, I would like to give some biographical details.

Utuy Tatang Sontani was born on May 13, 1920 in Satuduit kampung, Cianjur, the center of the famous rice-growing district in west Java. Despite his long residence in urban Jakarta and Bandung, Sontani's works bear the strong impress of being Sundanese and born in an area intensely proud of its cultural heritage. The simplistic society of *Tambera* (completely based on Cianjur, by his own admission), the legendary quality of his play *Suling*, the strong individuality of his heroes, the hypocrisy of fanatic Muslims, and the harshness of the capitalists in his later works, as well as the continuing interest in Sundanese culture, clearly reveal this. He appears not to have taken his schooling very seriously, and in 1938 he left Cianjur to attend the Taman Siswa school in Bandung, a town Andrea Wilcox describes as one of the prime examples of Indonesian urban anomie, where provincialism and ethnic conflict are rife, all people are comparative newcomers, shame is an ineffectual deterrent, respectful behavior lacking, and harmony and mutual cooperation are virtually ignored values.<sup>4</sup> The Taman Dewasa school was part of the indigenous Taman Siswa school system; unlike other Indonesian authors of the postwar period, Sontani was not given a basically Dutch education. Nevertheless, his first job on leaving school was a clerk in the office of the Bandung residency, where he remained until 1942.

He published two novels in 1938, as serials in newspapers. *Tambera*, a historical romance, appeared in *Sipatuhunan*; *Mahala Bapa*, based on the cruel treatment of a village girl by her aristocratic husband, was published in *Sinar Pasundan*. The latter work aroused little comment (Sontani afterwards thought that it was probably unconvincing<sup>5</sup>), but *Tambera* was reprinted in four thin volumes and considered new and daring, although it was clearly part of a growing trend in Sundanese writing, the historical novel.<sup>6</sup>

During the Japanese Occupation, Sontani worked as an assistant in the cultural section of the Priangan branch of the national, supra-political organization *Putera*. (Among the leaders of the Priangan branch were Aidit, future leader of the Communist Party of Indonesia, and A.S. Dharta, a founder of the left-wing writers organization Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat, or Lekra.) Sontani was also actively involved in a loose grouping of writers known as Sasterawan Angkatan Baru Priangan, which included M.A. Salmun and Achdiat Karta Mihardja, and was sponsored by the manager of a local printing press. According to Achdiat, the group had no clear aims or conception of the nature of art and left nothing of worth in either Sundanese or Indonesian. During the Occupation Sontani translated *Tambera* into Indonesian and composed a good deal of the allegorical play *Suling* (up to the part on the split between Panji and Sri).

During the early stages of the Indonesian Revolution, Sontani served in the BPRI (Barisan Pemberontakan Republik Indonesia, an irregular armed force) as editor of a magazine titled *Berontak* (Rebel) in Magelang, until it failed due to lack of contributions and printing difficulties. He then acted as head editor for news in Sundanese for the Republican Army in Bandung, until the First Dutch Military Action in 1947. In 1948 he

moved to Jakarta. Two plays were published by Balai Pustaka in that year: *Suling* (The Flute), an allegory in verse on Indonesian history, dated Gunung Puteri, Sumedang, March, 1946, and *Bunga Rumah Makan* (Flower of the Coffee Shop), dated Priangan, January, 1947, a modern play. Although most of Sontani's future writing was in Indonesian, he also continued to write in Sundanese and has produced poetry, short stories, essays, and a number of original studies on the regional folk traditions relating to Sang Kuriang and Si Kabayan. The publishers of the Sundanese version of *Sang Kuriang* asserted that Sontani wrote better and more happily in that language.

Besides drama, Sontani was also writing short stories. These were pessimistic accounts of the lives of the little people in the Revolution, and were collected as *Orang-orang Sial* (The Unfortunates). First published by Balai Pustaka in 1951, the collection was reprinted in 1963 with one extra story. This story, "Menuju Kamar Durhaka" (Into the Room of Rebellion), dated 17th June 1949, deals with a woman forced by divorce into prostitution--a common theme in his later work. Some critics have seen these stories as humorous; Achdiat Karta Mihardja, for instance, considered Sontani "the most sophisticated author of humour and satire" in Indonesia.<sup>7</sup> Ajip Rosidi more correctly points out the bitterness underpinning the humor.<sup>8</sup>

The year 1951 also marked the publication of *Awal dan Mira*, Sontani's best play, in which the characters are most complex and in which a serious problem is tackled in some depth, that of the outsider as a genuine human being. The characters and setting suggest that *Awal dan Mira* is an extension of *Bunga Rumah Makan*,<sup>9</sup> but closer examination shows that the theme of the latter play is in direct conflict with that of the first. *Awal dan Mira* also marks an advancement in literary technique, for Sontani succeeds in making a dramatic script easily readable for those not used to drama by setting the dialogue in a story form that removes instructions about entrances, exits, setting, and attitudes. He was awarded the Literary Award of the Badan Musyawarat Kebudayaan Nasional (BMKN) in 1952 for *Awal dan Mira*. Subsequently Sontani wrote almost exclusively one-act plays in short story form.

Sontani's despair at the "failure" of the Indonesian state to create an authentic humanity<sup>10</sup> may have led to his turning back to Sundanese culture at this time. "Sang Kuriang - Dayang Sumbi" was published in *Indonesia* in October, 1953; he translated R.T.A. Sunarja's *Sangkuriang* into Indonesian (this was published by Balai Pustaka, probably in 1954); and he composed his own "libretto in two acts," which was published in *Seni* in 1955. The Sundanese version of "Sang Kuriang - Dayang Sumbi" appeared in *Warga* in 1953, *Sipatahunan* published *Sang Kuriang* in 1958.

The theme of Oedipal conflict, which is the basis of the Sang Kuriang myth, features strongly in Sontani's plays for the next six years. "Manusia Iseng" (Nuisance People), *Indonesia*, August-September, 1953, transposes the myth into contemporary, urban terms. This marks a shift in Sontani's writing into more interior themes, a more radical use of the stage, and an assault on conventional moral sentiments.

"Sayang Ada Orang Lain," finished in April, 1954, violently criticizes a society in which a husband has to corrupt others or have his wife prostitute herself to maintain a publicly acceptable life-style; "Di Langit Ada Bintang," November, 1954, deals with a range of different class attitudes to love and the future; "Selamat Jalan Anak Kufur," June, 1956, argues for the need to be true to one's calling, even if one is a prostitute; "Sa'at yang Genting," July, 1956, deals with incest (the play won a second award from BMKN); "Di Muka Kaca," December, 1956, is built around a mirror able to repeat the thoughts of some of the characters at critical moments of solitude; and "Pengakuan," August, 1957, presents one situation a number of times, as perceived by the participants. Not all of these experiments were successful, but he was recognized as an important and prolific writer, and the public had come to the point of exclaiming: "Ah! Here he is again!" whenever a new play appeared.<sup>11</sup> (His work at the Social Education office at this time was totally unsatisfying and consisted of choosing books and magazines for folk libraries for which there were no funds.<sup>12</sup>)

In 1957 he was invited to visit China; in 1958 he attended the first conference of Afro-Asian writers held at Tashkent. His works began to appear in Russian (*Tambera, Bunga Rumah Makan, Si Kabayan*) and Chinese (*Tambera, Bunga Rumah Makan, Awal dan Mira, Si Sapar*). Sontani became more and more identified with the literary left-wing association Lekra. In 1959 Lekra published his *Si Kabayan*, a "comedy in two acts" based on the Sundanese trickster figure, and appointed him member of the Central Committee after the First National Congress in Solo.<sup>13</sup> In 1961, he also attended the preliminary meeting held in Tokyo to plan for the second conference of Afro-Asian writers (to be held in Cairo the following year). He returned through China. He was employed from 1961 on as an assistant to H.B. Jassin at the Lembaga Bahasa dan Kesusasteraan, carrying out research. He wrote two plays that might be considered social-realist in this period, *Si Sapar* (dated 1961 to 1963) and *Si Kampeng* (June, 1964); two farces which were published in journal form only, "Segumpul Daging Bernyawa" and "Tak Pernah Menjadi Tua"; as well as a fairly large number of essays on such titles as "The Theater of the New Emerging Forces Begins by Glorifying the Revolution," "Sundanese Literature as Spokesman between Two Cultures," "It is Hard but Virtuous to Go Down to the Masses," "Goodbye UNESCO," and "The Conference of Afro-Asian Writers Rejuvenates Afro-Asian Writers."<sup>14</sup> The left-wing newspaper *Bintang Timur*, however, specifically referred to Sontani in an article in early September, 1965 as "the non-Communist writer Utuy Tatang Sontani" (*pengarang nonkomunis Utuy Tatang Sontani*). Sontani may have been a member of Lekra but he brought only "the atmosphere of *Awal dan Mira*" into those activities he was involved in, as one paper commented;<sup>15</sup> Ajip Rosidi saw his membership as neither giving psychological, political, nor social awareness to him.<sup>16</sup> Shortly before September 30, 1965, Sontani left to visit China a third time; he has also been seen in Russia and Czechoslovakia since. His health is said to be poor.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE DEGRADATION OF INDONESIAN SOCIETY

Sontani's early works--*Tambera*, *Suling*, and *Orang-orang Sial*--deal with social change in Indonesia and tend to suggest that a change has taken place, due to external pressures, in which the purity of traditional society has been spoiled. In these works little stress is placed on the nature and role of the individual in society.

#### *Tambera*

*Tambera* tells of the coming of the Dutch to the island of Banda, in the Moluccas, in 1599. The boy, Tambera, grows to maturity, falls in love with Clara, the daughter of the Dutch commander, becomes a cadet in the foreign army, and witnesses the subjugation of his people.

The period is one of vital significance for the future of Indonesia. The picture of traditional village life is strongly drawn. Lontor faces the sea [31, 9]<sup>17</sup>; it is clean and well-ordered, and the houses are sheltered by trees [9]. There are ladders at the front of the houses [99]. Cooking is done in the kitchen at the back [134]. Fishing nets hang on the walls; pigs are kept in the courtyards [26]. People also keep goats, dogs, and hens [9, 55]. They grow the poor man's food of sweet potato [108], papaya, sago [237], *singkok* [117], and spices, which are tended individually [149] but harvested communally [32]. Spices are traded with European merchants, although none have come for a long time and the Bandanese are beginning to feel that spices are a waste of effort [33].

The head of the village is the *kepala kampung*, who is first among equals. Decisions are made in informal discussion with the other men of the village [24]. The *kepala kampung* has no power to punish anyone [181]. Imbata claims to be lord of Banda and all the nearby islands, i.e., over the 500 people on Banda and the 1500 elsewhere [48].

Each family is a nuclear unit. The women guard the kitchens and the *adat*; the men tend the gardens. Women respect the men [168] and love their children. Men, on the other hand, despise women as weaker than themselves [113, 126]. Marriage is usually arranged when children are about sixteen [117]; the children are consulted. The wedding consists of ritual and a feast [149], following which the husband moves to the house of his wife's family [134].

Boys have a good deal of freedom; they can eat out [125], roam at will [177], go sailing [112], fly kites [189], or watch their elders chase pigs [115] and fight cocks [119]. Girls have less freedom and are supposed to mix only with members of their own sex or boys of their family [166], although mixed chasings take place on the beach on the night of Kawista's wedding [150].

There is not a great deal of specific Muslim practice, but the faith is taught by Swamin, who has studied in Java. He fasts, and

recommends the practice to others [109]; he prays to the Lord, *Gusti*, and regards himself as *kaunila-Gusti*, servant of the Lord [14; a mystical idea of mixed Islamic and syncretic origin, according to Schrieke<sup>18</sup>]. Living as a hermit, he bears the title "*Ajar*." The animistic *dukun*, on the other hand, sells charms, spells, and magic potions [97, 123]. He burns gum as he chants incantations [164] and can make prognostications based on birth-dates [122]. He prays to the ancestors, *nenek-moyang*, who permit people to be happy [128] and who protect them from hate and evil [280, 163] and the diseases caused by the *hantu*, spirits of the forest [274]. A person's spirit finishes or wanders on death [254] but it may also vanish at other times [262] or be not in tune with what is happening [260]. Stories of Kancil, the mousedeer, are told to children [77] and have both content and didactic purpose [97].

People speak *bahasa Banda* [69], which the Dutch can only manage at the *kasar*, lowest, level [243]. Important tools are the hoe [11] and the club [10] outside the house and cutting knives in the kitchen [258]. Money is unknown [73]. The English trader exchanges cloth for spices [19]. There are no markets [123]. The basis of social activity is socio-economic reciprocity, or mutual cooperation, *gotong royong*; this is destroyed by the introduction of a money economy [34, 133].

The accumulation of exact detail may give the reader confidence that this is the sort of (somewhat idealized) Indonesian society he is familiar with. Jassin has written, for example: "the way of life in Banda was probably not very different from the way of life today, as far as human experiences and relationships are concerned."<sup>19</sup> Such confidence is sadly misplaced. As can be seen from the records of the indigenous people and from the reports of visitors, the way of life in Banda was quite distinct at the end of the sixteenth century.

According to such contemporary accounts, there were five inhabited islands: Banda Lontor, Banda Neira, Pulau Ai, Pulau Run, and Rosengain. The population, about 15,000 people, were of mixed Indonesian and Melanesian stock and were, according to Francois Pyrard: "Mohometans, brave and warlike, and of the same dress and customs as those of the other islands and adjacent countries."<sup>20</sup> The ecology of the islands was organized around the growing, trading, and defending of spices.

Politically, the islands were governed by a council of forty nobles, *orangkaya* (including descendants of the four kings deposed early in the sixteenth century), which met at Ortatton on Banda Lontor. The council meetings were attended by the common people, who had the right to veto decisions they found disagreeable. Two factions were evident at the meetings: an Ulilima faction representing the areas to the south of Neira, the west of Banda Lontor, and the western islands, and the Uლისისვა faction representing the north of Banda Neira, the east of Banda Lontor, and Rosengain. The factions fought wars, staged ambushes and fought from ships; in these battles, they killed each other "like dogs," neither side giving nor asking mercy.<sup>21</sup> Heads taken were displayed on a large stone outside the *shahbandar*'s house. Slaves were also captured.

Mace and nutmeg were harvested three times a year, giving averages of 126, 30, and 20 tons of mace, and 693, 168, and 104 tons of nutmeg respectively. Cloves were harvested once a year, with a bumper crop once every four years. The spices were sold to Chinese, Indian, and especially Javanese merchants, who followed the fixed trading routes from Java, Bali, the lesser Sundas, and Timor to Banda (and thence on to Macassar, if they so wished). Ships were sailed by slave labor and, besides revolt, were also subject to the vagaries of nature; the full trip took two to three years. Neira was the chief trading town by 1600. Trade was by barter, the Bandanese accepting food, clothing, and metals in exchange for their produce. Rice also came from Macassar; sago was brought from Aru and Kei. Western observers frequently criticized the Bandanese for falsifying weights, adulterating their products, and mixing their gold with inferior metals.<sup>22</sup>

Life in the kampungs could have been as Sontani describes it-- there is no evidence to prove otherwise. But neither is there mention in *Tambera* of wars, difficulties in trading, of rank differences, councils, headhunting, and slavery, or of the widespread trading network on which Banda depended. Neither is there much real relationship between the historical events found in the records of the Dutch and Sontani's fantasies dreamed on the hillsides of Cianjur. It can be readily ascertained that van Heemskerck arrived in Ortatton with two ships on March 15, 1599; that he was received by the *shahbandar* with scarcely any goodwill at all and not allowed to land at Lontor; that it took him four months of hard bartering and careful supervision of his goods before he could raise a cargo, during which time his weights were stolen and he was several times offered adulterated goods; that when he left, the twenty crew left behind did not include Mr. van Speult (of later fame in the Amboina massacre); that these crew members were taken up again after great danger from attack by the Tubanese; and that, although there were a number of attempts by the Bandanese to fend off Dutch aggression before their final subjugation in 1621 by Jan Pieterz. Coen, there was no uprising in 1603 and indeed no fort until 1609.<sup>23</sup>

There can be no doubt as to the failure of *Tambera* as "a piece of accurate historical reconstruction."<sup>24</sup> Professor A. Teeuw has written:

Most of the book, in my opinion, fails as an historical novel. By this I do not only mean that there are numerous mistakes concerning the circumstances of the age, mistakes made because of the author's lack of a proper knowledge of the period. Rather I mean that the whole atmosphere is completely anachronistic and does not agree with the period the author has chosen . . . No one forces an author to use a historical framework. But if he does so, then it is most surely reasonable that we can expect him to choose a setting that will be validated by the way he presents his story. Utuy, however, has done no such thing. Quite on the contrary. We never really feel,

not even for a moment, that we are face to face with people from the year 1600--these are Indonesians of the twentieth century: the mood of the history is Sontani's and not that of any person ever from Banda.<sup>25</sup>

Jassin's attempts to justify the book as a historical novel are unconvincing.<sup>26</sup>

If Sontani's account is not meant to be an accurate reconstruction, then what can we make of the society and history so carefully depicted? The publisher's advertisement of the first edition claimed that: "the novel represents a journey between the author's fantasy of times long ago and the product of his experience in a society that, although consistent, still moves in change and revolution." It further suggests that, although "the past time depicted is Bandanese society of the seventeenth century, the land and the sea, their dancing and music, these appear as an appropriate decor for the characters who act out the drama of 'The Struggle of Indonesia against Western Imperialism.'" Neither of these quotations can be taken at face value, but the latter statement may suggest a starting point. *Tambera* is a young man's dream of Indonesia as it was before the coming of the Dutch: a happy, harmonious, integrated society of cooperating equals, living in close contact with nature and able to express themselves creatively through song and dance. This society was spoiled by the introduction of a money economy and consequent attitudes of greed and violence. *Tambera* is the study of defeat as well as struggle.

Most clearly we see this in the character of Tambera himself. Tambera is a moody adolescent.<sup>27</sup> He is attracted to Clara; she represents something new and foreign. Other members of the society are willing to do a few days work for the Dutch; Tambera commits himself irrevocably. His growth is only really shown at two points--at the period prior to the coming of the Dutch, when he is still a boy, and shortly after the arrival of Clara. In the second half of the book, he is almost totally absent. Basically he prefers a world of fantasy, in which he is loved and honored, to the responsibility which lies before him as the son of the *kepala kampung*. Yet, although he wants love, he rejects the love offered by his parents and Wadela; although he wants honor, he never engages in any activity which will secure this. Rather than play with other children, he removes himself from them and retreats into the striking rhythmic prose that characterizes Tambera's stream of consciousness.<sup>28</sup> Despite his divorce from himself, his scorn and conceit, he remains a child to the end. Sympathizing with him, Jassin has written:

[Tambera is] a day dreamer, weak, with no goals at all: but also, at the same time, determined, honest, and ready to oppose all obstacles to further his own will. He is a type of the first *inlander* soldier, who enters the service of the Dutch not to help them conquer his people, but for

vague and romantic reasons. Tambera is a sensitive person; he would probably be a poet nowadays. By mixing with the Dutch, he has become a god in his own mind<sup>29</sup> and offended against his own people. *But when he attains stability of intellect and emotion*, he will undoubtedly return to his own people, enriched. Although this is only hinted at in the last four pages, we can surmise that Tambera will be a heroic representative of those ideals Sontani intends to present in the as yet unfinished second part of the novel.<sup>30</sup>

Tambera, the dreamer, entranced by deceptive beauty, is clearly a symbol of Indonesia at a certain stage in its history.

Negating all that Tambera stands for is Kawista. Older, stronger, more aggressive, Kawista is continually engaged in meaningful behavior. He defends the weak, marries the right girl, leads the revolt against the Dutch, and is the potential--tragic--hero of the book. As a subsidiary character, he is developed to such a point that he becomes in fact the dominant character and a prototype national hero. The plot virtually becomes two: at the beginning, it is all Tambera the boy, with only a glimpse of the impetuous Kawista; at the end it is all Kawista, the rebel, and only a glimpse of Tambera, the frightened, arrogant child. The carelessness of characterization, the uncertainty of some of the plot, both due perhaps to the method of composition, militate against the complete success of the book. Nevertheless, its theme, the freedom of the individual within a potentially corrupt society, is the foundation of all of Sontani's writing.

#### *Suling* (The Flute)

In *Suling* the description of the corruption of Indonesian society is far more explicit. There are suggestions of Tambera and Wadela in the characters of Panji and Sri, and the garden setting is similar, but *Suling* is a far sparser, more allegorical work. Elsewhere, Sontani describes it as an attempt, during the Japanese Occupation, to come to an understanding of whether Indonesian society is based on "the political style, as Bung Karno insisted, the economic, as Bung Hatta insisted, the religious (in the sense of the salvation of society) as Kiai H.M. Mansur insisted, or the cultural (in the limited sense of the peace and calm of society), as Ki Hajar Dewantara insisted."<sup>31</sup> These four men were the leaders of the parapolitical body *Putera* (Pusat Tenaga Rakjat), established in March, 1943 to prepare Indonesia for its future independence.

The stage setting of *Suling* is very bare. The scene is:

*Dunia yang tidak kenal duka,  
Hidup yang tidak tahu celaka,  
Bah'gia dibuai cinta.*

(A world that knows not sorrow/Life that knows not trouble/  
Happiness cradled in love. [Act 3]).

Into this world come Panji and Sri, youthful innocents, with a fire in their souls which must be kept alive if they are ever to return to heaven. The first act, in which this is explained in long, four-line verses, acts as a prologue to the play. The angel, *Bidadara*, who brings them "along a dark road through the sky" (*melalui jalan angkasa yang gelap gelita*) returns in the last act, but there is scarcely any other mention of the fire. Rather, the main symbol becomes the flute (*suling*), which can be taken to be a symbol of art itself. It is art which drives Panji, art which binds Sri to him, art which is their final liberation. As player and dancer they are both equal:

Sri: *Tak ada yang berlebihan antara hamba dan tuan;  
Masing-masing ada kewajiban:  
Hamba berkewajiban menanti yang akan terjadi;  
Tuan yang wajib mencari.*

(There is a perfect balance between us/Each has their obligations:/  
I must wait for what happens;/You must search. [Act 2]).

Their love bubbles through each of their highly ornate speeches:

Panji: *Tapi apa yang akan kucari kurindukan  
O kekasihku!  
Pabila tiada yang lebih kurindukan  
Dari cantikmu?*

(But what shall I seek, what do I desire/Oh, my beloved?/  
There is nothing I desire more/than your beauty. [Act 2]).

For the moment, this simplicity characterizes their relationship. Her answers balance his questions; the crucial words are *sekti*, power, and *lagu*, song:

*Sebaliknya apa yang kusilakan kunanti,  
Wahai Pahlawanku!  
Pabila bagiku tiada yang lebih sekti  
Dari lagu dayamu.*

(On the contrary, what do I ask, what do I await/Oh my hero!/  
When there is nothing more powerful/than your strong song?)

This relationship of respect and obligation, love and art, is intruded upon by the entry of the First Friend. The term "friend" is ironic. Each of the friends represents an ideal which restricts Panji and Sri. As allegorical figures, there is little sympathetic about any of these friends. They are also older than Panji and Sri and tend to suggest the arbitrary imposition of adult responsibility on childish playfulness. Their ambiguity lies in the fact that the world of childhood must eventually give way to experience if the characters are to attain their full maturity.

The first friend offers friendship itself:

*Terimalah salam perkenalan  
Dari hatiku yang naik turun  
Mengikuti kebahagiaan  
Turut merasa bumi berayun.*

(Receive my friendly greeting/My heart beats/With happiness/  
as the world does. [Act 3]).

Panji replies by blowing his flute; the friend is offended.

It is, perhaps, necessary for the couple's awareness that they should be drawn into a wider human community. Friendship does not stop art, but neither does it understand it the way love does. Those critics, such as Jassin, Teeuw, and Santa Maria,<sup>32</sup> who see the play as an allegory of Indonesian history, take the first friend to represent the Indianizing period. This does not seem particularly obvious; it is perhaps more consistent to see the friend as an earlier period in which mutual cooperation was considered a major Indonesian virtue.

Panji soon accepts the friend's words as sweet (this is commented on a number of times). Sri is more hesitant as she waits to see what will happen. As soon as they join hands in friendship the blow falls:

*. . . sungguh tidak layak  
Wanita nampak bergerak:  
Kewajiban perempuan  
Diam memagari badan.*

(It is not proper/For a woman to be active:/Her duty/is to  
quietly guard her body. [Act 3]).

As in so many of Sontani's plays, it is the woman that suffers the consequences of man's ignorant bravado. Wadela and Tambara's mother suffered for him, now Sri begins to suffer for Panji. Through the curiously abstract argument that it is femininity (*keperempuanan*) that matters, and not the woman herself, Sri now begins to move into a position of inferiority. Her subsequent comments indicate that this is not entirely unexpected, and it is bearable as long as she can continue to hear the flute. The emphasis on differentiated sexuality is extended by the Second Friend.

This friend comes "to see whether God has poured out His blessing here" (*melihat/entah di sini Tuhan melimpahkan rahmat*). But he is more concerned that there is one woman and two men (Panji and the First Friend). Morality becomes an issue; here too, for the first time, is the busybody *kiai* (religious official) who is to become such a stock character in Sontani's later plays. Panji does not recognize the problem, the First Friend submits that friendship is sufficient, but the Second Friend places the issue in a wider context, that of the governance of God, the orderer of lives, the merciful, the omniscient, He who sent them down from heaven. Panji immediately declares his faith, and the

reprisal comes: those that believe in God must follow His laws. In Panji's case, he must marry Sri. Sri must also keep her face hidden. The feminity emphasized before now turns into mere prettiness that is forbidden lest salvation be imperilled. Again Sri accepts the insult and the degradation. It is easier to correlate the Second Friend with Islam in Indonesian history (or, more specifically, the period of the great Muslim kingdoms in north Java) than it is to link the First Friend with the Hindu period. Despite the publisher's claim, I cannot link either with the progress of the soul.

The opening words of each friend clearly reveal their nature. The Third Friend comes because of the flute and "Because those here/Will value my coming" (*Sebab rupanya orang di sini/Akan menghargai arti datangku*). The key word is *menghargai*, value. He represents economics, the business of making a living profitably: "You must work/with your mind" (*Harus engkau berusaha/Dengan menggunakan akal*). Both previous friends have brought spiritual benefits. The Third Friend brings food. There is a condition to his giving--he wants something in exchange. Trade reveals mutual esteem *and* the riches of God. Of course, it is Sri who gives up her bracelets. The Third Friend's direct, hard conversation is similar to that of the Dutch in *Tambera*,<sup>33</sup> who can conceive of no goal higher than the money they themselves introduce, and those who interpret the text historically find no difficulty in this association.

Sri is extremely apprehensive about the final friend. She re-emphasizes the original love and equality (end of Act 5). The Fourth Friend's entrance is coarsely self-assertive:

*Orang di sini seperti kerbau  
Tidak mengenal tingkat mertabat,  
Mudah saja menyebut "engkau,"  
Menganggap aku tidak berpangkat.*

(People here are like buffalo/With no sense of rank and degree/  
They speak easily in a derogatory manner/Treating me as if I were  
of no account. [Act 6]).

We have moved from complementarity in love to community, then to submission to the law of God and economic reciprocity, and finally to straight dominance. As Dr. Wilcox has pointed out, Sundanese consider that an arrogant person knows no shame, has little concern with correct behavior (in which superiors repay the respect of those below them with humility), and persistently endangers harmony and future cooperation. The friend brings only one thing, the sword, ready to attack those who fail to show sufficient respect to him. For the first time, the other friends are thrown into violent argument and disheartened submission. Much to his horror, Panji is not allowed to play the flute. He protests, art must be free. Sri leaves, this is the final cruelty she has been waiting for: "If the flute is forbidden/I will wait in darkness" (*Maka jika suling tak sanggup berbunyi/Biarlah hamba menanti dalam sunyi*, [Act 6]). Indonesia (if one is following this interpretation) may accept outside friendship, economics or religion, but to be

forcefully deprived of art is the destruction of her reason for existing. Panji follows Sri out, then divorces her. It is possible that he even kills her.

It is understandable that when Jassin linked the friends to the attitudes and persons Sontani claimed they were written on, he was taken back by the Fourth Friend: Sukarno! Much better to link that friend with the Japanese Occupation and their censorship of art. Nevertheless, there is a distinct suggestion in Sontani's writing that *all* political power is cruel and arbitrary--the Dutch, the Revolution, and the capitalist-bureaucrat forces alike.

According to Sontani's account in "Mengarang," he had written this much of the story prior to the proclamation of Indonesian Independence and was at something of a loss how to finish. Then, he says, the last character was born, and she was born out of his anger at the rudeness with which he had been treated by a young woman. In a sense, she ranks as a fifth friend. Her name is *Perempuan Pengembara*, the Wandering Woman. She is both pretty and immoral, being willing to give herself to Panji "to make him happy" (*untuk menggembirakan*), "without any special obligations at all" (*Dengan tak ada/peraturan apa*).

For the first time, Panji laughs. The strength she promises him helps him to reject the Fourth Friend, with the help of the fire and the God within himself (Act 11, page 78), to start a new age. He wins back the flute and forces the other three friends to submit to him. Twice he rejects the woman's demand that he follow her, as he argues there is more to art than beauty--there is truth. This preference by Sontani is a significant pointer to reasons for his later shift to a somewhat more committed art. Like *Bebasari*, the earlier play by Roestam Effendi, *Suling* presents the struggle of the artist to free Indonesia from outside political powers in an allegorical manner. Jassin has suggested that the woman represents unconditionally free inspiration. Sontani rejects this as anarchy. The final lesson of the play is that:

. . . *kedamaian*  
*Keselamatan, kemakmuran dan keagungan*  
*Takkan lahir bila kepercayaan hati*  
*Akal dan pikiran tidak disinari seni.*

(Peace/Salvation, prosperity and power/Cannot be born when/  
emotional and intellectual trust are not enlightened by art.  
[Act 12]).

This then is the answer to the original question: Indonesian society is founded on all four styles--political, religious, economic, and cultural--but all are oppressive if not enlightened by an art which emphasizes truth.

*Orang-orang Sial* (Poor Wretches)

In *Tambera* and *Suling*, Sontani can be considered to be searching for historical reasons which explain the present state of Indonesian society. The short stories of *Orang-orang Sial* chronicle various facets of the period 1948 to 1950, particularly those relating to urban life and the need to earn enough money to live decently.

Sontani himself suggests in the story "Badut" one possible way that the stories may be related to social concerns. The narrator of that story is asked by his pseudo-intellectual boss which philosophical standpoint he espouses--Idealism? or Historical Materialism? Imitating the boss, he replies, "I believe in humourism" (*Saya menganut humorisme*, page 78, 1963 edition).

Mistakenly, critics have tended to see Sontani as a comic writer. But as I have suggested above, the consensus of the stories is profoundly bitter, the humor arises out of pain.

What, for example, is specifically funny about the boss in "Badut"? Firstly there is his leadership of a trade union. Then there are his claims to have helped guerrilla fighters and his suffering in the mountains. (Nothing like the suffering of Atma in the first story, "Paku dan Palu.") And his speeches:

"From now on, we must be aware, we the people of Indonesia, the people Multatuli--author of *Saijah and Adinda*--describes as the inhabitants of the pearl of the equator, that we are a great race, we possess *Herrengeist* and not *Sklavengeist*. We must be like the Bolsheviks, who were led by Lenin and other great men like Dostoyevsky, Leo Nicholas Tolstoy, Maxim Gorki and Raskolnikof. This is what we have gained from the nationalist revolution we fought against the Dutch imperialists, our struggle was labelled extremist and anarchistic, but we were ready to fight against bourgeois-capitalist and feudal social structures and replace them with a democratic society. But although we live in a democratic manner, we should not assume that we have therefore achieved democratic socialism . . ." (pages 70-71).

The author comments "naively" on the difficulty of the Russian names compared to the ordinary Indonesian Dul, Ali, Hasan, and Husen. This sense of linguistic absurdity extends to the books the boss reads: *Inleiding tot de wetenschap der politiek*, *Social Theory*, *Rusland--Heden en Verleden* (page 73).

The boss's appointment to his position has singularly little to do with his revolutionary activities:

"Isn't your boss married to Nyi M?" (an old friend asks).  
"But who is Nyi M?" I asked, not understanding him.

"Why Nyi M is the daughter of Mr. H," he replied.  
"And who is Mr. H?" I asked, still ignorant.  
"Why Mr. H is Mrs. S's younger brother," he replied again.  
"And who is Mrs. S?" I still did not understand.  
"Why, Mrs. S is the wife of the minister in charge of the  
ministry that runs your office," he replied again. (page 74)

Hypocrisy, bombast, psuedo-intellectualism, nepotism--one does laugh, but considering that the future of the new nation may be in the hands of such clowns is scarcely funny. Sontani is unsparing in this story, as he is elsewhere. In "Jaga Malam," he lashes nationalistic cockiness; "Keluarga Wangsa" attacks military pretension and corruption; "Lukisan" attacks aesthetic posing. The shock of the family forced to make a flag from their underwear to commemorate their son's sacrifice of his life in the national struggle throws the whole Revolution into doubt (was *this* what men fought for?). As in *Tambera* and *Suling*, the pressures towards immorality are external to the characters.

This we see in "Paku dan Palu," the first story in the collection. Atma and his family are forced into poverty, and the only means he has to escape this, his hammer and nails, are the cause of his death. No one wears shoes any more. Yet the destructiveness of the Revolution, felt throughout the story, is seldom referred to at all. Samad, hero of the last story, "Usaha Samad," comes to Jakarta, hoping to earn a living while remaining true to the teachings of religion. He begins by trying to sell *Korans*, next tries selling pictures of the President, and ends, successful at least, selling obscene photographs. There is a subtle irony in the way that his aunt covers her mouth in horror, while accepting the money.

At times the sympathy for the oppressed breaks into blinding despair. Nowhere is this stronger than in "Menuju Kamar Durhaka," the story of a divorced woman forced into prostitution, told in one of Sontani's rare uses of the first person narration. The opening page sets the conflict, as the woman drags her case along, watched by a number of men in the same way as her husband used to watch her, "before he became no more than an animal and began to visit Lane M almost every night." She sees herself a victim of such people and loathes them [31]. In Lane M she struggles against the insistence of a madam-- a middle-aged woman with a gold dollar hanging on her breast, who looks like a hairless monkey (page 37)--that she stay. The woman's thoughts are simple, and moral. Prostitutes are bad people; one stole my husband. The madam's arguments are also simple: many men come here, they have good positions in society, even the subdistrict head (*camat*) comes. The gradual despair of the woman is terrible: insulted by her husband, not knowing where to go, slandered by all, the one who suffers, not the perpetrator of the crime.

The victims are sincere individuals, overwhelmed by circumstances which they can neither understand nor control. They are the unlucky ones of the title. The sympathy, like the anger, is understated; Sontani knows how to describe what is happening so that the reader will be able to make these implicit judgments.

## The Condition of Indonesian Society

Sontani's earliest works present a definite view of Indonesian society. Those works with a "historical" basis suggest that Indonesian society was once pure and harmonious, but that this integration was destroyed by outside forces. In *Tambera*, there was one set of outside forces: the Dutch. In *Suling*, reading that work as an historical allegory, there are four stages to the debasement (five if one includes the Revolution): fraternity (primitive communalism), religion (Islam), economics (the Dutch), and politics (nationalist forces). In this latter work, the salvation of society is claimed to rest in the poet inspired by truth rather than beauty, which is simply escapist. Sontani's later works, which are more individual and more pessimistic, can be seen as attempts to tell the truth about society, particularly through explorations of family and class conflicts. In *Orang-orang Sial*, however, the emphasis still rests on forces external to the characters. The shift from social to individual awareness can be seen in the next set of texts to be considered.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE FAILURE OF THE OUTSIDER

The heroes of *Bunga Rumah Makan* and *Awal dan Mira* are men who hold themselves aloof from society, and comment on its moral inadequacies and confusion from an apparently superior viewpoint. It is convenient to call this person an "outsider." Between these two plays, however, there is a radical alteration in attitude; the outsider mocks society and those characters who are shaped by their rigid adherence to single truths (religion, economics, etc.), but there develops a real possibility that the outsider is more grotesque than those he himself mocks.

#### *Bunga Rumah Makan* (Flower of the Coffee Shop)

Many of Sontani's characters, in all his plays, are stereotypes. *Bunga Rumah Makan* contains a number of one-dimensional characters: the beggar, who steals cakes from the coffee shop; Usman, the religious fanatic; Rukayah, the fighter for female equality; and Sudarma, the owner of the shop, who evaluates Ani, the waitress and "flower," only in terms of the economic advantage she brings him. These characters are formed by their single adherence to one value. No doubt this is convenient in a short play. But Sontani intends to go further: he wants to suggest that society is essentially a collection of such constricted people.

To use the word frequently used by Iskandar, the outsider, they are all puppets (*boneka*). "You have no power here," Iskandar tells Ani, "on the contrary, you're a slave. Huh! Man imagines himself to be an object of beauty, not realizing that he is really here as a puppet, ordered to be a liar and a cheat" (*Kau tidak berkuasa di sini, tapi kau di sini dibelenggu. Cih! Hanya di dalam khayalannya saja manusia itu merasa dirinya mentereng, tak tahu ia bahwa sebenarnya dia di sini dijadikan boneka, disuruh jadi pendusta dan penipu*, Scene 13, 1962 edition, page 23). In society all people "play a role" (*main sandiwara*), lying to themselves and cheating others (Scene 19, page 35). As Sontani presents it, the idea echoes (without necessarily being inspired by) Sartre's picture of a waiter in a café, whose movement is "quick and forward, a little too precise, a little too rapid," that "seems to us a game." The waiter is playing at being a waiter in a café, he "plays with his condition in order to realize it."<sup>34</sup>

Karnaen is a clear example of a role player, acting the part of Sudarma's son, future owner of the restaurant. By society's rules he plays the part well, if rather dully. Ani plays at being a waitress. Sudarma plays at being a manager. In each case, the dullness gives them away, revealing the self-deception (or "bad faith") which makes them live puppets. This is a major shift in Sontani's thinking, away from external social pressures to internalized personal inauthenticity.

The only one who sees this falseness is Iskandar, the apparently naive, unsophisticated, and somewhat aggressive child of nature.<sup>35</sup> In

the play, he is judged by two systems of values, one of society, the other of his own making. By conventional social standards, he is a *gelandangan*, a tramp. He dresses badly, his hair is untidy, he refuses to work. His behavior is eccentric--he comes into coffee shops for no purpose, sits on the table, and insults the waitress, then refuses to leave when ordered to do so. The police are well acquainted with him. He is strong enough to knock Karnaen down with a single blow and ruthless enough to start to attack him with a chair until Ani stops him. Claiming to be "a free son of the people" (*anak rakyat yang bebas*, Scene 13, page 21), he says: "I am a free human being; no one has the right to order me about or restrain me" (*Aku manusia merdeka, tiada seorang juga yang berhak menyuruh dan menahan aku*, Scene 14, page 24). In fact he cares for no one else and is possibly, as a number of people judge him, partly mad.

By his own rules, however, his behavior is perfectly justified. It is better to be a *gelandangan* than a puppet subject to the expectations of other people. Iskandar refuses to compromise with the values of society. Nor will he allow his emotional life to be determined by other people, whom he compares to dogs barking by the side of the road (Scene 19, page 37). In *Bunga Rumah Makan*, Iskandar is the man who really understands society and human nature, and revolts against inauthenticity in the name of freedom.

His role is not only to proclaim the truth, but to get other people to accept it, particularly Ani. For she is the center of the play, the flower of the restaurant. Iskandar is on stage for only five of the twenty-one acts.

Ani is little more than a sexual object. Karnaen wants to make her queen of his household and, although she knows the full intent of his wishes, she concerns herself only with what is discreet and respectful in his behavior. She also addresses her other suitor, Captain Suherman, an army officer, in this polite manner while, as Iskandar says, spiritually prostituting herself to him when he comes to the restaurant to eat and drink, drawn by her powdered face (Scene 13, page 21). His insincerity is obvious in the highly flowery way he talks to her: "When have I ever lied to you, my flower?" (*Kapan aku dusta padamu, bungaku?*), "But now that I'm here, there's no need to give me anything to drink, I can refresh my soul just being near you" (*Tapi setelah aku datang di sini, tak hendak aku kauberi minum, agar jasmaniku segar berhadapan dengan kau*), "Who says you're not beautiful? I'm refreshed just being here" (*Siapa bilang kau tidak indah? Segar rohaniku menghadapi kau*), and "I'm leaving, my flower. Stay fresh; don't wilt before you are picked" (*Kutinggalkan kau, bungaku. Segarlah, jangan layu sebelum dipetik*). These are all phrases of the prewar, poetic vocabulary, devoid of meaning, yet functioning here as explicit counters of desire. Ani attaches them all to the immediate conversation and renders them harmless.

Rukayah's speech in the preceding scene, Scene 12, places their relationship in the context of exploitation: "If I, as a woman, face

a man with nothing but my emotions, that is a sure sign that I will come to grief" (page 20). Suherman himself reveals this, when he argues with Usman: "Do you think I love her because I want to marry her?" (Scene 18, page 32). Sudarma will not let her get married; he needs her to work in the shop (Scene 17, page 29). Then at last she sees the truth Iskandar has been trying to teach her: "Shut up! Shut up! I know people only like me for my smile, not for my tears!" (Scene 18, page 32). Once she has come to understand how her life is manipulated for the amusement of others, there is only one thing she can honestly do, and that is leave.

Whether she should take the further step and marry Iskandar is not so obvious; it makes for a convenient, surprise ending, but does not arise naturally out of the action of the play. It is a rather unthought act, perhaps a betrayal of her new freedom, especially if the reader feels sympathy for her and not for him. But in his case, it may also mark a betrayal; he carries her case, and she suggests that if he no longer feels alone in the world, he may well get a job (Scene 20, page 39). Her argument, however, is: "I am going to stop acting a part in a play and go with my enemy--but also my friend. I want to accompany him as a woman who will fight by his side" (*Aku akan berhenti main sandiwara dan akan pergi bersama musuh-tapi-kawanku, mengawani dia sebagai perempuan yang akan berjuang berdampingan*, Scene 20, page 39). Her strength is not unlike that of the Wandering Woman.

#### *Awal dan Mira* (Awal and Mira)

The superficial similarities between *Bunga Rumah Makan* and *Awal dan Mira* are striking. Both concern nervous young men in love with girls who work in coffee shops. Both outsiders espouse the same philosophy on freedom and enslavement. Only the ending is different: Mira does not go with Awal because she cannot, she has no legs (*buntung karena peperangan*, 1962 edition, page 46). The minor characters are also very similar. Once beyond a superficial reading, however, it becomes clear that the correspondence between the plays is fairly complex, that Sontani's view of society as a mass of puppets has been changed by a certain amount of sympathy, and that his characterization of the outsider now leaves the validity of his message in the gravest of doubt. These attitudes of sympathy, pessimism, and despair make *Awal dan Mira* a much more complex work than its predecessor. It is, in my opinion, his major work.

Awal's attitude to the society around him is one of deep disgust. He classifies everyone he meets as "clowns" (*badut*), engaged in empty verbiage.<sup>36</sup>

The first example is the woman talking on the radio, "just for the sake of making a noise." Her spirited talk encouraging the participation of women in the revolutionary struggle to build a new society is barely intelligible: "Therefore . . . it is the responsibility of we womenfolk that in times like this, after we have lost so much as a result of the war,

that we be more diligent in fighting side by side with our men to build a peaceful society in our glorious and beautiful motherland, Indonesia. Come, let us roll up the sleeves of our blouses . . ." (*dari itu . . . adalah sudah menjadi kewajiban kita kaum wanita, supaya di jaman sekarang ini, setelah kita banyak kehilangan sebagai akibat peperangan, kita kaum wanita mesti lebih giat berjuang berdampingan dengan laki-laki guna membangun masyarakat damai di tanah air kita Indonesia yang indah dan molek ini. Marilah kita menyingsing lengan-baju kita . . .*, page 9). Awal leaps to his feet, his hands closed in fists and demands that the radio be turned off. "Complete nonsense the lot of it! . . . The nonsense of clowns. Huh--'fight side by side,' 'our glorious and beautiful homeland!' Easy enough to talk. She herself wouldn't know what she had been talking about. Just as long as she makes a noise." (*Omongkosong semuanya juga! . . . Omongan badut. Hh, berjuang berdampingan--tanah air yang indah dan molek! Enak saja bicara. Dia sendiri tak akan tahu apa yang dikatakannya. Asal saja berbunyi, page 9*).

In this reaction to the jargon of the national Revolution, we see the whole character of Awal: his irritability, his sudden move from passivity to action, his aggressiveness--verbal and physical--his condemnation of those who mouth the conventional platitudes as "clowns."

Two men enter the restaurant, both about thirty years of age. One is of medium height and wears a blue shirt, the other is shorter and wears a white shirt. Awal is discomfited by their presence and leaves. Again his fists tighten as he shouts: "You are clowns! . . . You're not human beings!" (*Memang kau badut! . . . Kau bukan manusia!*, page 23).

An old man, about fifty-eight years of age, the pious *haji* archetype, is also condemned for being a clown. He regards Mira as nothing more than a waitress in a coffee shop and comes to the shop to forget his troubles. The old man appeals to the glorious example of the time of the Prophet Muhammad. Awal accepts this as sufficient proof of the old man's clownishness and a perfect reason why he, Awal, has nothing to gain by talking to him (page 31).

A second set of two men enter; one carries a camera, the other is the editor of a prominent magazine. Awal insists that the papers only print people who talk nonsense. He condemns the editor as being a man whose soul is narrow and superficial (*sempit-picik*) and demands that he, too, stop using the nationalist cliches with such blatant insincerity--"Speak the truth! Speak like a human being, not just for the sake of making a noise!" (. . . *bicara yang benar, bicara secara manusia, jangan asal saja berbunyi*, page 39). As he does so, Awal insists that Mira is not a puppet (*boneka*) or a waste basket to be filled with whatever words anyone wants to use. When they leave, Awal comments: "Hm . . . only clowns come here" (*Hm . . . badut-badut melulu yang datang di sini*, page 41).

This is Awal's opinion: all are clowns. The coffee shop is surely symbolic of the larger society. His view is very much the same as Iskandar's; both men see society as composed of empty, inauthentic

human beings. But the play is not yet finished. Whereas the view expounded in *Bunga Rumah Makan* was accepted uncritically, here it is not. Firstly, Awal is too aggressive. We do feel some sympathy for the other characters, they are not all heartless puppets. The old man, for example, is not a prying busybody like Usman. He says things about Awal's feelings and Mira's behavior towards him that we are meant to accept.

Further, he is the one who recognizes Awal as someone who "has absolutely nothing to cling to" (*sudah kehilangan pegangan samasekali*, page 32). Mira denies this, joking: "He believes in me" (*Dia percaya pada saya*, page 32). Later, however, she turns this criticism on Awal, with devastating effect:

*"Mas, apa yang kaulakukan selama ini di hadapanku bagiku lebih mabadut daripada kelakuan orang-orang yang kau sendiri namakan badut. Kau mencela jiwa orang lain, tapi kau sendiri merangkak-rangkak di bawah kaki mereka. Kau badut besar, kau sudah kehilangan pegangan, kehilangan kepercayaan pada diri sendiri. Padahal di jaman sekarang, bagi kita tidak ada yang mesti dipercaya selain diri sendiri. Tidak ada. Sungguh, tidak ada!"*

("Sir, your actions here have proved you more of a clown than those people you yourself call clowns. You've condemned them, yet you've lain crawling at their feet. You are the greatest clown; you've nothing to hold on to; you've lost all belief in yourself. And yet, these days, there is nothing one can believe in but one's self. There isn't. I assure you, there isn't!," page 42).

When people spoke of Iskandar as half mad, untidy, a tramp, these terms could be dismissed as being based on irrelevant criteria. But Mira's attack is based on exactly the same terms Awal himself uses. It is, therefore, tremendously devastating. Awal's attitude shifts to one of hate. "If that's what you say, then I know now that, as far as I am concerned, you are a coffee-shop waitress after all!" (*Kalau itu yang kaukatakan, tahulah aku sekarang, bahwa kau bagiku adalah seorang tukang kopi!*, page 42).

There are a number of comments which might be used to support an argument that Awal is mad. Mira's mother treats him cautiously, reminding him: "Mira isn't an upper class girl; she's just a worker in a coffee shop" (*Mira itu bukan perempuan dari golongan atas. Dia hanya tukang-kopi*, page 10). She explains to the customers Blue Shirt and White Shirt: "his parents were no ordinary folks" (*orangtuanya itu bukan sembarang orang*, page 12), and adds the significant information: "But now he lives alone" (*Tapi sekarang dia hidup sendirian*, page 12). Blue Shirt comments that many nobles are no longer honored as they used to be before the war and that this has driven them mad. Mira's mother also comments that he is highly educated. Blue Shirt dismisses this, too. Awal himself dismisses class as meaningless "in times of madness such as

these" (*di jaman eden seperti sekarang ini*, page 10), lamenting that society is now dominated by ignorant people who want to dominate others by talking nonsense. "They're the sort of people who control our society today, people who want to conquer others through continual chatter, who don't know that their own souls are dry and dusty, their world narrow--far narrower than this coffee shop!" (*Orang-orang semacam itulah yang menguasai masyarakat kita sekarang--orang-orang yang maunya mengatasi orang lain dengan bicara terus bicara, tak tahu jiwanya sendiri kering-dangkal, dunianya sendiri sempit. Lebih sempit dari ini kedai-kopi!*, page 10). Displaced social class allegiances, a high degree of education, living in isolation, tendencies to rapid verbal and physical aggression alternating with extreme passivity, the comments of other people, all establish very early in the play the distinct possibility of Awal's insanity.

The letter Awal sends Mira underlies his possible estrangement from reality. Its language is most unusual: "Mira, although you have just lied to me, your soul and your world are still a problem unto me. To me, you are not a waitress, Mira. And I want to speak with you. Not where you are because there are clowns there. Therefore, I'll wait for you in the bus shed." (*Mira! Meskipun kau barusan mendustai aku, tapi jiwamu dan duniamu bagiku tetap merupakan soal. Kau bagiku tetap bukan tukang-kopi. Karena itu aku ingin bicara dengan kau berdua. Jangan di tempatmu, sebab ada badut-badut. Dapatkah sekarang juga kau meninggalkan tempatmu barang sebentar? Aku menunggu di gardu*, page 21). Blue Shirt comments on the inappropriateness of cultivating feelings of melancholy (*memupuk perasaan rindu-dendam*) such as were common before the Second World War (page 21). This mocking of the letter before Awal returns, then to his face, form two of the most brutal scenes in Sontani's writing. Yet the brutality is essential, for Awal's appreciation of Mira is totally unreal, as the climax of the play reveals.

The outsider here is no prophet calling on men to leave a corrupted society. He is a definite psychological misfit, whose imagination does not fully correspond with reality and whose violent rejection of society is based on narcissistic hatred of everything outside himself.

Awal's idealization of Mira is part of his spontaneous mad drive towards a philosophy of absolutes. From the picture Sontani gives, Mira is clearly a very earthy character. She refuses to give one customer his change, insisting that he ought to pay for the time he has spent looking at her ("your wife isn't as pretty as I am," she tells him, page 6). She enjoys the company of Blue Shirt and White Shirt and has no hesitation in stopping them fighting Awal by speaking curtly to them and throwing coffee at Blue Shirt. She shouts at a woman whose husband dawdles past the shop that the woman is afraid of losing her man (the woman spits at her, twice). Mira, unlike Ani, knows exactly why people come to the shop, "the nonsense people talk just because I'm here" (*omongan orang yang ngomong lantaran aku ada*, page 15). Humorously she knows "better than anyone" that she is beautiful, but will not let her photograph be used in a magazine unless she is paid for it. Having lost her legs in the war, she has no illusions at all.

Yet this is not how Awal sees her. His first terms are negative, "not a worker in a coffee shop" (*bukan tukang kopi*). But as White Shirt says: "If you're not a coffee shop worker, what are you?" (*Lho! Kalau bukan tukang kopi apa?*, page 20). Rather, Awal views her as a problem: "I am still troubled by your soul and your world" (page 21, cited above). This denial of her personality is reinforced by the positive terms he later uses:

*"Selama perempuan dilahirkan ke dunia untuk jadi kawan-hidup laki-laki, selama itu aku harus dan mesti berusaha untuk dapat menyerahkan kepercayaan pada orang lain yang akan kujadikan kawan-hidupku. Dan bagiku sekarang sudah jelas, bahwa kau dengan duniamu yang tidak sempit adalah manusia yang kucari-cari selama ini."*

*"Saya tukang-kopi, mas!"*

*"Kau dengan jiwamu yang penuh berisi kehidupan adalah paduan dari keindahan surga yang kumimpikan dan kepahitan dunia yang kurasakan. Kaulah ujud wanita utama."*

"As long as women are born into the world to become man's companion for life, so long must I, and need I work to surrender my trust to someone else who will be my partner. And it is now clear that you, with your world which is not narrow, are the humanity I have searched for so long."

"I'm a waitress, my lord!"

"You with your soul full of life, are the fusion of the beauty of heaven I dream of and the bitterness of this earth which I feel. You are the manifestation of the ultimate woman" (page 41).

The terms are quite inhuman. It is amazing that Awal has no idea of Mira's physical loss, and this totally overwhelms him at the end of the play. His description of her as a union of heavenly beauty and earthly pain becomes grotesquely true as she explains why she has always been a riddle to him--"because above I was beautiful and below I was deformed, I was always a riddle to you" (*lantaran ke atas aku cantik dan ke bawah aku cacat, selama ini aku bagimu merupakan teka-teki*, page 46).

The relationship is a complex one. At the beginning of the play she seems determined to avoid him, although unwilling to allow others to speak badly of him. She will not leave the shop to meet him, and she apparently does nothing to stop his humiliation in the fight with Blue Shirt until it is well advanced. He complains that she has never felt what he feels (page 28); she has only played with him (page 28)--the old man agrees with this latter opinion (page 32). She calls him

"the great clown" (*badut besar*, page 42). Yet as the play develops, we also notice the number of times she defends him to other people; the polite way she talks to him, always using the terms *den* or *mas*; the way she makes him comfortable when he returns to the restaurant. She brings a great simplicity to his problems: "There is nothing to be discussed. Just to be felt" (*Antara kita tidak untuk dibicarakan. Tapi untuk dirasakan*, page 28). He is worried that the problem between them is "you are not I and I am not you" (*kau bukan aku dan aku bukan kau*, page 28); she denies the problem exists at all (page 29). She repeats many of his opinions--for example, that "they only speak nonsense on the radio" (page 14), and she is able to state his dissatisfaction very clearly and honestly: "he has longed for humanity for a long time" (*dia sudah lama merindukan manusia*, page 32), agreeing with him that it is hard to find humanity one can trust.

In fact, she never does other than affirm her love for him. "Sir," she tells him in their first long discussion, "the door of one heart can only be opened by another. And my heart is open" (*Mas, pintu hati hanya dapat dibuka oleh hati. Dan hati saya sudah terbuka*, page 28). Although she partly denies knowing the meaning of love in her discussion with the old man (page 33), it is clear that this is at the center of the complexity of their relationship. "Who can believe that there are people in the world now who love other people more than they love themselves?" (*Siapa mau percaya bahwa di dunia sekarang ada manusia yang lebih mencintai orang lain daripada mencintai dirinya sendiri?*, page 41). Awal's answer is rather cynical: "Who does believe that? You don't. I don't. But for your sake, I'll try" (*Siapa pula yang percaya? Engkau tidak. Akupun tidak. Tapi untukmu, aku akan mencoba*, page 41). She wants Awal to accept love as a full human emotion rather than as an intellectual problem. He must come to see her as she is. Until he breaks through his illusions about her, she does not consider his love to be, in fact, love for another (page 42): "I do not believe you can love me more than you love yourself" (*Aku tidak percaya cintamu padaku akan melebihi cintamu pada dirimu sendiri*, page 44). By destroying the coffee shop, he destroys both her illusions: "I can't avoid my duty, I am a waitress" (*saya tidak dapat meringgalkan kewajiban sebagai tukang-kopi*, page 44) and his own about her physical and spiritual nature. The shock is overwhelming, Awal collapses. Now that he knows, she accepts his love: "I believe, sir, I believe--" (*Aku percaya, mas, aku percaya--*, page 47).

#### The Outsider as Prophet and Clown

*Awal dan Mira* marks a significant advance in Utuy Tatang Sontani's thinking on the relationship between the condition of the individual and that of society. Sontani's earlier works saw society as somehow degraded by external forces. In *Bunga Rumah Makan* that degradation is internalized by the acceptance of roles forced on the individual by others. The authentic human being--Iskandar, later Ani--is the person who consciously refuses to be dominated by imposed stereotypes. Freedom is an internal matter, based on deliberate choice. *Awal dan Mira* casts doubt on the validity of this choice. The play is based on a series of

oppositions--Awal's view of society compared to other people's, Awal's view of Mira compared to her own, Awal's view of Awal compared to Mira's view of him. True, those in society seem grotesque; yet, from a different perspective, the outsider is even more grotesque. His knowledge is that of the madman, not that of a prophet. There is a way out, which is to love others more than one loves oneself, although this is rare in the present cycle of time (*di jaman ini*).

In the 1952 interview with Pramoedya Ananta Toer, which I have already quoted from, Sontani said: "I wish one could still believe in humanity. But such belief these days is no longer possible. There is only curiosity. How can you believe in humanity when the humanity you want does not exist? And if you live surrounded by animals, how can you hope to rub shoulders with mankind?" (*Aku ingin orang bisa mempercayai manusia lagi. Tetapi kepercayaan pada manusia sekarang ini sudah pudar. Yang ada hanya keinginan-tahu, nieuwsgierheid. Bagaimana engkau bisa mempercayai manusia, kalau manusia yang kauhendaki itu tidak ada. Dan kalau engkau berada di lingkungan binatang, bagaimana bisa engkau mengharapkan dapat bersinggungan dengan manusia?*). Sontani attributed the failure of humanity to the stupidity of those in the society who are mainly concerned only with self-aggrandizement (*memuas-muaskan serta membesar-besarkan diri*). It is stupidity, Sontani said, that turns men into animals. Toer called Sontani a giant among contemporary playwrights, but also "the most pessimistic of all Indonesian writers" (*puncak pessimisme di kalangan pengarang Indonesia*). It was as if Sontani himself had given up trying to love others more than himself.

## CHAPTER 4

### RETREAT TO THE SUBCONSCIOUS

Sontani's disgust with Indonesian society led to an apparently greater involvement with Sundanese culture. In 1952 he rejected an invitation to attend a peace conference in Peking and instead attended a conference on Sundanese language in Bandung; he was also closely involved in the staging of R.T.A. Sunarja's *Lutung Kasarung* at the Ikada (later Merdeka) stadium in Jakarta during May; and his translation of Sunarja's *Sangkuriang* was published in 1954, by which time he had also completed (in Sundanese and Indonesian) a number of original treatments of the story. After this dry spell in his writing, which he also used to read widely from foreign writers (*angan dari pengarang-pengarang besar untuk kebaikan manusia di masanya sendiri dan jauh sesudahnya*<sup>37</sup>), Sontani was able to complete two plays a year between 1953 and 1957 (except 1955). These plays deal with psychological themes, particularly those connected with Freudian psychology, and were written in the short story form established in *Awal dan Mira*. After the experimental, psychological treatment of the situation of modern, urban Indonesian man, Sontani returned to Sundanese themes with the completion of *Si Kabayan*.

Three areas of interest dominate these plays: the subconscious, particularly as related to myth and patterns of human conflict; sexuality; and social class. In each case, the plays study the assertion of the potentially strong individual against the mass of society.

#### *Sang Kuriang*

On the Sang Kuriang myth, Sontani published a poem in the magazine *Sunda* on the 30th June 1952, a one-act play ("Sang Kuriang djeung Dajang Sumbi," *Warga*, 1953; "Sang Kuriang--Dajang Sumbi," *Indonesia*, October 1953), and a libretto (*Sang Kuriang*: this was to have been published by Gunung Agung but because of difficulties, it appeared in *Seni* in two parts in 1955 and was published by Balai Pustaka in 1959; the Sundanese version appeared in *Sipatahoenan* in 1958 and was published as a book by Bhratara in 1962). Sang Kuriang is the most radically individual of all Sontani's heroes; significantly his challenging of the rules is now seen not as praiseworthy (as in Iskandar's case), not as possibly mad (*Awal*), but as clearly evil.

Sontani's use of the legend does not fully follow the standard versions. According to Darmawidjaja,<sup>38</sup> Sang Kuriang's mother, Dayang Sumbi, was born as a result of Celeng Wayungwang (cursed by Sang Hyang Batara Guru to live as a pig) drinking the urine of Raden Sungging Perbangkara of Galuh. The child was later adopted by the prince who found her while hunting. The beautiful child spent a lot of time weaving. One day she dropped her shuttle and promised to marry whoever picked it up, if a male did, or treat that one as a sister, if female. The dog Si Tumang picked it up and became Sang Kuriang's father.

Sang Kuriang spent a good deal of time hunting in the forests as he grew to manhood. Despite his repeated asking, his mother refused to tell him who his father was. When Si Tumang refused to attack a sow, Sang Kuriang killed the dog and fed its heart to his mother, pretending that it was a deer's heart. After being beaten by his mother, Sang wandered purposelessly while Dayang Sumbi withdrew to a cave, where she spent her time meditating.

Many years later Sang Kuriang stopped at the edge of a forest. Disconcerted by the spot but not knowing why (it was the place where he was born), he went to a cave. In the cave was a lovely woman ascetic, who allowed him to rest there. As time passed, he fell more and more in love with her and she with him. She refused, however, to set a date for a wedding and when she discovered scars on his head she realized that he was her own son. To dissuade him, she therefore set him impossible tasks--damming the Citarum River, turning the lake into a dam, and building a boat, all in one evening. By burning gum and reciting spells, Sang Kuriang was able to summon up spirit help. To stop him, Dayang Sumbi pounded on the ground with a rice pestle to set all the roosters crowing, and waved white cloth from a mountain top to simulate the sun's rays. Having cursed him for the evil he had committed in killing his father and trying to marry his mother, Dayang Sumbi prayed that Sang Kuriang would be swallowed up by a raging flood, which immediately happened. Darmawidjaja concludes his account by linking the story with certain geographical aspects around Bandung.

In the folk version, there is no motivation of character (except for lust), no justification of what happens, and little shaping of the events into a developing narrative. (Sophocles in his treatment of the Oedipus myth, by way of contrast, was able to place his emphasis on the unintended moral consequences of the "innocent" actions of clearly rooted social persons.)

Sontani's two versions begin only after Sang Kuriang has been separated from his mother--the 1953 version starts after he has killed his father, a courtier (as in Sunarja's version), and ends with the rise of the sun, neither the boy nor his mother dying; the 1959 version emphasizes the role of the spirits, makes Si Tumang a dumb, crippled hunchback, uses a burning forest to simulate dawn, and ends with the suicide of both characters. Some of these may be legitimate variations in the tradition.

Like Sophocles, Sontani is interested in moral attitudes and their effect on human characters. Sang Kuriang, simply by the absence of a father, stands outside normal society. Society may not lie to him, but neither does it tell him the truth, which he insists on knowing before he surrenders his isolation. Living in the forest with evil spirits, he refuses to mix with human beings and senses that he is rejected even by nature itself: "Alone!/Surrounded by silence/no place willing to accept me" (*Sunyi!/Sepi sekitar diri;/entah di mana yang*

*sudi* . . ., Act 1: Scene 1). Dayang Sumbi is dominated by a heavy sense of guilt for being unable to lighten his suffering and finally consents to reveal his origin, blaming everything that happens to man on the will of the gods. Sang Kuriang is horrified, most of all (it seems) by Tumang's ugliness. He curses the gods for making him their plaything and vows to live in even greater isolation than before.

As he grapples with the problem of his origin, Sang Kuriang is tormented by the evil spirits, the *siluman*, who reinforce his sense of shame and great horror at the unnaturalness of his conception. Sang Kuriang kills Tumang in order to create a truth in which he can believe. He himself becomes the only truth he can believe in. The spirits praise him, the world seems to brighten and he feels free: "I am free! I am liberated! . . . I am the beginning of everything" (*Aku bebas! Aku lepas! . . . Aku mula segala!*, Act 1: Scene 3). The self-assertion has changed into arrogance. Subjective truth has become the only real truth. Sang Kuriang now sees himself as a god "*bagiku . . .*"--the word was frequently used by Awal, but never with this consequence: "in my opinion . . . there is no other god than myself!" (*tiada dewata melainkan aku!*, Act 2: Scene 1).

Sang Kuriang acts three times to force his truth on the world. The first time is when he kills his father. The second is when he wishes to marry his mother--everything must belong to him. The third is when he takes his own life, asserting that the greatest level of self-assertion is the act of self-destruction:

*Maka di atas sanggupannya membunuh diri  
demi yang diyakini  
akan kuakhiri ini semua  
dengan kesanggupan menghapus adaku  
atas kuasa sendiri.*

(Her willingness to kill herself/for those things she believed in/leads me to end all this/by destroying my own being/through my own power [Act 2: Scene 2]).

Camus, of course, saw suicide as the only significant philosophical problem, and many parallels can be drawn between Sang Kuriang and "the rebel," with his boundless self-assertion, presumptuous pride, reliance on will, and challenging of the divine.<sup>39</sup>

The rebel is, by nature, a single individual. There is little in the play that one could describe as a society. In some ways the followers of Raja Siluman and those of Arda Lepa might better be described as "crowds." Raja Siluman's followers find their enemies in situations where people trust each other, an opportunity to temptation where there is strife, and delight where one man denies another (Act 1; Scene 1). When Sang Kuriang kills his father they praise him as "no ordinary man," "a true man," and a hero (Act 1; Scene 2); when he commits suicide they express their disappointment in him and quickly leave. Sontani refers to them at one stage as part of human power

(Act 1; Scene 2), recognizing them as psychological forces. The other crowd, the simple, almost foolish followers of Arda Lepa, are committed to the perpetuation of good in the world (see, in particular, the end of Act 2; Scene 2: *Mana yang buruk kita buang singkirkan/mana yang baik kita jadi teladan . . .*, "Whatever is bad we reject/whatever is good we use as example . . ."). It is significant, however, that the social values espoused are good and evil, harmony and disharmony. The outsider cannot now reject the values of society to form an individually valid truth.

*Manusia Iseng* (The Alienated)

J.A.C. Mackie has written in his monograph on *Problems of the Indonesian Inflation* that:

. . . the spectacular rise of the "new rich" (*Orang Kaja Baru* or OKB) [during the 1950's] and the gain in material well-being and social status of the armed forces, both officers and men, relative to the rest of the population, poses many intriguing questions for the historian of social change. So does the impoverishment of the middle class to which so many members of the ruling elite of the early '50s belonged. The impoverishment of the urban poor, the *kampung* dwellers and *wong tjilik* or "little people," raises problems almost too complex to analyze without extensive research, yet it has created surprisingly little unrest so far.<sup>40</sup>

Sontani's plays over the next few years dealt with the theme of *Sang Kuriang*, the self-definition of the individual in a conflict situation in a contemporary setting. To the conflict of sexuality, therefore, is added class conflict, arising out of a need for economic security.

The setting of *Manusia Iseng* is the amorphous city, and the play makes frequent use of Western words such as "wiski," "pickup," "oom," "aafsprek," "filem," and "dansa." The estrangement between Kasim and his wife, which is provoked by the presence of the wife's niece, reveals a clear lack of understanding between these sharply individual (but poorly developed) characters--the *manusia iseng* (alienated individuals) that Sitor Situmorang wrote so strongly of in his essay in *Zenith* in 1953.

Kasim's attitude to the world is one of disdain. The newspapers reveal man's stupidity; the only person one can trust is oneself. Estranged from his wife, Kasim lives with the lonely fear that one might kill someone, perhaps himself, because he no longer believes in other people. "How can you believe," he asks, "if everyone else around you is an individual world standing completely alone, each one separate from you and sometimes very alienated from you?" (*Bagaimana kau akan percaya kalau setiap orang lain di sekitarmu itu merupakan dunia-dunia yang berdiri sendiri-sendiri, yang masing-masing berlainan dengan kau*

dan terkadang sangat asing bagi kau? Indonesia, August-September, page 478). These are almost exactly Sontani's words to Pramoedya Ananta Toer, and they capture the problems of the increasingly typical Sontani hero very well--the need to believe, if there is anything worth believing in; the alienness of other people; the despair at one's own isolation; the attempt to break out of alienation by finding another person sympathetic to the hero's private vision of the world (i.e., by communicating).

Kasim's wife--she has no other name, Nyonya Kasim--also finds their relationship sterile and so has turned to the acquisition of material objects. As she explains to a neighbor, "husband" and "wife" are only words; men and women have different needs (page 485). Yet she also realizes that: "we live in the world not to bind each other, but to give to each other" (*kita hidup di dunia ini bukan untuk saling mengikat, melainkan untuk saling memberi*, page 486), and that if one has nothing to give, one should let the other person go.

Nyonya Kasim is even prepared for her husband to marry Tuti, her niece, who is living with them as a substitute child (page 479). Goaded by Tuti, and slightly drunk, Kasim has made love to the girl. Nyonya Kasim's feeling is also that Tuti has coarsened him (page 476). The girl finds Kasim mysterious (page 477) and is willing to excite him to destroy the strong sense of isolation he conveys to her (page 478). Tuti is, yet again, a liberated woman, "so liberated," as Nyonya Kasim says, "that she doesn't know what should be done and what shouldn't" (*sehingga tiada tahu lagi mana yang patut dilakukan dan mana yang tidak*, page 482). She rejects the possibility that "human beings can still love each other in the world today" (*di dunia sekarang masih ada cinta antara manusia*, page 480). Only fools love each other; the vital question is one of existence, "whether you consider the other person to have existence or not" (*apakah orang lain itu ada bagimu atau tidak ada*, page 480). In their relationship with each other, Tuti and Kasim do consider the other person to exist; Kasim and his wife, on the other hand, do not, by virtue of their mutual indifference.

Tuti loses. Kasim is struck by a truck at the end of the play, mocking his decision whether he should live or not. He dies with the name "Dewi" on his lips, the name he used to call his wife before they were married. Tuti is left with only her hatred, "the only consolation for one who has found emptiness" (*itulah satu-satunya hiburan bagi manusia yang menemui kekosongan*, page 487). Again Sontani has rhetorically led the observer to reject the radical outsider as evil. The archetype of the play is the incest theme, its setting is the city. Sexual conflict has been established as an important topic for dramatic consideration and returns strongly in the next plays, in which Sontani presents class differences as an added variable.

*Sayang Ada Orang Lain* (What a Pity There are Other People)

Sontani admitted two and a half years after writing *Sayang Ada Orang Lain* that he had never seen a completely satisfying performance

of it. One can well understand. The main character, Suminta, is a completely static figure, negative in the extreme. His wife is naive and childish. There are three minor characters; one is also unconvincing, one is the *haji* stereotype, the other is the evil outsider. Nothing happens in the play (on stage, at least), and at the end, the two main characters, having talked inconclusively throughout, decide to separate. Sontani has described the play as "a revelation of humanity involved in a disaster" (*satu pernyataan manusia yang terlibat oleh suatu bencana*)<sup>41</sup> and Suminta as "a human being who feels and thinks about everything, a man responsible for the consequences of what he thinks about and feels. But he is not an easy sort of person to act, he is man in all his possibilities" (*seorang manusia yang merasakan dan memikirkan segala, manusia yang bertanggungjawab terhadap akibat yang dirasakan dan dipikirkannya. Tapi dia memang bukan bukan seorang type-manusia yang mudah ditiru, dia adalah manusia dengan segala kemungkinannya*). Despite the argument that life is composed of momentary experiences, a one-act play may not be the most adequate vehicle for consideration of such problems.

The play opens with a consideration of the characters of Suminta and his wife. Suminta is shabbily dressed, a persistent borrower, regularly given to pawning or selling his possessions to meet his debts, afraid to leave the house in case he meets his creditors. His wife, Mini, is attractive, elegantly dressed, and keen to be out and about. They have been married five years, yet act as though it were only five days. A guest, Hamid, insists that Suminta should think more realistically, more dialectically (page 7).<sup>42</sup> One must use all opportunities to the full, not considering any right or wrong, but simply as necessary. Suminta rejects this as an open advocacy of "behaving corruptly so as to cover one's needs" (*korupsi untuk menutupi kekurangan sekarang*, page 7), which Hamid denies, but the same assertion, that one must act in one's own interest ("corruptly"), is repeated and discussed with the woman who sells Mini a broach (page 9). The woman sees that a conductor taking money for tickets but giving none is corrupt, but does not accept that her husband, who receives certain payments for financial transactions he arranges, receives anything but gratitude. "Anyway," she asks, "what proof is there that honest people are ever rich?" (page 10).

Sontani has moved from what might be called spiritual evil--disharmony, alienation, selfishness--to moral evil. Whereas in the earlier plays, the hero was tempted to behave in an unauthentic way, he is now actively encouraged by those around him to behave in a way that is criminally dishonest. As Hamid puts it, both Suminta and (if he won't) Mini have this option.

Mini is apparently prepared to do so. (Indeed, her relative affluence suggests that she does so regularly, although nothing is made of this.) Haji Salim bursts in to tell Suminta he has seen Mini being driven away in a car by "our heathen neighbor" (*tetangga kita yang sudah kufur*, page 12). The *haji* insists that he shame his wife

and drive her away. Like his stereotypical counterparts, Haji Salim has all the answers and knows how to act; like his counterparts, Suminta has a good deal of sensitivity, no answers, and no idea how to act. (The actor most appreciated by the audience, in Sontani's experience, was always the one that played the role of pious fraud.<sup>43</sup>)

Hamid's response is to accuse Suminta of narrowmindedness and pessimism, call Salim a senile, interfering old man, and praise Mini for her willingness to do something positive about her own poverty. It seems also possible that Hamid has arranged the meeting with the "jackal-eyes" man, whom Nugroho Notosusanto describes as an *Orang Kaya Baru*, expensively but badly dressed.<sup>44</sup> But Suminta is unable to act, because when all truths are "true," none is; "each of us has a truth that is wrong for the other" (*masing-masing dari kita mempunyai kebenaran yang salah bagi pihak lain*, page 21), he tells Mini once the others have gone. He cannot punish her, because her truth is valid for herself; therefore he must punish himself. Because he cannot wipe out (*menghapus*) the shame she has caused him, he must kill himself (*menghapuskan diri*, page 22). The only way any Sontani hero can handle conflicting ideas is by getting rid of all of them except one. Some ideas cannot be denied; they can only be ignored. If it is not possible to reach this simple figure, the tension can only be smashed by destroying the person who feels the tension caused by the conflicting viewpoints.

The *haji* returns with the young man with whom, he alleges, Mini had intercourse. The man with jackal eyes laughs when Hamid attacks Haji Salim, delights in his own lust, and views the world as filled with stupid people who are no better than animals. Jassin describes him as an anarchist, not bound to anyone or anything.<sup>45</sup> It is quite clear that no sympathy can possibly be shown for this character now.

Does Sontani have any solution to the problems he has raised? Religion is obviously an amusing anachronism;<sup>46</sup> integrity leads to powerlessness; greed and lust (radical self-assertion) mean crime or corruption. Suminta leaves Mini so that she can face tomorrow "with her eyes open" and perhaps marry someone else (page 33). He returns her to herself (*Mulai saat ini kau adalah kepunyaanmu, bukan kepunyaanku dan bukan kepunyaan siapapun juga!*, page 34). We can only conclude that believing in others is no longer a valid answer either.

#### *Di Langit Ada Bintang* (There are Stars in the Sky)

The tentative class and *golongan* relationships of *Sayang Ada Orang Lain* are far more explicit in this next play. At the center of the play is the well-off Hamdan, his intellectual wife, and his *kampung* mistress, Marlina. Marlina has separated from her husband, Rodi, because he cannot afford to keep her. Other working class characters are Marsih, an impoverished harlot, and Miun, her lover (pimp?), who live under a bridge. To the right of the bridge is

Hamdan's expensive, well-furnished house; to the left is Marlina's bamboo house. The set thus links three levels of society--the rich, the poor and the extremely poor.

There is a deep indignation in the play, which is directed, in particular, towards Hamdan, the socially superior man who oppresses those who suffer the inequalities of the system. Marlina detests the meetings he arranges from his office, but they are necessary for her financial survival and to keep her sister in school. Rodi, not by any means an impartial observer, describes Hamdan as a lord (*Padukatuan*) who irresponsibly and insanely spreads the disease of greed and desires to possess many women, while the little people suffer because of the many things they lack (*Manusia Kota* text, page 43). Hamdan buys Marlina's time and affections, making her no different from Marsih the prostitute (see the explicit discussion of this on page 37). Marlina allows him to rest from his intelligent, socially ambitious wife, to whom he returns at the end of the play in a manner that suggests they are both beasts (page 45, cf. page 48).

The trishaw driver and the prostitute are common symbols in Indonesian literature after 1945 for exploited men and women who have ownership over nothing, not even their own bodies. Rodi brutally beats Hamdan in a futile assertion of the rights of the "little man," but he is quickly hunted by the police whose job it is to defend the corrupt *status quo*. Rodi is a pale, badly dressed, emotional character, who walks rather like Awal and is similarly inclined to form his hands into fists when he is angry. He is not, however, an outsider but a member of a class betrayed by money values. Whereas Miun and Marsih represent simple clown figures, emphasizing the virtue of the poor, Rodi and Marlina are fuller figures, capable of development in Sontani's later work into some sort of positive heroes (see *Si Sapan*, below).

*Selamat Jalan Anak Kufur* (Goodbye, Heathen)

The struggle of the working classes to preserve some form of ordered, humane existence, through "immoral" means, if necessary, is continued in *Selamat Jalan Anak Kufur*, which is set in a brothel. The main characters are a prostitute, Titi; the madam, Si Ibu; and Rais, a trishaw driver. There are a number of minor characters: a schoolboy who has broken off with his girlfriend, a fat Chinese businessman, an older man who only wants to talk, and a well-dressed man whose wallet is stolen by the schoolboy. To the madam these people represent men in general, because "all men are the same" (*semua laki-laki itu sama*, *Indonesia*, August 1956, page 351).

It would be a mistake to read the ending, in which Titi leaves with Rais, as the pure maiden being saved by the knight in shining armor. Titi is a hard and realistic professional, without any of Ani's illusions. She tells "blue jeans" to stop talking nonsense when he begins to praise her beauty, "If you want a room, let's go. But if you've only come to play, you'd better go away" (*Kalau kau mau ngamar*,

*mari kita ke kamar. Tapi kalau hanya untuk main-main saja, kau lebih baik pergi*, page 342). She calls the schoolboy mad when he is unable to handle her and kicks him when he falls at her feet crying. She feels no shame at her role and no compulsion to accept every customer that comes (she rejects the Chinese). The madam's statement that "she has only been here a week" (*dia baru seminggu*, page 346) is unconvincing.

Yet she has not assumed all the values the madam ("mother") cynically holds. The madam hates men, who marry women only to force them to cook and wash dishes, to enslave (*mempembudak*) them, to relieve their lusts, and, when bored, to throw them away like rubbish (page 341). The "mother" is committed to sex as a means of aggression: "your room," she tells Titi, "is there for you to treat men as your victims" (*kamar itu, disediakan sebagai tempat di mana kau mesti memperlakukan laki-laki itu sebagai mangsamu*, page 348). Man has degraded the prostitutes as "society's trash" (*sampah masyarakat*) and "the bearer of social diseases" (*benih penyakit kotor*, page 341); she has the power, however, to revenge herself by dominating him, if she has the self-respect to do so (page 345). The mother argues that a prostitute is as beholden to fulfill the duties of her calling as any Muslim is (page 341).

The evil outsider in Sontani's plays (from the Fourth Friend on) is committed by his or her behavior to a rigid, automatic code of action. It is, in a sense, not their behavior that damns them, but their stupidity. Rais is the only one to see that Si Ibu is as arbitrary as any of the men she condemns. And Titi, like Ani, gains her freedom for the society of role players precisely because she has the power to choose, and she exercises it by opting out of the system.

Titi affirms the worth of emotion over money; this is the lesson she has learned from Rais (pages 339-340). It is a different lesson from Ani's because it revolves around financial values and the distribution and manipulation of wealth in society. Rais is, again, a far more positive hero than Iskandar. Clearly still wrestling with the same problems, Sontani is giving the answers new, more committed, shadings.

#### *Saat Yang Genting* (A Pregnant Moment)

The next three plays reject the variable of class conflict and turn back to sexual conflict, which becomes the basis of Sontani's radical experiments in presenting subconscious attitudes and tensions actually on stage.

*Saat Yang Genting* deals with the desire of a man for his "daughter" and his wish to kill his old wife. The setting uses three doors; the doors are imaginary, and many of the characters who use them, when they appear, are imaginary too (*Manusia Kota* text, page 66). There are,

thus, a number of simultaneous levels of action--present real action, past real action, and imagined nontemporal action. The result is an approach to human nature which is both less philosophical and sociological, as well as more psychological.

The play begins typically with a revelation of the distance between husband (Mahmud) and wife (Martin) at a time when the wife is having her first child. The wife blames this distance on the husband's inability to see things the way she does (page 68, scene 1); he blames it on his need to be alone to nurse the special understanding of the world that he bears (page 70, scene 2). (His feeling of alienation began to reveal itself by his attending motion pictures on his own; ironically the first film he saw was based on depth psychology, page 69). This feeling of his separateness is strengthened by the introduction of Martin's sister Karlin, a university student, into the house during Martin's fourth month of pregnancy; Karlin understands Mahmud's loneliness, but also unites with her sister to criticize his apathy: "Apathy. That's the right word. The word that fits most Indonesians these days" (*Apatis. Itulah sebutan yang tepat. Sebutan yang memang berlaku bagi kebanyakan bangsa Indonesia di jaman sekarang*, page 74). Apathy, stupidity, lethargy, indifference are the common lot of the Sontani hero.

Mahmud imagines himself proposing to Karlin and being rejected because Karlin, as a modern woman, insists on choosing her own husband. Her screams of hatred are echoed by Martin's mocking laughter. Re-creating the scene to his own advantage, Karlin accepts him for his maturity and dances the "Dance of the Seven Veils" before he drags her to the bedroom. The fantasy is broken by Martin's comment that he is a weak man who likes to daydream alone (page 80). He rejects her, screaming that she is dead, having died at the hospital (page 81). Sontani skillfully covers a wide range of emotions: lust, hatred, fear, and malicious pleasure, then jealousy as Mahmud suspects Karlin has found a boyfriend.

Believing in others becomes in this play "a sense of responsibility" (*rasa tanggung-jawab*, page 86). Mahmud accuses Karlin of covering her loneliness with this pretense in the same way he uses fantasy; she denies that, asserting that it is responsibility (not love) that makes man different from the beasts (page 86). The play ends with Mahmud accepting his responsibility, deliriously happy that Martin has given birth safely, and rushing off to the hospital.

In many ways the play is typical of this "middle period" of Sontani's writing: the empty husband, with no values of his own, forced to admit his love for his intelligent wife, whose disappointment in the marriage is very strong and who errs by introducing the free-thinking young woman into the household. The plot deals with potential incest. The humor of the ending and the actual avoidance of threatened immorality, as well as the taut dialogue, lift the play out of the sentimentality which marks some of the other plays of this same time.

*Di Muka Kaca* (In Front of the Mirror)

We have seen that Sontani tends to view social action as a drama in which players act out certain roles, more or less consciously. We have seen that his leading characters define themselves by refusing to act conventionally ascribed roles (and that this is fairly negative, but is--sometimes--justified), by acting criminal roles (this will be negative, as the role is played unthinkingly), or by choosing roles that they consider suitable (this may be positive, even though the roles are normally considered socially deviant). The central image in *Di Muka Kaca* is a mirror, and the play describes a man's transition from alienated hero to a potentially negative hero and his salvation through commitment.

The man (unfortunately) is a cliché of the bohemian artist;<sup>47</sup> he has a beard and long side levers (*Siasat*, 30th January 1957, text, page 24). His role is one of continued outrage at cheap "pornographic" magazines (page 24), political corruption, polygamy, banditry, prostitution, and the general bestiality of Indonesian life (page 26). The sense of outrage in the revised edition of the text is more extensive; Sontani, in 1963, repeats his earlier criticism that those who make the most noise get the best position in society and claims a crisis of authority, of belief, and an age of complete chaos (page 42).<sup>48</sup> The point is underlined when one of society's leaders decides to build a house for his second wife rather than buy one of Dar's paintings. To the artist, animal instincts have displaced beauty (page 26). Dar's own art is confused and ugly, reflecting his attitude to the world around him.

Dar categorizes all human beings as animals and sex as the most animal act indulged in by man. It is his wish to preserve some purity in the world. Jeti, his daughter, is his ideal (the phrase was omitted in the revised text): "I wanted to make her into my pride. I let her grow, I left her far, far away from my own filth, so that she could one day understand what I wanted" (*yang akan kujadikan kebanggaanku. Kubiarkan dia tumbuh, kubiarkan dia jauh, jauh dari kebinatanganku, jauh dari kekotoranku, sampai dia nanti mengerti apa yang kuinginkan*, page 29). Once he suspects that she has been fouled--and he identifies himself strongly with the youth he considers to have dishonored her (page 29)--he has no refuge (*tempat pelarianku satu-satunya*, page 29). Unable to separate himself from the bestiality of others, he accepts his own bestiality as freedom: "Freedom to arbitrarily become a wild animal surrounded by other wild animals" (*Bebas untuk semena-mena jadi binatang buas di tengah-tengah binatang lain*, page 29).

Like *Awal*, however, there is clearly something obsessive about Dar's behavior. There is the same aggressive generalization about everyone else in single terms, the same division between human and non-human (animal). Dar's wife is very insistent that he is using Jeti for his own ends, that he does not see her for what she is (page 29). The conclusion of the play, and a conclusion that applies to all

Sontani's leading characters, is that freedom is not an end in itself. That is license. And it is the source of evil. Rather, one is free to be a moral being, to believe, to love, to commit oneself, or--in Dar's case--to accept other people as they are (page 30). Dar's bestiality, his lust, alcoholism, and inability to paint (1963 text, page 42) create disharmony; his commitment to his family (after Jeti attempts to drown herself) marks a new beginning for him.

#### *Pengakuan* (Confession)

Although an excellently constructed play, presenting three different perceptions of the one event involving two men, one woman, and a gunshot, the play adds nothing to Sontani's thinking on man and society.

The characters are those of the earlier plays--a bitter wife, an indifferent lover, and a dominating husband. We are familiar with the problems raised by the relativity of subjective truths.

#### Conclusion

The period 1953 to 1957 was a prolific one for Sontani. It began with a renewed solidarity on his part with Sundanese culture. There was a move from psychological awareness to a tentative social analysis of conflict between classes, based on money as a means of sexual domination, and a final shift to dealing with interior and exterior reality together on stage. During this period the aloofness of the outsider was rejected in favor of some sort of commitment to conscious living. Morality was less important than social harmony and personal satisfaction. A notable feature of all the plays was a concern with sexual behavior, particularly in situations of family incest. Throughout the period Sontani's disgust with society increased. The corruption of society was not, however, seen as attributable to any external forces; it was a personal problem, involving a lack of full awareness, false role playing, and a mechanical attitude to life and love.

During the late 1950s Sontani's increasing personal identification with the left was to lead him--after he had written a number of crude, knockabout farces--to further attacks on social degradation, with positive heroes and obvious upper class villains, and a certain amount of speech-making on social renewal.



## CHAPTER 5

### THE SALVATION OF INDONESIAN MAN AND SOCIETY

Sontani was only one of a number of major authors of the "Generation of 1945" who gave their support to Sukarno and the literary left during the period of Guided Democracy. He shares with Pramoedya Ananta Toer and Rivai Apin, to name the best known, a number of basic similarities in his personal development, which are not to be found among those writers who supported the Cultural Manifesto of 1963 (which was banned by Sukarno in May 1964 after extensive agitation, in particular by Lekra and left-wing student unions). Sontani was born in a rural environment and continued to feel a strong nostalgia for it, never feeling completely at home in Jakarta. He was not educated past secondary level. He was inspired by the Revolution, yet disappointed by its results. He saw Indonesian society in moral terms and had a concept of righteous humanity and a just society. A major writer, he had little reward from Indonesia in terms of finance, status, or prestige. He was encouraged by left-wing literary movements, at home and abroad, to believe that writing was an important way of changing society in a positive way and that the writer was a person of consequence. Perhaps it is unfair to say it, he was entering a period of literary decline.

I do not believe, as some critics appear to, that commitment to a left-wing ideology is necessarily productive of bad art or indicative of either greed or mental weakness.<sup>49</sup> Sontani was certainly far from being a committed communist, but a number of tentative developments in his earlier work (those relating to obvious situations of the exploitation of one class by another), and the use he makes of the radical nationalist ideology of Sukarno and others, show that he believed that left-wing solutions were capable of answering some of the philosophical problems dealing with human nature and society that Sontani had been trying to answer for a long time. Sontani, however, handled the answers in his own way, being on occasion criticized for doing so; his commitment was not always consistent; it was almost never dogmatic.

#### *Si Kabayan*

The comedy *Si Kabayan* is a very positive work, based on Sundanese folk tradition. Sontani uses it, in particular, to attack simplistic religious belief and the corrupt stupidity of Indonesian society. It marks the beginning of Sontani's public commitment to the left.

Kabayan is the subject of numerous short tales which turn upon a foolish word or action, a cunning maneuver, or an act of obscenity. In the Sundanese tradition, the other characters are Kabayan's father-in-law, his wife, his friends and neighbors, and attractive widows. As a typical trickster figure, Kabayan sometimes makes fools of others and sometimes of himself. Much of the humor draws from released aggression.

Here are two traditional Kabayan tales. One day Kabayan and his father-in-law decided to set pit traps. Feeling lazy, the old man

finished up setting only bird traps. They quarrelled and decided not to divide whatever they caught. The next morning the father-in-law went out early to see what they had trapped. He had nothing; Kabayan had a deer. So the father changed the deer over to his bird trap. Kabayan recognized the deception at once and refused his father's invitation to eat, saying that he preferred to watch the river flow backwards. "Impossible!" shouted the old man. "No more so than catching a deer in a bird trap!" Kabayan replied. The old man admitted his fault, and Kabayan punished him by not giving him any meat.

Another day Kabayan asked his father what a woman looked like. His father told him that women walk slowly, so Kabayan brought home a centipede. His father explained that women were friendly; they would greet you from a long way off. Kabayan brought home a corpse with a prominent lip. He kept the corpse in his room for some days until his parents threw it into the river. Smelling the odor of the corpse on his parents, Kabayan decided that they too were dead and threw them into the river. When he farted, he threw himself in after them. Downstream he was washed ashore, dug himself a grave, and hid his head in it. When the weather was sunny, he would put his head out. Everytime a water buffalo visited the grave, he would tell it to go away.<sup>50</sup>

As Achdiat Karta Mihardja has pointed out,<sup>51</sup> "Kabayan" can be used as the name of the hero of any funny story, whenever it is created, and the production of Kabayan tales is thus a continuous thing. Achdiat quotes two tales, one from the Dutch colonial period, in which Kabayan serves as a juror ready to support any decision the judge reaches, and another from the Japanese period, in which Kabayan passed an oral Japanese language test with the sentence *Gurame tinggarr mastakane* ("Only the head of the gurame fish remains," Sundanese), as examples.

Sontani's *Si Kabayan* is a modern satire; its success rests on Kabayan being placed "outside and beyond inhibition."<sup>52</sup> Sontani has never had much good to say about religious people in his plays. In this play, it is the supernaturally inspired man, the prophet himself, who is attacked as a liar and fraud.

Kabayan is no ordinary person. He is neither fat nor thin, tall nor short, old nor young; he wears a batek jacket and long black shorts with a sarong over his shoulder; no one knows where he comes from and whether he works or not. Only one thing is certain--his name: Kabayan (1964 text, page 5). Once the name is known, the characterization is immediately obvious.

He is sleeping as the play begins. His father-in-law, who is on his way to the fields, complains to Ijem, Kabayan's wife, that all Kabayan ever does is sit by the river. When he wakes, Kabayan denies he is lazy; he has been praying, not snoring.<sup>53</sup> After a search for food, Kabayan apparently enters a trance and announces to Ijem that he is *eyang Parahulu*, an ancestor spirit, who has taken possession of Kabayan's body while he is in the seventh heaven. The spirit reprimands Ijem for not realizing that her husband is a scholar of the esoteric arts

and for not offering him the appropriate gifts. Ijem becomes her husband's first disciple and feeds him with her father's eggs, then flees. Returning to his common self, Kabayan smiles and comments: "Three is not too bad." (*Em, tiga butir juga lumayan*, page 9).<sup>54</sup> Like Sang Kuriang, Kabayan decides on his own truths, but he is wiser than to believe in them.

Kabayan's second disciple is his father-in-law, to whom he confides his secret identity and Nabi Khidir's revelation that the world as it is now is full of poison which makes men completely mad (page 16). Sworn to tell no one, the father-in-law immediately tells the mosque *lebai*, who is able to supply a theological explanation for the situation. He becomes the third disciple and the first one to drink the foul smelling "holy water" Kabayan offers. The fourth disciple, Alnasik, asks for a husband for his daughter; when he actually gets one, Kabayan, the prophet, is concerned by the miracle. Sontani's perception of the genesis of spiritual movements is very shrewd.

Having set the scene, Sontani now explores it through a range of four minor characters, before reversing it with an unexpected ending. These four petitioners balance each other, in terms of their character, social position, and attitudes, and they balance against the four disciples. One even imagines Kabayan is a *wali* (prophet), just to underline the direction of the attack. Kabayan's fame has spread; people have come to him from as far as Central Java. These four come from Garut, Bandung and Bogor. The man from Bogor realizes that the miracles will not work unless the petitioner has faith; the man from Garut sees Kabayan as an intermediary for higher powers. As the philosophers argue, Kabayan sleeps.

The first petitioner, a civil servant, wants to be promoted. Kabayan points out that this will not make him a better person. The second is a woman from Bandung who has been cast off by her husband after he gets a raise in salary and takes a second wife. The next petitioner, a soldier, wants to be invulnerable; Kabayan proves he cannot have this unless he can lift both feet off the ground at the same time. The final suppliant is a corrupt man, who hopes to avoid being sent to jail; Kabayan punishes him by pouring water all over him. If Kabayan was only a cheat (like Elmer Gantry in Sinclair Lewis' novel, for example), he might very well play the game they want played. He doesn't. His answers are brutally honest. He attacks civil service bureaucracy and inefficiency, the immorality of the "big shots," the pretensions of the army, and business corruption.

Fearing that he may become as mad as they all are (page 40), Kabayan farcically ritually purifies his father-in-law, then, leaving everything he has been given to Ijem, departs. In a note he tells how much he has learned about human stupidity in the village and how he has enjoyed playing with people. He finally denies having any spiritual power or ever having met with Nabi Khidir. It is clear that Kabayan has a strength and forthrightness unlike any other Sontani hero. In a talk on Sundanese literature given to the Akademi Multatuli in 1964,

Sontani placed a good deal of stress on Kabayan as a symbol of working class consciousness, oriented to the real world, reliant on political action, and committed to revolt "for the sake of an awareness of life in community" (*demi kesadaran hidup kemasyarakatan, Harian Rakjat Minggu*, 9th August 1964).<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, he considered upper class culture abstract, non-political and arrogant; from his other writing on Sundanese folklore it is evident that he also has Sang Kuriang in mind here.<sup>56</sup> An alternative approach to Sontani's writings could well have revolved around a study of fools; precisely because of his class position, Kabayan is no fool.

*Segumpul Daging Bernyawa* (Heap of Living Flesh)

At first the relatively unknown *Segumpul Daging Bernyawa* seems merely another conventional Sontani play of his mid-1950s period. It deals with an older man and a young girl, who "ought to get married." The girl, Wida, is free, she uses make-up and goes to the movies, and she has no sense of guilt. The girl's mother leaves because she cannot bear the shame brought on her by her daughter.

There is also an interfering busybody, a young man. And it is he who marks the play out as radically left-wing. Although it is never explicitly said that Hasan is a communist, he has been to eastern Europe (3),<sup>57</sup> he belongs to a mass organization (*organisasi kerakyatan*, 2), and he is willing to concede to being a "believer in communist ideology" (*penganut paham komunis*, 6). He describes himself as coming from the have-nots, who are pure and innocent (2).

Hasan criticizes Wida's liking for Tuan Kadir, the rich importer; to her, this is an act of individual freedom--to Hasan it is a relationship in which one person has something to sell and the other buys it, an act of "political capitalism" (*politik kapitalisme*, 1). She ought not to identify herself with Hollywood film stars (the American film industry was the subject of a special left campaign at this time), but with "work," the source of true human worth (*harga manusia yang sebenarnya . . . di dalam bekerja, Wida, di dalam kerjanya*, 1).

As soon as Wida loses her virginity to Kadir, however, she begins to wilt (*layu*); her beauty (*seri*) declines. She sees herself as nothing but "a heap of breathing flesh" (*segumpul daging bernyawa*). The film stars possessed her; it was them Kadir loved. Now she has nothing, while he still has his money. He offers her money to marry him and be his second wife; she refuses. Instead she turns to Hasan. Hasan seems to her to glow; he has something that fills him, some powerful inner conviction. He explains to her that he lives not for himself but as a part of society, working towards a society that one day will be "just, prosperous, and classless" (*adil . . . makmur . . . tidak berkelas*).

Hasan defeats Kadir in debate, arguing that money enslaves (*membonekakan manusia*), while labor liberates. Wida rejects Kadir as a

man without humanity (*seorang manusia yang sudah kehilangan kemanusiaan*). All men are equal, Hasan teaches, all are good; the bourgeois are wrong to think they are better than others because they have more money. Kadir may have had her body, Wida tells him, he can never have her soul. She is ready to work, to progress, to fight against the chains of the present and bring the future closer (*untuk bekerja, untuk bergerak maju, untuk berjuang memusnahkan belenggu kekinian dan mendatangkan haridepan*, 8). She is no longer just living flesh. Sontani seems to have made a strong commitment of his own.

*Tak Pernah Menjadi Tua* (Never to be Old)

The year 1963 was one of intense political activity in Indonesia. The campaign for the liberation of West Irian and against Malaysia were at their height. The four-act play *Tak Pernah Menjadi Tua*, dated Cianjur, April 1963, and published in *Peruma Bhakti* in June and July of the same year, seems most incongruous in this context. A beautiful fifteen-year-old girl from the rural districts, her old grandfather who amuses her by his ability to fart repeatedly, the old man's equally old employer who falls in love with the girl and moves into the attic of his house away from his wife, the doctor who pronounces the old man's virility finished, the wife who leaves to live with her thirty-year-old son--these are scarcely characters to represent the might of the new emerging forces. Granted only that the old man is prepared to "buy" the girl (Act 2), the play belongs much more with those other plays which explore the theme of parent-child incest, although it is far more robust and vulgar than any of them are.

The comparative differences in age and sexual attractiveness continually shift during the play. There are real differences in age, but more important are the perceived differences. The wife sees her husband as old and senile; he sees her as old and stupid. He cannot see that he himself is old. "The longer she is in the world," he tells Dudung, "the older she will get. Women are like that. We men are not. We never get old. To the day we die, we never age" (*Kian lama dia di dunia, kian tualah dia. Itulah perempuan. Tapi kita laki-laki tidak. Kita tak pernah menjadi tua. Sampai mati, tak pernah menjadi tua.* Act 2).

It is her fault that he is old. (He admits being old or not as it suits the argument.) A woman begins to age as soon as she has given birth to a child. The husband is dragged along too, so he ages as well. The "only solution" is to marry a young wife (Act 2).

Nyonya Isak is prepared (as often happens in Sontani's plays) to let him remarry, because she has matured and he has not; they have nothing more in common. It is not that a woman's age continues to advance after childbirth and a man's does not, the man actually becomes the child:

. . . *kau adalah anakku yang paling manja, tuan, anakku yang datang kepadaku bersama-sama dengan lahirnya si Dudung, datang untuk minta diurus, dipelihara dan dijaga*

siang dan malam. Diurus makannya, dipelihara pakaiannya, dijaga kesihatannya. Dan itu semua kulakukan dengan penuh kasih-sayang, anak manis, kulakukan dengan penuh kesadaran sebagai seorang perempuan, sebagai seorang ibu yang tahu pasti bahwa kau memerlukan itu semua. Tapi, sekarang tuan sudah jemu dengan segala yang kuberikan kepada tuan, sekarang tuan mau terlepas dari itu semua, mau hidup sendirian . . .

(" . . . you were the child I spoiled most, sir, the child that also came to me when I gave birth to Dudung, came asking to be cared for, protected, and looked after day and night. To have his food arranged, his clothes provided, his health looked after. And I did it all lovingly, dear child, I did it with my woman's awareness, as a mother who knew you needed all that. But now you are bored with what I can give you, now you want to let it all go, you want to be independent . . .")

The surrogate child has grown up, wants to marry, no longer needs the mother. But the mother is still needed by her real child. The quotation continues:

". . . Itu aku tidak keberatan, nak, aku tidak keberatan. Toh aku belum kehilangan semua. Aku masih ada mempunyai sesuatu untuk mencurahkan cintaku, untuk mencurahkan segala suka dan dukaku, sesuatu yang akan menghargai dan menghormati aku, sesuatu yang tidak akan merasa jemu dengan ketuaanku. Bukan begitu, Dudung? Bukankah aku bisa mengharapkan itu semua dari kau?"

(" . . . That doesn't matter, child, I don't mind. I haven't lost everything. I still have something which I can give my love to, give my joys and sorrows, something that will honor and respect me, something that will never be bored because I am old. That's right, isn't it, Dudung? I can expect you to do all that, can't I?" End of Act 3.)

Dudung says nothing, but looks at his mother, "full of feeling" (*penuh perasaan*). When he next talks to his father, it is clear to Isak that his wife is now acting like a young woman (*mau meniru-niru seorang gadis*). She has decided to go with Dudung to Bandung. Isak has decided he cannot marry Odah, because he cannot spoil (*memperkosakan*) her youth and innocence (sexual relations commonly mark the beginning of maturity, and thus aging, in Sontani's works). The old man rejects Dudung's attempts to take his place (*memusuhi bapaknya dan memihak kepada ibunya*). Dudung is still a child, unmarried despite his thirty years; he cannot defeat Isak. He is sent back to his mother with two messages: she must live with her husband; he--Isak--is no longer a child, or to be treated as such. The happy ending triumphs over depth psychology.

The play, as I have suggested, seems incongruous at this point in Sontani's personal development. It is longer, more vigorous, less committed, more psychological, than the other works of this period. One would not be altogether surprised to find out that it was an adaptation of some other, perhaps European, play, although the themes of the power (sexual and other) conferred by money and family incest are old ones in Sontani's own work. Whatever the case, the play surely forces one to question the completeness of Sontani's commitment to the left at this time. J. Huizinga has described the activity of play as a "free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as 'not serious,' but at the same time, absorbing each player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest and no profit can be gained from it."<sup>58</sup> Perhaps, on the other hand, *Tak Pernah Menjadi Tua* is a last self-indulgence, as if--having got this playfulness out of his system--he could then go on and write what he had finally decided to accept.

### *Si Sapar and Si Kampeng*

*Si Sapar* was begun in 1961 and finished in 1964, *Si Kampeng* is dated June, 1964. Written in quite a different style from Sontani's earlier work, these plays analyze society in terms of class conflict. Now the conflict is economic and not spiritual, although--paradoxically--the exploiters are the *kiai*, the social group most closely associated with the mosque and its rituals and the dominant land-owning group in west Java. Sontani had long taken the opportunity to pillory them in his plays as hypocrites and busybodies, so the criticism of *kiais* as exploiters of the masses formed a convenient meeting point for ideology and prejudice. Society is neither conquered from the outside nor subject to a vague dispersed unease, but is destroyed by its own capitalists. The solution to inhumanity is simply to punish its source, so that humanity can flourish.

*Si Sapar* deals with the degradation of human labor. Sapar is a trishaw driver in the service of a fat *haji*. Forster has pointed out that "for some" the trishaw driver was "the eternal victim, haggard and consumptive, pedalling his heart out for his rich exploiters; for others he symbolized the mob, wild and unstable, ready to gang up on lonely and unwary strangers; for both he represented the raw material of revolution, discontented and dangerous."<sup>59</sup> Onih is a prostitute, selling herself to fat, well-placed government executives.<sup>60</sup> *Si Sapar* thus covers at least three of the five major themes of socialist writing: "conversion, the coming of socialism, labor struggles, the decadence of the rich, and prostitution."<sup>61</sup> As in *Selamat Jalan Anak Kufur*, the relationship is glamorized, and Onih appears as a beautiful princess seeking protection from her prince against the *raksasa* monsters of police. There is again just as much evidence to show that she is a hardened professional.

The story is fairly melodramatic and Sontani appears not entirely comfortable with it, to judge by his regular comment to the reader:

"you may agree or not, but that was how things happened" (*boleh pembaca setuju atau tidak, tapi begitu kejadiannya*). It is a simple, moral tract. The *haji* who owns the trishaws is physically repulsive, speaks in a ridiculous manner, is greedy, and is given to hypocritical references to God. The government executive is very similar, perhaps more secular. The major part of the story is the ending, in which the bureaucrat-capitalist rides through the town beside the dead Onih, pedalled by Sapar's corpse. A ghost story with an obvious hero and heroine, a villain who is punished, and the triumph of love is indeed "popular literature,"<sup>62</sup> although one critic refused to believe that it was really "revolutionary realism" (*realisme revolusioner*).<sup>63</sup>

*Si Kampeng* is far more vicious. The deceitful, cowardly landowner, Haji Gopur, is killed by a local idiot-child, Kampeng, his own son. Haji Gopur has tried to cheat the villagers by parcelling out his land to his family instead of turning it over to the government for redistribution. The issue of land reform was a major source of left-wing agitation during the early 1960s;<sup>64</sup> a review in the Muslim newspaper *Duta Masyarakat* indicated how in performance Haji Gopur was clearly presented as a *setan desa* ("one of the seven demons of the village," a reference to a common slogan of the PKI, i.e., Communist Party of Indonesia), the police as fools, and the headman as a dolt, and commented that the play was likely to teach children to hate Islam.<sup>65</sup>

Kampeng is an illegitimate child, ignorant, a thief, physically deformed, and continually ridiculed by other children. Yet at the end of the story, a neighbor proudly comments to his mother: "Your child is a hero, Umi. Kampeng is a hero!" (*Anakmu itu pahlawan, Umi. Si Kampeng itu seorang pahlawan!*, page 36).

Sontani had succeeded in dividing man's rottenness off and locating it in one exploiting class. Killing Haji Gopur was a direct way of removing man's inhumanity to man. This provided, perhaps, one solution to the problem Sontani had been trying to answer, but it did not satisfy convinced members of the left wing. *Bintang Timur* denied that Kampeng wanted anything more than to be recognized as Gopur's son; the values of the play were feudal. Kampeng was neither a peasant nor revolutionary, he had no relevance for what was currently taking place in Indonesia.<sup>66</sup> Bakri Siregar went further, in his review of the talk on Sundanese literature, and suggested that Sontani's distinction between an exploiting upper class and an exploited lower class could (wrongly, of course) be taken to suggest an opposition between the government, i.e., Sukarno, the propounder of the Political Manifesto, and the people.<sup>67</sup> The view of the PKI at that time was that there were two aspects of state power, "the anti-people aspect, consisting of comprador, bureaucrat-capitalist and landlord classes, and the 'pro-people' aspect composed mainly of the national bourgeoisie and the proletariat."<sup>68</sup> Indeed Sontani was not unaware of this distinction. In a speech made in Surabaya in late 1963, he described himself as coming from the petit bourgeois class and among those who had chosen to identify themselves with the workers, laborers, and farmers.<sup>69</sup> The distinction refined, rather than refuted, his overall argument.

Public Statements, 1959 to 1965

It is possible indeed that Sontani was never fully accepted as a member of the left, despite their efforts to win him over and the pride they took in his association with Lekra. Boejang Saleh had criticized him in 1956 for not using "positive heroes" in his plays; Pramoedya Ananta Toer in 1959 described Sontani as "a poor colonial child" (*anak bangsa jajahan yang miskin*), who had fled from human stupidity into a more beautiful and decent (*utuh*) world in his coffee-shop plays; Lekra made Rivai Apin, a poet who had written virtually nothing after 1950, head of its drama section, Lembaga Senidrama, at its second conference in 1962; Bakri Siregar had trouble defending Sontani's concepts of class; and *Bintang Timur*, as we have seen, specifically referred to Sontani in late 1965 as *sasterawan non-komunis* ("non-communist writer"). *Si Sapar*, *Si Kampeng*, and the public talks Sontani gave, particularly in late 1963 and throughout 1964, can be seen as evidence to refute this suspicion.<sup>70</sup> Because Sontani showed little interest in complex leftist theory, however, the plays certainly, and the talks on occasion, had the opposite effect--they alienated Sontani from, rather than identified him with, the left.

Sontani's awareness of his need to identify with the masses put him in a dependent position. "How can we give to the People, unless we know what it is that they need?" he asked in Bali in February 1962.<sup>71</sup> "I have come to learn . . ." he told the Conference of the Lembaga Senidrama in Medan, April, 1963.<sup>72</sup> In Semarang, he acknowledged--briefly, honestly, sincerely--that the experience of meeting with and talking to revolutionary writers, both at home and in China, had convinced him that his own works should serve the working class (*kelas rakyat pekerja*) from whom he must learn as much as possible.<sup>73</sup>

Class conflict was fundamental. Traditional drama, both East and West, began with large groups of people coming to one place to approve of what was being said, to share a common awareness, and to create in their own minds something that they felt to be great and glorious. In Indonesia, folk theater was perverted by the feudal class wanting to exploit the people for their own amusement (*doger* became *tajuban*, for example).<sup>74</sup> In the West, the individualism of society, the restriction of interest in the theater to an elite, and the private emphasis on the author's experience, led to the performance being nothing more or less than a "show."<sup>75</sup> To overcome this, there must be "only one class," as he argued to the Lekra Central Committee in Palembang in March 1964, and, with specific reference to Sunda, to the Akadami Multatuli in August. Upper-class culture is created by those "who have the power" (*yang menguasai*); it deals with powerful gods and pretty women and strange, incomprehensible, abstract human beings, who elevate themselves above the "stupid," "crude" masses. Lower-class culture, coming from the "real world," presents real, concrete, suffering human beings. By building a united front of artists and peasants, Lekra has taken a lead in creating a single culture, in which workers and farmers are seen as valuable human beings, imperialism vanishes from the face of the earth, and oppression of man by man is ended.<sup>76</sup>

Sontani also identified "Neo-colonialist imperialism" (*Nekolim*) with the forces exploiting the masses, and he participated in the campaign against the United States<sup>77</sup> and the United Nations.<sup>78</sup> The future of the world, he argued, lay with the "New Emerging Forces" (*Nefo*): the peoples of Indonesia, China, Korean, Vietnam, Cuba, the Congo, and so on.<sup>79</sup> He claimed Bung Karno's August the Seventeenth speeches as the "theater of the New Emerging Forces," in which there is dialogue between the Leader and the People, the Leader and the Revolution, and the People and the Revolution.<sup>80</sup> This may have been his own refutation of Ajip Rosidi's attack on his orthodoxy,<sup>81</sup> but, in harking back to what he took to be the revitalized antecedents of theater, he was also presenting a lively, integrated, classless society in which there was no separation between government and the people.

In view of the incongruity of *Tak Pernah Menjadi Tua*, it is interesting to note that the theme of rejuvenation forms a constant undercurrent in his talks. Participation in the Tashkent Afro-Asian Writers Conference, as he later asserted (he was more sanguine at the time<sup>82</sup>), had helped him to "discover himself as a human being who would never grow old" (*menemukan dirinya sebagai manusia yang tidak menjadi tua*).<sup>83</sup> One became young by participation in the creation of a new culture, one in which the ageless Si Kabayan would delight everyone (*manusia Si Kabayan yang tak pernah menjadi tua*).<sup>84</sup>

#### From Outsider to Exile

On the 30th September 1965, six leading generals in the Indonesian Army were murdered. Members of the Communist Party and its affiliated organizations, including Lekra, were all accused of having been involved in an abortive coup. Some 300,000 to a million people were killed in reprisals, and at least 120,000 more imprisoned in about 350 prison camps.<sup>85</sup> In 1969, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Rivai Apin, and another 2,500 left-wing intellectuals were sent to the prison island of Buru in east Indonesia. There can be no possible doubt that had Sontani not left for China a few days before the end of September, 1965, he too would now be on Buru as well.

There is a progression in Utuy Tatang Sontani's handling of the theme of "man in the midst of inhumanity." He began with a view of a pure society, corrupted from the outside. He moved to an attitude which saw the only answer to the corruption of society to be an escape from society so that one could keep one's own purity intact. When it became clear that the outsider took society's corruptness with him and could in fact turn into an evil person, Sontani began to look for some sort of positive commitment his characters could make to authenticate their existence. Influenced by depth psychology, he spent some time analyzing the sexual conflicts that are at the basis of family life and the use of money by an upper class to satisfy itself sexually with members of the lower class. During the aggressive nationalism of Guided Democracy, Sontani hardened this division between classes and decided

that the removal of the upper class would eventually allow the return of a just, equal, classless state. Whether he fully believed this or not, and I think there is evidence for believing that he did, particularly in late 1963 and 1964, Sontani was never a communist and never fully accepted by the left.

Ironically, the abortive coup changed Sontani from an outsider to an exile, forever barred from the society he regarded so ambiguously.

## NOTES

1. Balfas, in *Mutiara* II/17-18, 17th August 1950; Asrul Sani, "Fragmen Keadaan III," *Siasat*, 5th November 1950--cited in H.B. Jassin: *Kesusasteraan Indonesia Modern dalam Kritik dan Esei* (Jakarta, 1962), I, p. 123.
2. Pramoedya Ananta Toer, "Berkenalan dengan Utuy Tatang Sontani," *Siasat*, 7th September 1952.
3. "Keterangan Utuy Tatang Sontani tentang: Sajang Ada Orang Lain," *Kisah* IV (December, 1956), p. 19.
4. Andrea Wilcox, "The Sundanese Village," in G.W. Skinner, ed., *Local, Ethnic and National Loyalties in Village Indonesia* (New Haven, 1959), p. 48.
5. Utuy Tatang Sontani: "Sastra jang terlahir di Tjiandjur," *Bintang Timur*, 7th November 1963.
6. See Ajip Rosidi: "Kesusasteraan Sunda," *Siasat*, 26th November 1958.
7. "Humour in Modern Indonesian Literature," *Hemisphere*, March, 1963, p. 31.
8. *Tjerita Pendek Indonesia* (Indonesia, 1959), p. 61.
9. Jassin, *op.cit.*, p. 195.
10. Interview with Pramoedya Ananta Toer in Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *op. cit.*
11. "Hah, ini dia lagi!" Subagio Sastrowardojo, "Dua Drama Utuy," *Siasat*, 31st July 1957, p. 27.
12. "Maka Datanglah Entjok," *Siasat*, 16th April 1958, p. 25.
13. Sontani's name was not mentioned in the list given in *Harian Rakjat*, 4th April 1959, where there is provision for a representative from both Borneo and the Celebes, but appears in the *Laporan Kebudayaan Rakjat*, published by Lekra in late 1959.
14. References to place and date of publication of Sontani's writings are given in the Bibliography.
15. *Harian Rakjat Minggu*, 14th July 1963.
16. *Duta Masyarakat*, 14th June 1964.
17. The numbers in brackets are page references to the second printing.

18. *Indonesian Sociological Studies* (The Hague, 1955), Vol. 1, p. 236.
19. Jassin, *op. cit.*, p. 203.
20. *Voyage of Francois Pyrard to the East Indies* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1888), Vol. II, p. 167.
21. J. Keuning, ed., *Tweede Schipvaart naar Oost-Indië, 1598-1600* ('s-Gravenhage: Linschoten-Vereeniging, 1944), Vol. IV, pp. 71-72.
22. Full references for the preceding paragraphs can be found in my: "Seventeenth Century Bandanese Society . . .," BKI, Vol. 123, No. 3, pp. 347-365.
23. See, for example, J. van der Chijs, *De Vestiging van het Nederlandsche Gezag over de Banda Eilanden* (The Hague, 1886).
24. Compare A.H. Johns: "Towards a Modern Literature in Indonesia," *Meanjin*, December, 1960, p. 386.
25. *Pokok dan Tokoh* (Jakarta, 1953), Vol. II, pp. 231-232.
26. *Kesusasteraan Indonesia Modern* (Jakarta, 1962), Vol. I, p. 203.
27. In Sundanese society, people born in the month of Sapar are given the names of fish (*tambora* is a kind of fish) so that they will not be hot-headed. A. Prawirasuganda, *Upatjara Adat di Pasundan* (Bandung, 1964), pp. 41-42.
28. Johns, *op. cit.*
29. The phrase is from William Kloos, a Dutch poet of the 1880s.
30. Jassin, *op. cit.*, p. 204.
31. "Mengarang," *Orang-orang Sial* (1963 edition), p. 24.
32. "Significato e problematica dell'opera di Utuy Tatang Sontani," *Annali*, Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli, Vol. 15, pp. 4-7.
33. See page 49, in particular.
34. See the section of *L'être et le néant*, translated as "Self-Deception" in Walter Kaufmann, ed., *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre* (New York, 1961).
35. On "the child of nature," see P.L. Thoslev, *The Byronic Hero* (Minnesota, 1962).
36. *Badut* is used as a term of abuse in Achdiat Karta Mihardja's *Atheis*, in Mochtar Lubis's *Djalan Tak Ada Ujung* and Pramoedya Ananta Toer's *Bukan Pasar Malam*, all from this same period.

37. "Berkenalan dengan Utuy Tatang Sontani," *op. cit.* Compare H.B. Jassin, "Selamat Tinggal, 1952," *Zenith*, February, 1953, where it is asserted that Sontani spends little time reading books, his study is society (p. 71).
38. "Sang Kuriang," in H.B. Jassin, ed., *Gema Tanah Air* (Jakarta, 1959). Ajip Rosidi comments favorably on this text in *Kapankah Kesusasteraan Indonesia Lahir?* (Jakarta, 1964), p. 97.
39. See Camus, *The Rebel*, trans. A. Bower (London, 1953).
40. Monograph Series, Modern Indonesia Project (Cornell, 1967), p. 63.
41. "Keterangan Utuy Tatang Sontani tentang: Sajang Ada Orang Lain," *Kisah*, December, 1956, p. 19.
42. Page references are to the text as contained in *Manusia Kota* (Jakarta, 1961).
43. "Keterangan Utuy Tatang Sontani . . ."
44. Review, *Siasat*, 19th February 1958, p. 25.
45. *Kesusasteraan Indonesia Modern*, Vol. I, p. 183.
46. See Subagio Sastrowardojo, "Dua Drama Utuy yang tidak berdarah," *Siasat*, 31 July 1957.
47. *Selamat Djalan Anak Kufur* (Bukittinggi--Jakarta, 1961).
48. The first paragraph is based on my "Indonesian Writers and the Left, Before 1965," *Review of Indonesian and Malayan Affairs*, January, 1970. The critics referred to in paragraph two are Mochtar Lubis in *Senja di Jakarta*, 1963; A.H. Johns in "The Writer as Outsider," *Meanjin Quarterly* 22 (1963) and "Poet between Two Worlds," *Westerly*, October, 1966; and A. Teeuw in *Modern Indonesian Literature* (The Hague, 1967), especially pp. 180-181.
49. L. Coster Wijsman, *Uilenspiegelverhalen in Indonesia* (Leiden, 1929), tales 8 and 76.
50. M. Grotjahn, *Beyond Laughter* (New York, 1957), p. 16.
51. See also Freud's *Jokes and the Relation to the Unconscious*.
52. In one of the Kancil tales, mousedeer saves himself by pretending to be teaching the frogs how to chant: *Hikayat Sang Kanchil* (Singapore, 1953), pp. 35-36.
53. This is similar to tales 4 and 5 in Coster-Wijsman's collection.

54. "Sastra Sunda sebagai djurubitjara . . .," *Harian Rakjat Minggu*, 2nd to 30th August 1964; also *Zaman Baru*, November, 1964.
55. See "Kekajaan Batin Ki Sunda, Di sagigireun Si Kabayan aja Sang Kuriang," *Kiwari*, July, 1957.
56. *Bintang Timur*, issues 147 to 156, 1961. Numbers refer to episodes.
57. *Homo Ludens* (London, 1949), p. 13.
58. H. Forster, *Flowering Lotus, A View of Java* (London, 1958), pp. 29-30.
59. A short story by Sontani, "Onih dan Ibunya" is printed in Selamatmuljana's *Sari Pustaka Indonesia*; a poem "Onih," by Sajudi, describing a prostitute, appears in Ajip Rosidi's *Kesusasteraan Sunda Dewasa Ini*, p. 141, and in a different translation, by Ajatrohaedi, *Duta Masyarakat*, 15 November 1964.
60. W.B. Rideout, *The Radical Novel in the United States* (Harvard, 1956).
61. On "popular literature" see P.B. Lafont and D. Lombard, *Littératures Contemporaines de L'Asie du Sud-Est* (Paris, 1974).
62. "'Si Sapar'dan 'Si Kampeng' Utuy Tatang Sontani," *Harian Rakjat Minggu*, 3 January 1965.
63. See Rex Mortimer, *The Indonesian Communist Party and Land Reform, 1959-1965*. Monash Papers on Southeast Asia, No. 1, 1972. Also David Penny, "Development Opportunities in Indonesian Agriculture," *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, October, 1967.
64. "Si Kamper [sic] menjambut lebaran hadji," *Duta Masyarakat*, 25 April 1965.
65. *Bintang Timur*, 27th December 1964.
66. "Sorotan atas tjeramah Utuy Tatang Sontani," *Zaman Baru*, November 1964.
67. *Indonesian Tribune*, 17th August 1966, as cited by *Hsinhua Daily News Release*, 9th July 1967.
68. *Bintang Timur*, 13th September 1963.
69. Boejang Saleh: "Perkembangan Kesusasteraan Indonesia," *Almanak Seni 1957*; Pramoedya Ananta Toer, "Pertjakapan dengan Angkatan Muda," *Pesta*, 4th July 1959; *Bintang Timur*, 5th September 1965.
70. "Turun kemataholong sulit . . .," *Harian Rakjat*, 7th April 1962.

71. "Aku datang untuk beladjar," *Harian Rakjat*, 6th April 1963.
72. See *Bintang Timur*, 15th September 1963.
73. "Semangat doger belum mati," *Harian Rakjat*, 6th December 1964. *Doger* is a folk dance; *tajuban* is a dance commonly performed by nobles with women who are often prostitutes, and during the dance intercourse with these women is encouraged.
74. "Teater NEFO . . .," *Zaman Baru*, January, 1965. Also *Bintang Timur*, 6 December 1964.
75. "Hanja satu kebudajaan," *Harian Rakjat*, 8th March 1964.
76. "Hanja satu kebudajaan," *Harian Rakjat*, 8th March 1964.
77. "Selamat Tinggal UNESCO," *Harian Rakjat*, 31st January 1965.
78. "Teater NEFO dimulai dengan mengagungkan revolusi," *Zaman Baru*, January, 1965; also *Bintang Timur*, 6th December 1964.
79. *Ibid.*
80. "Utuy menidjau perkembangan sastra Sunda," *Duta Masyarakat*, 31st May, 7th, 14th June 1964.
81. "Konferensi Tasjkent," *Bintang Merah*, January, 1959.
82. "KPAA meremadjakan pengarang AA," *Harian Rakjat*, 7th June 1963.
83. "Sastra Sunda . . .," *Zaman Baru*, November, 1964.
84. These figures can be found in the December 1969 issue of the International Commission of Jurists' *Review*.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Literary Works by Utuy Tatang Sontani

- Suling*. Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1948.
- Bunga Rumah Makan*. Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1948. Reprinted Bandung: Kiwari, 1962.
- Tambera*. Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1949. Reprinted 1952.
- Orang-orang Sial*. Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1951. Reprinted Bandung: Kiwari, 1963.
- "Awal dan Mira," *Indonesia*, August-September 1951. Reprinted Balai Pustaka, 1952; Kiwari, 1962.
- "Manusia Iseng," *Indonesia*, August-September 1953.
- "Sang Kuriang--Dajang Sumbi," *Indonesia*, October 1953. Sundanese version in *Warga*, 1953.
- Sang Kuriang*. Translation of Sundanese work by R.T.A. Sunarja, Jakarta: Timur Mas, 1954?
- "Sajang Ada Orang Lain," *Indonesia*, May-June 1954. Reprinted *Manusia Kota*, Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1961.
- "Dilangit Ada Bintang," *Indonesia*, February 1955. Also *Manusia Kota*.
- "Sang Kuriang," *Seni*, November and December 1955. Reprinted Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1959. Sundanese version, Bandung: Bhratara, 1962.
- "Selamat Djalan Anak Kufur," *Indonesia*, August 1956. Also *Selamat Djalan Anak Kufur*, Bukit Tinggi--Jakarta: Nusantara, 1963.
- "Dimuka Katja," *Siasat*, 30th January 1957. Also *Zaman Baru*, 1st July 1957 and *Selamat Djalan Anak Kufur*.
- "Saat jang Genting," *Indonesia*, March 1957. Also *Manusia Kota*.
- "Pengakuan," *Siasat*, 25th September, 2nd October, 9th October 1957. Also *Manusia Kota*.
- Si Kabajan*. Jakarta: Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakjat, 1959. Reprinted 1964; Sundanese version, Bandung: Bhratara, 1965.
- "Segumpul Daging Bernjawa," *Bintang Timur*, issues 147-156, 1961.
- "Peking," (poem), *Zaman Baru*, 15-31 May 1961.

"Tak Pernah Mendjadi Tua," *Teruna Bhakti*, 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th June, 6th July 1963.

*Si Sapar*. Jakarta: Jajasan Kebudajaan Sadar, no date, 1964?

*Si Kampeng*. Jakarta: Jajasan Kebudajaan Sadar, no date, 1964?

Articles and Newspaper Reports: Sundanese

"Kakajaan Batin Ki Sunda: Di Sagigireun Sang Kuriang Aja Si Kabajan," *Kiwarri*, July, 1957.

"Njawang Kasusastran Sunda Modern," *Kalawarta L.B. & S.S.*, August-September, 1958; part two, *Sipatahoenan*, 29th August 1959.

Articles and Newspaper Reports: Indonesian

*Harian Rakjat*

"Turun kemataholong sulit, tapi luhur," 7th April 1962.

"Aku datang untuk beladjar," 6th April 1963.

"KPAA meremadjakan pengarang AA," 7th April 1963.

"Manusia didalam hasil sastra," 19th January 1964.

"Hanja satu kebudajaan," 8th March 1964.

"Sastra Sunda sebagai djurubitjara dari dua kebudajaan," 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th August 1964. Reprinted *Zaman Baru*, November, 1964.

"Semangat doger belum mati," 6th December 1964.

"Selamat Tinggal UNESCO," 31st January 1965.

*Bintang Timur*

"Penulis drama sebagian teater," 7th, 14th, 21st April 1963.

"Kami melangkahakan kaki," 13th October 1963.

"Sastra jang terlahir di Tjiandjur," 27th October, 3rd, 10th November 1963.

"Teater NEFO dimulai dengan megagungkan Revolusi," 6th December 1964. Also *Zaman Baru*, January, 1965.

*Kisah*

"Keterangan Utuy Tatang Sontani tentang *Sajang Ada Orang Lain*,"  
December, 1956.

Criticism of Sontani's Work

Achdiat Karta Mihardja, "Humour in Modern Indonesian Literature,"  
*Hemisphere*, February, March, 1965.

Achdiat Karta Mihardja, "Dongeng-dongeng Si Kabajan," in *Tjerita Rakjat*, III, Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1963.

Achmad Tarbin A., "Si Kabajan di Tangjung Priuk," *Bintang Timur*,  
22 December 1961.

Ajip Rosidi, "Apakah Kesusasteraan Daerah Punja Hak Hidup?" *Siasat*,  
18th September 1957.

Ajip Rosidi, "Menggali jang lama," *Budaja*, September-October 1959.  
Republished in *Kapankah Kesusasteraan Indonesia Lahir*, Jakarta:  
Bhratara, 1964.

Ajip Rosidi, "Orang-orang Sial Utuy Tatang Sontani," *Tjerita-pendek Indonesia*, Jakarta: Djambatan, 1959.

Ajip Rosidi, "Kesusasteraan Sunda," *Siasat*, 26th November 1958.

Ajip Rosidi. *Kesusasteraan Sunda Dewasa Ini*. Bandung: Tjupumanik,  
1966.

Mohammad Ambri, *Si Kabajan Djadi Dukum*. Bandung: Pelita Masa,  
1966.

A.M. Simbar Wathony, "Awal dan Mira," *Bintang Timur*, 6th October  
1961.

H.G. Aveling, "An Analysis of Utuy Tatang Sontani's 'Suling,'" *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, Vol. 125, No. 3,  
1969.

H.G. Aveling, "Indonesian Writers and the Left," *Review of Indonesian and Malayan Affairs*, January-June 1970.

H.G. Aveling, "Myth and Reality in Modern Indonesian Drama," in P.B. Lafont and D. Lombard, ed., *Littératures Contemporaries de L'Asie du Sud-Est*. Paris: l'Asiathèque, 1974.

H.G. Aveling, "Seventeenth Century Bandanese Society in Fact and Fiction: 'Tambara' Assessed," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, Vol. 123, No. 3, 1967.

- M. Balfas, "Prosa Indonesia," *Harian Rakjat*, 22nd December 1956.
- Boen Sri Oemarjati, *Bentuk Lakon dalam Sastra Indonesia*. Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1967.
- J. Brandon, *Theatre in Southeast Asia*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967.
- Iramani, "Dilangit Ada Bintang," *Harian Rakjat*, 3rd September 1955.
- T. Iskandar, "Surabaja," *Harian Rakjat*, 13th September 1963.
- H.B. Jassin, "Utuy Tatang Sontani, Pengarang *Bunga Rumah Makan*," *Kesusasteraan Indonesia Modern dalam Kritik dan Esei*, I, Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1962.
- Joeb, "Sayang Ada Orang Lain," *Harian Rakjat*, 5th March 1955.
- A.H. Johns, "Indonesian Literature and Social Upheaval," *Australian Outlook*, 1959.
- A.H. Johns, "Towards a Modern Literature in Indonesia," *Meanjin Quarterly*, 1960.
- M. Hussyn Umar, "Di Muka Katja," *Siasat*, 19th June 1957.
- M. Hussyn Umar, "Sayang Ada Orang Lain," *Siasat*, 18th July 1956.
- Mohammad Rustandi Karta Kusuma, "Simposion Sastra di Solo," *Indonesia*, 1958.
- Nugroho Notosusanto, "Dilangit Ada Bintang," *Siasat*, 28th September 1955.
- Nugroho Notosusanto, "Sayang Ada Orang Lain," *Siasat*, 19th February 1958.
- Pramoedya Ananta Toer, "Berkenalan dengan Utuy Tatang Sontani," *Siasat*, 7th September 1952.
- Pramoedya Ananta Toer, "Pertjakapan dengan Angkatan Muda," *Pesta*, 4th July 1959.
- L. Santa Maria, "Significato e problematico dell'opera di Utuy Tatang Sontani," *Annali*, Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napole, Vol. 15.
- Shanmu, "Pembitjaraan Buku Si Kampeng," *Bintang Timur*, 27th December 1964.
- "Si Kamper (sic) mejambut lebaran hadji: Dengan menghina tokoh hadji sebagai setan desa," *Duta Masyarakat*, 25th April 1965.

Subagio Sastrowardojo, "Dua drama Utuy jang tak berdarah," *Siasat*,  
31st July 1957.

Subagio Sastrowardojo, "Perkembangan Drama di Indonesia," *Siasat*,  
9th October 1957.

Tan Tasen, "Sorotan Derama Manusia Kota," *Dewan Bahasa*, June 1967.

A. Teeuw, *Pokok dan Tokoh*. Jakarta: Jajasan Pembangunan, 1953.

A. Teeuw, *Modern Indonesian Literature*. The Hague: Nijhoff, 1967.

Woerjanto Tegal, "Sajang Tak Ada Botol," *Siasat*, 12th November 1956.

AWAL AND MIRA

by

Utuy Tatang Sontani

Translated by Harry Aveling

The translator wishes to acknowledge the support given him by the Asian Literature Program of the Asia Society, New York, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

## AWAL AND MIRA

These events took place one evening in the year 1951 in front of a coffee shop owned by a pretty woman named Mira.

The so-called "coffee shop owned by Mira" was really only the front verandah of Mira's house which had been made into a coffee shop. Mira's house was bamboo, small but still new, placed facing the road, built on the remains of a stone house destroyed by the war, isolated far from the noisy bustle.

No one knew when the house had been first erected, nor when the front verandah had first been set up as a coffee shop. But what was certain was that Mira's coffee shop was like every other coffee shop-- besides the basic equipment needed for making coffee, the usual items of trade sold in coffee shops were also set out. There were sweets, soft-drink bottles, cigarettes, matches, and so on. And like all other coffee shops, in front of Mira's shop was a long bench for the customers to sit on, and between the space of the shop and the bench was the obstruction of a table and a counter set chest high--and there was no door.

Sometime after nine o'clock at night, Mira, who was pretty, sat busily darning behind the counter, beneath an electric light, visible only from the waist up. Her mother, an old woman, was outside the space of the shop, busily arranging the shelves of merchandise. And in front of the shop on the bench sat a man, who was still young, facing a glass of coffee on the table.

The man finished his coffee, then gave some money to Mira saying, "Give me a cent change."

But Mira, sitting behind the counter, gave him no change. Having taken the money from him she just kept on sewing.

"Where's the change?" asked the man.

"Bah!" replied Mira.

"Come on, a cent's a cent you know."

"Of course a cent's a cent," said Mira. "But don't you feel you've spent rather a long time sitting there, looking at my face?"

"Do I have to pay to look at your face?"

"Why not?" replied Mira. "I bet your wife at home isn't as pretty as I am."

The man started. But finally he stood up, saying as he did so, "Well, if I must--nothing I can do about it."

And without looking back, he walked out of the shop, going off to the right.

"They even count the cents!" said Mira when the man was far away. "They think you have to be nice to everyone these days."

"Possibly because it's so late in the month, Mira," said her mother. "There haven't been many customers these last three nights. Maybe everyone's run out of money."

And having said so, the old woman continued gazing far off to the left.

"Heh, it's quiet," she added. "I can only see one person coming this way."

Suddenly she started and said in a rush, "Mira! I think it's Lord Awal."

And hearing that, Mira, still sitting behind the counter, started too. Hurriedly she left her seat and hobbled through the door into the house on the left, saying to her mother as she did so, "Just tell him I'm not here!"

The man called Awal was aged between twenty-seven and thirty. His body was thin, his hair long and unkempt. He entered the coffee shop with a swaying, tired gait and in a deep voice said to Mira's mother, "Is Mira here, mother?"

"No sir," replied the mother. "Don't know where she's gone."

"Has she been away long?"

"Quite a long time."

Awal, who was thin, sat tiredly on the bench. Sat with his back to the counter. Then he said in his deep voice,

"When is she going to stop fighting me?"

"Fighting . . . ?" asked Mira's mother.

"What else would you call it? All the time I was sick she never once came to see me, although I sent her frequent letters here asking her to."

"She has a lot to do, my lord."

"A lot to do? Hm, now that I've forced myself to come here she isn't here."

Mira's mother was silent for some time, then left through the side door into the house. But not long after she came back through this same door which Mira had used--back into the shop. From within the shop she said, "White coffee, my lord?"

"Don't worry, it doesn't matter."

Then Mira's mother sat down once more. After sitting quietly for a while she got the radio, which was not far from the door, and quietly turned it on.

". . . therefore," said the loud, clear, woman's voice from the radio, "it is the responsibility of we womenfolk that in times like these, after we have lost so much as a result of the war, that we must be more diligent in fighting side-by-side with the men to build a peaceful society in our glorious and beautiful motherland, Indonesia. Come, let us roll up the sleeves of our blouses . . ."

Only this much came from the radio, for Awal who had been sitting thinking, suddenly got up and said as he clenched a fist,

"Turn that radio off, mother!"

"Why--why, sir?" asked Mira's mother whilst obeying.

"Complete nonsense the lot of it!" he replied. "The nonsense of clowns. Huh, fight side-by-side--our glorious and lovely motherland! Easy enough to say. She herself wouldn't know what she'd been talking about. Just as long as she makes a noise."

Having erupted, he sat down swaying again.

"Are you--are you sure you don't want anything to drink?" asked Mira's mother.

"I want to speak with Mira, mother," he replied.

"But she might be away a long time. Can't I help by giving her a message for you?"

"I want to speak to Mira herself," he replied again. "I want to hear something far, far different from the rubbish people usually speak."

"But, my lord, Mira--my daughter, she's just an ordinary person. You mustn't hope for the impossible from her."

Awal lifted his head, looked straight at Mira's mother, and said, "Who hopes for the impossible? I don't hope for the impossible from her. What I hope for is the decent hope of any man that some woman should become his life's companion. That isn't an impossibility."

"What I meant, my lord," said Mira's mother, "was that Mira isn't an upper-class girl. She's only a waitress."

Again Awal looked at the mother, saying "What does upper-class mean in an age as crazy as this one? Do you think that woman speaking on the radio was from the upper-class? The woman who spoke just for the sake of

making a noise? They're the sort of people who control our society today, people who want to conquer others through continual chatter; who don't know that their own souls are dry and dusty, their world narrow--far narrower than this coffee shop!"

Two men entered from the right; both a bit over thirty. One was well-built and tall and wore a blue shirt. The other was rather shorter and wore a white shirt. Both came to the front of the shop with a light happy tread. Happy too was Blue Shirt's voice as he shouted,

"Where's Mira, ma?"

"Not here," replied Mira's mother.

"Oh," said White Shirt. "If Mira's not here, I don't think we'd enjoy drinking coffee here."

"Doesn't matter," said Blue Shirt. "We'll wait till she comes back. Why go home so soon? There's nothing at home, either."

And then they sat down not far from Awal--sat facing the counter. But as they neared, Awal--having observed their style of behavior--got straight up and started to go.

"Where are you going, my lord?" asked Mira's mother. "Sit down for a while."

"It doesn't matter, mother," he replied, going off to the right and not looking back.

Blue Shirt watched his swaying walk. And then when the observed was far away, the observer said to his friend,

"Why's he so cranky?"

"You'd think he was angry at us," replied White Shirt.

"He's a very learned man," said Mira's mother.

"What's learning?" countered Blue Shirt. "All I can see is that he looks like someone out of his mind. But I guess in these times there are quite a few people out of their minds. He's an aristocrat isn't he, ma?"

"They say," she replied, "that his parents were no ordinary folk. But he lives by himself now."

"And gets no respect like his parents used to," added Blue Shirt. "That's the fate of the upper-classes these days. Times have changed but they still live like they used to before the war when everyone respected their class. Finally they end up like they're out of their minds."

Suddenly Mira, who had previously gone into the house, appeared from the door saying as she did so,

"Do you think folk'll consider you clever because you talk about other people?"

"He--, Mira's here," shouted Blue Shirt. "We almost believed she wasn't. But now we know she's not out to us, but only to that crazy young man."

"I said," said Mira sitting down behind the counter, "no one will call you clever for talking about others."

"Tell us," replied Blue Shirt, "that we mean more to you than that young man does."

"Mean more to me? You come to buy the goods I sell. And I have to serve you as any shopkeeper wanting to make money would."

"Why don't you serve him then?" asked White Shirt.

"That's my business, not yours. If you want something to drink say so! Black coffee, with sugar, or with milk?"

Blue Shirt who spoke easily, laughed easily. "Listen how bravely our beloved speaks! And that's what makes sitting here so pleasant, isn't it? We can sit here till it gets real late."

"Tell me!" said Mira. "Black coffee? With sugar? or milk?"

White Shirt laughed: "She just keeps on attacking!"

And Blue Shirt, who was already laughing, laughed harder.

"But we won't give in! White coffee please! Even if you put the prices up we won't retreat."

"Both white coffee?" asked Mira's mother.

"Of course both white, ma. Why be different!" replied White Shirt. Then he turned to Mira and said, "Why isn't the radio on? It'd make it much nicer sitting here."

"Bah!" replied Mira. "There's only nonsense on the radio."

"Even so, turn it on."

"No need," said Blue Shirt. "No need to listen to the radio. Just looking at Mira makes us forget we haven't got any rice at home."

Just as Mira's mother was pushing the glasses of coffee in front of Blue Shirt and his companion, there passed in front of the shop, from

the right, a man and a beautifully dressed woman. The woman walked in front, the man walked behind her. But when he was in front of the shop, the man walked more slowly as he looked at Mira sitting behind the counter. And he looked for a long time; so long that the woman he followed said to him as she grabbed his hand, "Come on!"

The recipient of the order obeyed and quickened his pace. But she who gave the order continued to look at Mira and, after some time, spat.

"Hey," said Mira, "why spit? Think you've got something anyone'd try and steal from you?"

The woman spat again and said, "Really?!"

But having said so, she quickly walked away.

Mira laughed. Blue Shirt laughed delightedly too. And White Shirt joined in the laughter, spicing his laughter into the words, "Haha, that was really something! It was just as well we didn't see blood spilt."

"Who knows," said Blue Shirt, "maybe there'll be some blood spilt at home between that husband and wife. Never underestimate married people."

"Just as well we're not married," added White Shirt.

"So you're still boys, is that what you're saying?" asked Mira. "Huh, boys."

Blue Shirt laughed: "Oh, not wedded doesn't mean not bedded!"

"Do I have to listen to those who gossip just because I'm here?"

"What?" asked White Shirt. "What does that mean?"

"If you don't understand forget it! Don't ask again. Don't say anything. Just drink your coffee. That makes less noise!"

White Shirt giggled. And his laughing friend laughed louder, and said: "Well, well, sometimes you have to admit that for a waitress Mira's pretty smart. It's a bit hard for us to talk to her. She should be over there at . . ."

"In the judge's office," interrupted White Shirt.

"Not in the judge's office," bantered Blue Shirt, "That's an insult, buddy. She should be over there besides one of the big shots--the wife of a big shot. Aren't there lots of them who, in the war all hid, scared to death, and have now popped up in important jobs--so important they feel they need to have two or three wives."

"If you want to insult me," said Mira, "don't beat about the bush!"

"Who said anything about insulting you?" replied Blue Shirt. "The big shot's wives, even the number two or three ones, spend all day getting into cars, out of cars, living in big houses, going to restaurants now and then, and then travelling around the countryside for a week at a time. In short a rather nice life. Not like us. We carried weapons during the war and nearly got shot by the enemy lots of times, but we still live in tiny lanes!"

"There's no method in the world today!" mocked White Shirt. "We were the ones who were always tired--they're the ones who get all the pleasure out of it."

"Therefore," replied Mira, "I'm quite happy to be a waitress, for from behind this counter I can see all the people who are disordered like yourselves!"

"Us disordered?" asked White Shirt. "What's disordered about us?"

"Your brains! If your brains were working properly, why would you pour out your annoyance at present conditions to me? This is a coffee shop. People can grumble and complain all they like here. But the merchandise isn't like witnesses writing down all you have to say. It's there to be bought!"

Blue Shirt laughed again. And White Shirt laughed as he said to his friend, "What about it? Will we buy the lot?"

From the right a boy about thirteen entered. He was walking quickly. He spoke directly and quickly to Mira: "Miss Mira?"

"Yes," replied Mira.

The boy put forward a piece of paper.

"Here's a letter."

"Who's it from?"

"From the man who was here before."

"Where is he now?"

"Over there, waiting in the bus shed."

Mira asked nothing else. She took the piece of paper which the boy had offered her, then read it through.

While Mira was reading it, Blue Shirt asked the boy: "Did you get your orders from a thin man with untidy hair?"

"Yes," he replied.

"Disaster a million times over!" said Blue Shirt laughing. "He's found out you were lying." Then he added: "He'll be angry, won't he?"

But Mira, busy reading, didn't answer.

"How about it, ma," said Blue Shirt to Mira's mother, "now he's found out she was telling lies?"

"Old people like me," replied Mira's mother, "keep out of this sort of thing."

"Old people shouldn't get involved," said Blue Shirt, gulping down the contents of the glass in front of him. And he, like his friend, continued to watch Mira read the letter.

Mira only read for a moment, then said to the boy, "Tell him I can't leave my responsibilities here. I'd rather he came here."

"Good," replied the boy, leaving.

"Tell him I'm waiting, won't you?"

"Yes."

And the boy kept walking off to the left; walking as smartly as when he came into the shop.

After the boy was a good way off, Blue Shirt said to Mira, "What's in the letter, eh?"

"That's my business," replied Mira.

Blue Shirt, who laughed a lot, laughed again. Then he went over to his friend and whispered in his ear.

"What are you whispering about?" asked Mira.

"That's our business," replied Blue Shirt and he laughed again. And his friend laughed. They both laughed uproariously.

Suddenly White Shirt pointed to far over on the left; "Hey, look! What's that?"

Mira turned from where she sat behind the counter, stretching to look in the direction Blue Shirt had indicated. She held the letter loosely in her hand, unaware that White Shirt was about to snatch it away. White Shirt threw the letter to his friend just as quickly as he took it.

"Damn!" she cried. "How dare you try something so obvious."

Blue Shirt, who had the letter, laughed and joyously read out the contents: "Mira, although you have just lied to me, your soul, your

world! are still a problem unto me. Your soul, your world! He's really out of his head."

"So our Mira's got a world of her own?" said White Shirt. And he continued shaking his head.

"Stop it!" screamed Mira.

But Blue Shirt paid no attention to her. He read on,

"To me, you are still not a waitress."

"Shoot," mocked White Shirt, "If you're not a waitress, what are you?"

"Listen! Listen!" said Blue Shirt and he read on. "Because of that I want to talk with you, by ourselves, not where you are because there are--Hey, what's this. He says we're clowns. What does he mean?"

"You *are* clowns!" said Mira. "Come on, give me back the letter."

But Blue Shirt paid no attention and read on: "Can you leave your place for a little while? I will wait for you in the bus shed."

After that he stopped reading. Giving the letter back to Mira he said, "And he can keep on waiting too--until we 'clowns' as he calls us go away."

"But we shan't go," interrupted White Shirt.

"You should tell him," said Blue Shirt, "that these aren't the times for all that prewar poetry business."

"Things move faster nowadays," added White Shirt. "If you're not fast you miss out on your share. And if you don't get your bit now, when will you? According to yesterday's paper, world war three is just about here."

"That's why!"

"What's why?"

"Why you're such animals--because you still believe the papers."

"Aww--"

"That's enough, that's enough, shut up," said Blue Shirt looking to the right. "Here comes the gentleman who called us clowns."

And he pretended to drink. And his friend pretended to drink.

After a long time the thin body of Awal appeared from the right, with his slow swaying gait. When he reached the front of the shop he did

not go straight to the bench. Only after Mira, who sat behind the counter, said, "Please sit down, sir," did he sit on the bench with his back to the counter.

"Coffee, sir?" asked Mira.

"Yes," he replied.

"Coffee for Mr. Awal, mother!" said Mira to her mother.

"White, sir?" asked the mother.

"Yes, white."

Suddenly after Mira's mother had placed the glass of coffee near Awal, Blue Shirt said in Mira's direction: "Mira, although you have just lied to me, your soul and your world are still a problem unto me."

Awal, who was sitting with his back to the counter, suddenly stiffened and stared at Blue Shirt. But the one under surveillance pretended not to notice that he was being watched and continued in a clear voice, facing Mira: "To me, you are not a waitress, Mira. And I want to speak with you. Not where you are because there are clowns there. Therefore--"

"Shut up!" shouted Awal.

"Who are you talking to?"

"I'm talking to Mira. That's right isn't it, Mira. I'll wait for you in the bus shed. O.K. Mira?"

Awal stood up. For a moment he looked at Mira. Then he looked at Blue Shirt: "What right have you got to meddle with other people's letters?" he asked. "What right have you got?"

"Hey," replied Blue Shirt. "Are you angry with someone?"

"Why do you have to meddle in other people's business?" Awal replied, his voice shrill and trembling.

"Who's meddling? You get angry too easily friend. Use your brains. Don't talk so lightly. Calling anyone you feel like a clown."

"You are clowns!" replied Awal, again clenching his hands. "You're not human beings!"

Blue Shirt stood up. "You must be mad!" he said. "Saying I'm not human."

Awal, his hands already clenched, said no more. He charged, hitting Blue Shirt with his fists, but Blue Shirt, who was much taller and much bigger in build than Awal--very much bigger--quickly defended himself and

continued replying with heavy blows and the thin Awal was not able to withstand the return attack. He fell headfirst onto the ground.

"Keep hitting him!" screamed White Shirt.

"That's enough!" screamed Mira, commandingly.

But Blue Shirt paid no attention to Mira's screams. He lifted his foot to kick Awal.

"Stop it!" shouted Mira, taking a glass of coffee and throwing the contents at him.

"You're a lot of bastards! Come on, get out of here!"

Then she turned to White Shirt: "You too, you animal! If you don't . . ."

"Wait a bit," said White Shirt. "Are you really throwing us out?"

"Don't ask so many questions," answered Mira. "Get out of here!"

"We mightn't come back again."

"Don't be so stupid. Come on, get moving. Get moving!"

"Great fun, eh?" said Blue Shirt kicking Awal. "Forget it. We'll go. Come on!"

"Pay first! Pay first!" said White Shirt. And after he had thrown some money in front of Mira, he followed his companion, walking away to the right.

After the men had left, Mira ordered her anxious mother: "Lift him up, Mother."

Without arguing, Mira's mother went out of the door into the house and shortly after came out of the door at the side of the house into the shop.

"My lord," she said, rocking Awal, "sir, lord--"

Clumsily the thin Awal stood up. Having stood he just stared at Mira as she sat behind the counter. Stared in a most awful manner.

"Is this what you've come to, happy to see me insulted by others before you?"

And because Mira, sitting behind the goods, said nothing, he spoke again, more insistently: "You're cruel! You've never felt the same as I have, not even for one moment. Before you were taunting me with your

lies, now you seem quite happy to see me insulted by others after you've destroyed--in front of them--the trust I placed in you."

But Mira did not reply from behind the counter. And because she did not reply, the thin-bodied Awal moved closer to her: "Mira! Did it make you happy to see other people hitting me? To see me insulted while you just sat there?"

And because Mira just sat there and did not reply again from behind the counter, Awal came even closer: "Mira! Was that why you wanted me here? to destroy my trust?"

Still Mira said nothing.

"Mira!" Awal screamed again.

"Sit down, sir," replied Mira. "Don't talk."

"No! I want to hear your answer. Why have you played with me, lied to me and had me insulted? Why?"

And because Mira, sitting behind the counter, still said nothing and was quiet, Awal reached for her neck over the counter, saying, "You'd be happy, would you, to see me die for you?"

"Sir, my lord, sir . . ." said Mira's mother anxiously.

"You'd like to make me a sacrifice to your beauty?"

Mira's mother became distraught. Finally she howled with all her strength: "He--help!"

Slowly Awal released his strangle hold and, having done so, dropped to the bench.

"Yes," he said in his heavy, almost indistinct voice, "inside I am confused, yet you--you remain quite calm--"

As Mira's mother entered the space of the shop, two young men came racing in from the left. Both were aged about twenty. In great haste the first young man asked, "What's up?"

"Why?" replied Mira. "Nothing's up here."

"Well!" said the first young man. "Someone was calling out for help."

"No. Nothing happening here," said Mira again. "If you'd like something to drink, please sit down."

The young men both looked at each other. The one in front asked his friend, "Will we have something to drink?"

But his friend replied with a sign which indicated that he had no money and he said to Mira, "It doesn't matter, some other time."

They both stepped off to the left, but after three steps the young man in front stopped and turned to look behind him. He said to his friend, "I wouldn't mind having a drink here."

"Why don't you?" asked Mira. "Please sit down."

"Maybe we'll come another time," replied the other young man, and he gestured to his friend to leave the shop.

After the young men were no longer there, Awal, who was sitting with his back to the counter, said in his heavy voice, "Mira, do you--do you forgive me?"

"Don't talk, sir," Mira answered. "Your coffee will get cold."

"You--you forbid me to speak," said Awal, "But you allow everyone else to talk to you."

"They are the customers, sir, and there's nothing between us that needs talking about."

Awal lifted his head and looked at Mira. "Nothing to talk about?" he asked. "Do you really think there is nothing to talk about between us?"

"Between us there is nothing to be discussed. Just to be felt."

"Hm, you answer like an angel," said Awal, standing, "but when did you ever feel what I feel? I was worried--you didn't want to know. I was sick--you didn't care. I was insulted--you sat by watching. No! You don't feel what I've ever felt. You have closed your heart."

"Sir, the door of one heart can only be opened by another, and my heart is open."

"Opened to play with my heart."

"That is the way your heart feels it. I feel in my heart that I have not been playing."

"You don't feel what I feel!"

"That's the way it feels to you!"

Awal, who had been standing, sat down--sat with his head bowed--and said, as if he were speaking to himself, "Hm, yes, the trouble between us is that you are not I and I am not you. But am I wrong in wanting to feel you becoming myself?"

"Your coffee will get cold, sir," said Mira.

"Let it!" replied Awal straightening himself up. "I must speak to you--speak until there are no more problems between us."

"There are no problems between us. What is there which is a problem?"

"You haven't soothed my heart."

"So your heart feels."

"You haven't given me an explanation!"

"That is your opinion. To me, everything has been explained."

From the right entered an old man, aged about fifty-eight, wearing a batik shirt and a traditional, store-bought sarong. Mira greeted him cheerily from behind the counter, "Ah, father! please have a seat."

"It's very quiet tonight, Mira," answered the newcomer.

"It look as though people are bored with coming here."

"How could they be bored? Anyone who is bored comes here, doesn't he?" replied the old man as he sat down. Then he said to Awal, "Not boredom, just the lateness of the month, hey young man?"

"Coffee, father?" asked Mira.

"No, no," he replied quickly, "just black tea. If I drink coffee I won't be able to sleep later and if I can't sleep at home that's when things become difficult."

And he sighed and added, "Yes, yes, if the place where I live now was as big as the old one? I wouldn't mind being awake at night for there'd be plenty to look at, but where I live now, hm, you can't even call it a house; it's just somewhere to sleep."

"But that's the usual thing nowadays, isn't it?" said Mira's mother, pushing a glass of black tea towards him.

"True, yes, that's true. If you had a large house before that doesn't guarantee you live in a large house now. And on the rubble of the old stone houses--like this one, Mira--you can only build bamboo houses. But, still, with the coffee shop here, Mira, you are performing a useful service."

"A useful service?" asked Mira.

"People who can't bear staying at home at night have to get out and go somewhere, and they can sit here and talk and forget all their troubles. That's right, isn't it, young man?"

Awal stood up and looked at the man who had invited him to speak.

"No," he said, "that's not right at all."

"What, what's not right?"

"You're like everyone else, you think Mira's a waitress and that you can come here to forget your troubles."

"Yes, eh, yes, that's right."

"So you're a clown?"

"A clown?"

"Yes, a clown!"

"I--I don't understand."

"Of course you don't understand. If you understood, I wouldn't have called you a clown."

"So--so how should we regard Mira?"

"That's up to you."

The old man was quiet for a moment. Having swallowed a mouthful of tea, he said, "I'm old, young man, and I've experienced many changes in the world, and in my opinion, whatever age it is, finally, there is no age more perfect in the way a man should treat a woman than that of the greatness of the prophet Muhammad."

Awal suddenly leaped up. "The age of Muhammad's greatness! Huh, easy enough to talk--as if you'd ever lived then! It's exactly statements like that which show that you are a clown, which means that there's nothing to be gained by my talking to you!" And having said that, he walked off, to the left.

For a short time the old man was silent from surprise. Finally he said, "Who is the young man, Mira? He looks clever, but--"

"Hm, yes," replied Mira, "I'm the only one who knows who he is."

"And you play with him!"

"Who says so?"

"As a matter of fact I was listening to the two of you talking before and I wondered whether you were talking of love or fighting. But there is one thing certain, that young man has absolutely nothing to cling to."

"Indeed, he has longed for humanity for a long time."

"Longed for humanity? What do you mean?"

"In this age where can you find humanity?--I mean a humanity one can trust?"

"Indeed Mira, as an old man living in this age, I've often asked myself: Is the day of judgement near for this world? Everywhere there are disturbances; everywhere troubles, robberies, murders, as if there is no love left amongst humankind. There is suspicion between us all, while the world leaders shout of peace as they prepare for war. This all builds up worry in the world. But still, as an old man, I do have something to believe in--something we can all believe in--a belief in a God who is more powerful than any person. But that young man's lost all belief and that's very dangerous."

"But he still believes in something."

"What?"

"He believes in me."

"Believes in you? But, Mira, believing in you, believing in anyone, doesn't mean that you believe. Belief for man means belief in God, or at least belief in his Prophet."

"That's all right for you: what's wrong with his belief for him?"

"What's wrong with it? The most obvious thing is that you--yes, you, as a woman must obviously disappoint him."

"Who says so?"

"Do you love him?"

"Hm, what's love?"

The old man sighed. Having drunk his glass to its end, he said, "You're a very strange person, Mira: but there's no point in my puzzling over your strangeness. Enough, anyway! I won't cause you any more trouble."

And he stood up and paid his money.

"What trouble?" said Mira, "Do sit for a while."

"I wouldn't make that young man wait too long for a chance to talk to you again."

And so saying, the old man departed to the right.

For some moments after, it was quiet in front of the coffee shop. Mira sat behind the counter busily counting the money, and her mother (after washing the dirty glasses) sat nodding.

Once, twice, three times the old woman yawned. Finally she said, "I didn't sleep this afternoon, Mira, so I'm sleepy now."

"If you want to go to bed, go on," replied Mira. "If I need any help later on I'll wake you up."

Saying nothing more, Mira's old mother went through the door into the house and did not appear any further.

The clock in the distance could be heard striking eleven, and a little after the final chime Awal entered with the same staggering gait as before. And as before, when he reached the front of the shop, it was sometime before he sat on the bench, sat with his back to the counter.

"More white coffee, sir?" asked Mira.

"No, it doesn't matter," he replied.

"Go on, drink it, don't let it get cold."

"Hm," he replied, "you know I didn't come here for coffee."

"But this is a coffee shop, sir."

"That's for those clowns whose eyes are fixed on appearances."

"You mean you can't see all the things in front of me?"

"I came here to discuss our souls, Mira--that is our problem."

"But I have told you before there is no problem."

"You don't know what I want."

"I know."

"If you knew, you'd want to leave the shop."

"That's not necessary. Besides I can't leave my responsibilities."

For a moment Awal looked at Mira, sighed, then bowed his head. It was some time before he said, "Mira, you know that apart from yourself, people don't mean anything to me."

"I'm a waitress, my lord."

"You and your soul are different to the others."

"Enough, Sir. This is a coffee shop and there are people coming."

Two men, both of the same age as Awal, were coming--coming from the right. The man walking in front wore shorts and carried a camera: the other wore glasses and held a folio containing letters in his hand.

While they were still far from the shop, Mira greeted them from behind the counter with: "Good Evening, Mr. Photographer."

"Good evening, Mira," answered the man carrying the camera.

"How about it? Have you finished my picture?"

"I have, I have," answered Shorts, as he sat on the bench. "I've got it with me. But allow me to introduce my friend. He's a reporter."

And his friend, whom he referred to as a reporter, nodded at Mira. And Mira returned his nod from behind the counter, saying as she did so, "Please sit down."

"Thank you," said Glasses. And he sat down straightaway beside his friend.

The man who was called Mr. Photographer took out a photograph from his shirt pocket. Then he handed over the picture to Mira, and said, once Mira had looked at it, "Well? Satisfied with it?"

"Mm, yes," answered Mira. "Is this one mine?"

"Yes. You can keep it. I've made lots. And my friend has asked for one of them."

"What for?"

"This week," answered Glasses, "you might see your picture in my magazine."

"O! Am I as important as all that?"

"Why not?" answered Glasses.

"But you know the papers these days far prefer to use the pictures of important officials, of the great men they interview--"

"They far prefer to emphasize lay-about gossipers," added Awal, who had been sitting quietly listening. "Even if they just sound off for the sake of making a noise, so they can fill the pages of the newspapers."

Glasses looked at Awal. So did his friend. But Glasses soon turned back to Mira, saying as he did so, "therefore the magazine I edit will include your picture as one of the struggling masses."

"But what difference does it make if my picture is used?" asked Mira.

"O!" said Shorts. "Don't you realize, Mira, that you're very pretty?"

"Pretty? I know that better than anyone!"

"And don't you know, Mira," said Awal, "that when someone asks something from you these days, it's so as to make himself important. That's why he'd put your picture in his magazine."

Again Glasses looked at Awal and said, "Excuse me, friend, I don't believe we've been introduced."

"By just listening to your nonsense I know your soul," said Awal, "and that's enough for me--far more so than knowing your name or position."

"Friend!" said Glasses. "I feel that these are no longer times in which one can set one's-self up as a god; nor are they times in which one speaks in words which are a bit hard for others to understand."

"Who's setting himself up as a god?" returned Awal. "If people don't understand what I say then that's not because I set myself up as a god, but it is a sign that that person should lament for his soul. In our present society there are many people whose souls are dry and dusty. Many."

For a moment Glasses looked at his friend, and when his friend had returned his look, he turned to Mira and said:

"Well, Miss? Do you agree to my using your picture in my magazine?"

"How much will you pay me?" replied Mira.

"Goodness!" said Shorts. "You should not ask to be payed, Mira. You should be grateful."

"But suppose I have to pay," said Glasses. "How much would you want?"

"You certainly couldn't afford it."

"Why not? How much is it?"

"Would you pay 1,000 rupiah?"

Glasses laughed. "Miss," he said, "where in the world would you find a magazine that would pay that much just to include a photograph? Even famous film stars, lots of them, give their pictures to the magazine, just like that."

"But I'm not a film star and I don't want to be compared to one."

"Therefore--" interrupted Shorts.

"Therefore I want to be paid a lot!" said Mira.

"It's like this, Miss," said Glasses. "I would like you to understand that the magazine I edit belongs to the people themselves. If you were aware of the demands of the age, and conscious of the responsibilities of the race, why shouldn't we work together for the race and the motherland we love . . ."

"Work together! The motherland we love!" said Awal, standing. "Come on! What next! Why don't you say the motherland is beautiful and glorious too? That sounds even better!"

"I'm not speaking to you, friend."

"In the name of Mira. I ask that you speak the truth, speak like a human being, not just for the sake of making a noise," added Awal. "It's true this is a coffee shop. But look! The person sitting behind the counter is human! Not a puppet or a rubbish tin into which you can throw any old words, just as long as you say something."

"Who else? Huh, not even aware of the nonsense which comes from his own narrow soul! Don't you think that what you've been saying hasn't appeared to your listeners as nonsense? Do you think that this person whom you've tried to get to talk to you has the same sort of world as you have--with your crowded, narrow soul, which only contains nonsense?"

Once again Glasses looked at his friend. After that, once his friend had returned his look, he stood up, saying to Mira, "Miss, we'll come back some other time."

"Won't you have something to drink before you go?" asked Mira.

"No thank you," he replied, and he gestured to his friend to invite him to leave the shop.

His friend stood up. As he walked off the right, following his friend, he said, "Good night, Mira, see you later."

"Good night," replied Mira.

"Hm," said Awal after the two had left, "only clowns come here."

"Therefore," said Mira, "You'd better stay home. This is a coffee shop."

"But as long as I cannot take you, I will not leave."

"That's torturing yourself. You'll catch a chill."

"What do *I* mean, if there is someone else to whom I can surrender my trust?"

"Oh, do you feel a necessity to trust someone else?"

"Mira! As long as women are born into the world to become man's companion for life, so long must I, and need I work to surrender my trust to someone else who will be my partner. And it is now clear that you, with your world which is not narrow, are the humanity I have searched for so long."

"I'm a waitress, my lord!"

"You with your soul full of life, are the fusion of the beauty of heaven I dream of and the bitterness of this earth which I feel. You are the manifestation of the ultimate woman."

"Oh, you know how to flatter? But who can believe that there are people in the world now who love other people more than they love themselves?"

"Who does believe that? You don't. I don't! But for your sake, I'll try."

"But you'd better go home now. My mother is asleep and I'll have to close the shop soon."

"If you close the shop I'll take you with me. And if you will not go then you'll have to lock me in the shop too."

"That's impossible."

"If not, then don't shut the shop!"

"So you're going to torture others too? Torture me? Is that what you'd do to try to show that you love others more than yourself?"

Awal did not reply. And because he did not, Mira added, from behind the counter, "Is that how you show your love? How you show your difference from those you yourself call clowns?"

And because Awal, who sat with his back to the counter, still said nothing, Mira added more firmly, "I know, sir, I know that what I am about to say will hurt you, hurt far more than my past silence, but I have to say it, if for no other reason than that you should know what I think of you."

And she looked at Awal again, and when Awal, under her gaze, said nothing, did not move, she said in a more confident tone, "Sir, your

actions here have proved you more of a clown than those people you yourself call clowns. You've condemned them, yet you've lain crawling at their feet. You are the greatest clown; you've nothing to hold on to. You've lost all belief in yourself. And yet, these days, there is nothing one can believe in but one's self--there isn't. I assure you, there isn't!"

Awal remained quiet and unmoving. Then suddenly he smiled--smiled bitterly--and said, "If that's what you say, then I know now that, as far as I'm concerned, you are a coffee shop waitress after all!"

And he stood, saying, "Good-bye, Mira!"

"Why good-bye?" asked Mira.

"I shall not return again. Neither to you nor to anyone else at all."

"Hm, are you running away to kill yourself? Why don't you kill me too?"

"Because I am a human being, not a clown!"

And having said that, he began to walk away.

But Mira, whom he was leaving, quickly continued, "Wait a minute, I haven't finished talking yet."

"Stop it Mira! We've talked too much already; it is quite clear that as long as you are not me, you cannot possibly understand me; as long as your world is not my world, you cannot possibly know what is hidden in the recesses of my heart. Previously I believed that although I felt everything to be meaningless I might still find love in your heart, a human love which sympathizes with the feelings of its lover. But such a love as that obviously is not to be found in anyone's heart. Not in the heart of any person alive today. Certainly not in your heart!"

And having said that, he moved to go--moved to leave the shop.

But Mira, whom he would have left, quickly added, "If you kill yourself, I will kill myself, I will kill myself too!"

Awal stopped for a moment and asked, turning to look at her, "What? You, a waitress, kill yourself?"

"I love you," answered Mira, and added as she wiped at her eyes, "love you with my whole body and soul."

And because Awal did not answer, she added more insistently, "I love you, but I do not believe that your love for me could overcome your love for yourself. NO! I don't believe it. I do not believe it!"

Awal, who was about to leave the shop, was startled. Finally he moved closer to her and said, "So you still accuse me of being the same as those people who talk nonsense in your company?"

"If you love me," answered Mira, "kill me! Kill me with the whole force of your love."

"You're mad! I loved you because I had hopes, because I wanted to live together with you."

"No! You and I must die. Die together. Because I do not believe you and I could live together. I don't believe you could love me more than you love yourself."

Awal was silent--startled. Then suddenly he said in a beseeching voice, "Mira, let us leave the shop. We can talk in the open air, underneath the starlight."

"It would be nice to talk in the starlight," Mira replied.

"Yes, let's go there."

"But I cannot leave my responsibilities as a waitress."

Immediately Awal stiffened from his beseeching and, clenching his fists, he said in a fierce voice, "Mira! It seems that I have to destroy the shop. Destroy it to prove that in my eyes you are not a waitress!"

"My lord," answered Mira, "don't try to build up hope in my heart by talking about impossibilities. This shop is my world--and the shop is strong whilst you are weak."

"Tell me then that I can only take you from here if I destroy the shop!"

"You haven't got the strength for that. And if you were to say that you wanted to take me away from here by destroying the shop then you would be talking nonsense. Nonsense like ordinary people talk."

"Tell me, you don't believe me!"

"How can I believe, if there is nothing in this world in which I can believe?"

Awal did not reply. His clenched hands were stretched out towards the table and the counter which separated him from Mira. Then they shook at the table and the counter, tore at them and lifted them.

"That's enough, sir," said Mira, "you'll catch a chill."

But Awal kept tearing at the table and the counter. Exerting his strength, and continuing to exert his strength, before he began to gasp for breath.

"Enough, sir, enough," said Mira, wiping her eyes. "You'll tire yourself out."

But it was as if Awal had not heard. He kept on exerting himself and exerting himself.

Finally the table and the counter in front of Mira were demolished. But the demolisher fell, his hands bloody. And when he stood again, he swayed breathing heavily: "Come--go come on, Mira," he said brokenly, "ou--outside."

Mira stood and walked out of the shop to Awal--walked with crutches under both her arms.

And when he saw that, the heavy breathing Awal fell back. His bloody hands grasped his head. His bright eyes shone.

"Oh - - - !" he said, almost inaudibly. And he fell back again. Moved back with a swaying gait as if about to topple.

"Yes, sir," said Mira, wiping the tears on her cheeks. "This is my reality. My amputated legs--amputated because of the war. But because of this, sir, because above I was beautiful and below I was deformed, I was always a riddle to you. But now--"

The thin-bodied Awal moved further back--and further. His trembling, bloody hands pointed at her--his mouth gaped.

"Mi - - -" he said almost inaudibly.

Then suddenly his voice broke into a scream: "Mi - - - Miraaa!"

And as he screamed he fell face downwards.

Quickly Mira moved to him. She embraced his thin body. And said sobbing, "I believe, sir, I believe--"

And then, in front of the shop, there was silence. Only the sounds of Mira's sobbing could be heard.