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An alternative reading of Sanusi Panes Sadjak

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KORTE MEDEDELINGEN

AN ALTERNATIVE READING OF SANUSI PANE'S "SADJAK"

Dimana harga karangan sadjak,
Bukanlah dalam maksud isinja,
Dalam bentuk, kata nan rantjak
Ditjari timbang dengan pilihnja.

Tanja pertama keluar dihati,
Setelah sadjak dibatja tamat,
Sehingga mana tersebut sakti,
Mengikat diri didalam hikmat.

Rasa budjangga waktu menjusun
Kata jang datang berdujun-dujun
Dari dalam, bukan nan ditjari

Harus kembali dalam pembatja.
Sebagai bajang dimuka katja.
Harus bergontjang hati nurani.

"Sadjak", from the collection *Puspa Mega*, is regularly cited by critics as illustrating Sanusi Pane's poetic creed.¹ The poem, it is claimed, stresses the priority of form over content. As Drs. J. U. Nasution has put it:

The value of a poem in (Sanusi Pane's) view rested in form, in beautiful words or in his own term "*kata nan rantjak*". So we should not be surprised if we feel him at this period brutally forcing beautiful words in his poems. Take for example the above poem. To find a rhyme for "*sadjak*" he had to search around for the appropriate word: "*nan rantjak*" although that is from the Minangkabau and not Indonesian. Because he had to exert himself to find beautiful form and the choicest words to give the highest possible worth to his poems, the result is often the opposite.²

This interpretation is based on the first stanza, which is usually translated as Dr. Burton Raffel does: "Whatever a poem is worth/ It

¹ The phrase is from A. Teeuw, *Modern Indonesian Literature* (The Hague 1967), p. 21. (Teeuw has *bukan* instead of *bukanlah* as the opening of the second line: so does Rosidi, below.)

² *Sanusi Pane* (Djakarta 1963), p. 31.

isn't for what it tries to say,/ It's in the beautiful strings of words,/ All balanced, each weighed."³ I should like to suggest an alternative reading of the poem.

The conventional reading, it seems to me, depends entirely on separating the third line of the poem from the second. (Sdr. Ajip Rosidi, in fact, uses a semi-colon in his printing of these lines.⁴) "Not", as Prof. A. Teeuw translates, "in its aims and content, *But* in the form, the fine words ..."

To read the *bukanlah* as governing both lines, separated in the original by a comma, gives the reverse of the usual reading: the worth of a poem lies neither in its contents nor in its form. For, if we are to follow the first three lines of the sestet, the poet, the real poet, does not search for words; they come crowding in upon him, arising spontaneously from within, and he merely has to arrange them on paper.⁵ The use of *kata nan rantjak* is ironic.

The second stanza repeats, scarcely elaborates, the question of the first: where does the magic woven by a poem arise from, the magic which binds us in the spell of the poem? (Nasution is correct in that the poem is verbose, interesting doctrinally but not poetically.)

The sestet answers the question. The *rasa*, or emotion, of the poet must, for the poem to have validity, be recreated in the reader, so that his emotional state as a response to the poem is the mirror image of the poet's in composition. The last line is unintegrated into the rest of the poem but repeats that the reader must be moved. The worth of the poem rests not in form or content but in emotional communication between writer and reader.

If this is so, then there is no advancement in Sanusi Pane's ideas on poetry in the second poem entitled "Sadjak", in the collection *Madah Kelana*:

O, bukannya dalam kata jang rantjak,
Kata jang pelik kebagusan sadjak.
O, pudjangga, buang segala kata,
Jang 'kan tjuma mempermainkan mata,
Dan hanja dibatja selintas lalu,
Karena ta' keluar dari sukmanu.

Seperti matahari mentjintai bumi,
Memberi sinar selama-lamanja,
Tidak meminta sesuatu kembali,
Harus tjintamu senantiasa.

³ *The Development of Modern Indonesian Poetry* (New York 1967), pp. 44-45.

⁴ *Ichtiisar Sedjarah Sastra Indonesia* (Bandung 1969), p. 32.

⁵ The doctrine was still common when Chairil Anwar was writing and he has described the faith of a group of writers in "the sudden, overwhelming desire to create. Inspiration!", commenting "So far, quite true! I agree!". But he disagreed when they continued, "We must trust, put it all down on paper. And ... there you are, finished!" calling their work "half-formed", "half-hearted" and rushed. See H. B. Jassin, *Chairil Anwar* (Jakarta 1968), pp. 128 and 136, and p. 141 ("Art is *conscious creation* from thought and feeling").

The beauty of a poem is (still) not in the use of words alone, but in the communication of that which arises from the poet's soul (*sukma*) and is expressed in a way which attracts more than passing interest. If the quatrain has any connection with the sestet, it is that the emotional traffic between writer and reader is one-way: the poet never knows how anyone reacts to his poems, but he must still keep on giving of himself to the world.

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WAWELAAR EN VAN DAVELAAR

In zijn gedenkrede ter gelegenheid van de honderdste verjaardag van het verschijnen van de roman "Max Havelaar" van E. Douwes Dekker (Multatuli)¹ heeft Dr. R. P. Meijer (thans hoogleraar te Londen) interessante denkbeelden ontwikkeld aangaande de structuur van deze vermaarde roman. In het bijzonder heeft hij gewezen op de overeenstemming in de namen van Max Havelaar en Ds. Wawelaar.² Voorts zijn zij elkanders antipoden: beiden houden een redevoering met "liefde" als hoofdthema; terwijl in Havelaars "Rede tot de Hoofden van Lebak" ware naastenliefde, in het bijzonder jegens de Javaanse medemens wordt beleden, houdt Wawelaars "liefde" in feite slechts haat in tegenover diezelfde Javaan. Wawelaar preekt in de "Tale Kanaans"; Havelaars betoog is doortrokken van de ware Bijbelse gloed van de Profeten. Tenslotte wijst Dr. Meijer nog op de etymologische implicaties van de naam "Wawelaar" die met "wawelen" of "wouwelen" zou samenhangen.

Tot zover ongeveer Dr. Meijer. Het bovenstaande zou geen aanleiding tot commentaar mijnerzijds geven, als niet in de Almanak en Naamregister voor Nederlandsch Indië van 1862³ (oudere heb ik hier niet ter beschikking) als President van de "Kerkeraad der Protestantse Gemeente te Batavia" wordt genoemd: Ds. A. van Davelaar over wie mij helaas verder niets bekend is geworden. De "Almanak" bevat over het algemeen informatie over het voorafgaande jaar, in dit geval dus over 1861. De Max Havelaar verscheen voor het eerst in 1860 en het lijkt mij buitengewoon onwaarschijnlijk (a) dat Douwes Dekker niet op de hoogte zou zijn van de naam van Batavia's hoofdpredikant in die jaren en (b) dat, mocht hij er inderdaad niet van op de hoogte zijn

¹ Dr. R. P. Meijer: *Max Havelaar 1860—1960*. A commemorative address delivered at a Public Meeting of the Netherlands Cultural Committee in the University of Melbourne on 19th May 1960, Melbourne University Press, Parkville N.2, Victoria (Australia).

² o.c., blz. 15, 16.

³ blz. 391.