

Phew! Europeesche beschaving!

Marco Kartodikromo's *Student Hidjo*

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On the last page of *Student Hidjo* (Student Green, 1919) everything is in apparent stability and peace. *Tata tentrem*, its author, Marco Kartodikromo, would have called it in his journalistic work :

Two years have passed.

Green is married to Dame Violet, and he is living happily as the district-attorney in Djarak. Wardojo is the Regent in Djarak, replacing his daddy, and he too is living in peace in the regency, with Dame Blue.

Walter returned from his leave and is the assistant-resident in Djarak and he has a wife, Betje ; and schoolteacher Miss Jet Roos is married to Administrator Boeren, the close friend of Willem Walter and they have their homes in Djarak.

[Doea tahoen jang telah laloe.

Hidjo telah kawin dengan R. A. Woengoe, dan hidoep senang mendjadi Djaksa di Djarak.

Wardojo soedah djadi Regent di Djarak, mengganti Papanja, poen dia hidoep roekoen didalam kabupaten dengan R. A. Biroe.

Walter soedah kembali dari verlof mendjadi Assistent Resident di Djarak dan telah mempoenja istri, jaitoe : Betje, dan Onderwijzeres nonah Jet Roos telah berkawin dengan Administrateur Boeren sobat karibnja Willem Walter dan sama bertempat tinggal di Djarak]

Evidently, happiness and peace are reserved for the Javanese protagonists only. The Dutch are described as merely having their homes in Djarak ; we could wonder how peaceful and happy these homes will be beyond the novel's last page, and for how long the stability and peace which these last words of *Student Hidjo* evoke will be retained. After all, tensions were brewing in the land of Java in the second decade of the 20th century, the years *Student Hidjo* was written and the tale's finale is cast.

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Djarak seems to refer to an imaginary place. Malay dictionaries tell us that the word *djarak* refers to the word “distance,” and to call the place of stability and peace “Distance” is an effective way of intimating fantasy, fiction, allegory. A faraway place beyond the words of the novel, so to speak. A peaceful and pastoral Distance from brewing Reality, that is, which in *Student Hidjo* is represented by the city of Solo. Solo is the residence of Student Green and his parents. Solo was also the domicile of Mas Marco himself, the cradle of activities that were meant to make people equal in Marco’s real-life world as well as in the protagonists’ world of words. Fact and fiction are subtly intertwined: Student Hidjo’s time and world are historical as well as fictional, pointing forwards to an as yet unknown future and pointing backwards to the uneasy cohabitation of Javanese and Dutch citizens, or rather of Javanese en Dutch rulers. Where is the peace, where is the tension? Is the tale really finished?

The very names of the main protagonists of *Student Hidjo*—those who will live happily ever after in Distance beyond the tale’s last page—lend themselves to an allegorical reading as well. Green (Hidjo), Violet (Woengoe), and Blue (Biroe): we could wonder whom or what Mas Marco had in mind when using these names of color. Maybe just to indicate that these three are linked together as opposed to the others; color as opposed to colorless, or beauty as opposed to profit, or fiction as opposed to reality—and thus, maybe, products of authorship versus products of journalism. Or maybe nothing but yet another teaser that may have made readers laugh as much as the place-name of Djarak should have made them smile. Out of unease, out of anxiety. Did the adventures of Student Green really take place, like the other stories and reports in *Sinar Hindia*, the newspaper in which *Student Hidjo* was initially published in 1918? Or should *Student Green* be read as a fiction (*karangan*), as an extended simile (*peroempaan*), the terms Marco Kartodikromo himself used to characterize his tales?

Of course there is plenty of reason to laugh, for the readers as much as for the protagonists, right from the beginning. *Student Hidjo* is an intriguing novel. Because of its language and its bumpy narrative line. Because of its explicit rejection of Holland—and yet not quite. Because of its claim that all people are equal—but not yet quite. And because of the manifest longing for order.

Student Hidjo (Student Green) is the story of a bookwormish and quiet youngster, named Hidjo, son of a rich merchant, living in Solo, Central Java. He is engaged with his cousin Raden Adjeng Biroe (Dame Blue), and his parents have great plans for him: he is to become an active member of the Javanese *priyai* (upper) class of administrators. To that intent, his father sends him to Holland for an academic education and to become an engineer. In The Hague, Green soon starts a passionate affair with his landlord’s daughter, Betje; he neglects his studies and feels strongly attracted to European civilization. Meanwhile in Java, his fiancée, Dame Blue, becomes close friends with Raden Adjeng Woengoe (Dame Violet), an acquaintance of Green, and Wardoyo, Dame Violet’s

brother. The two girls and the boy write letters to Green about their enjoyable life in Java, and they make him decide that life in Holland is not good for him.

Meanwhile, his parents decide that Dame Violet is a more appropriate partner for their son than Dame Blue; they call him back to Solo, happily brimming with Sarekat Islam activities. Hidjo, all too willing to obey parental orders, leaves Betje and returns to Java; there he attends the festive Sarekat Islam rallies in Solo and marries Raden Adjeng Woengoe.

This storyline is tenuously complemented and subverted by the experiences of Willem Walter, a Dutch civil servant in Java who is engaged with schoolteacher Jet Roos. Walter falls in love with Dame Violet, and is rejected.

Meanwhile, he receives letters from Miss Roos telling him that she is pregnant. While Miss Roos decides to have an abortion, Willem Walter decides to leave Java; he travels to The Hague where he meets Hidjo. Eventually he settles in Java, married with Betje.

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Mas Marco Kartodikromo (1890–1932) was a journalist who operated from the heartland of Java, trying to bring about changes in Javanese society from within. Just like most of his colleagues, he preferred Malay to Javanese, or to any other local language for that matter. Malay was the language of novelty, he felt, and of excitement; in Malay the values and ideas that held the land of Java in an ossifying grip, could be challenged—and as it turned out, there was a public for Malay publications. Like most of his colleagues, he must have been driven by a mixture of motives that were, no doubt, as hard to disentangle for himself as they are for us: adventurism, idealism, a lust for money, a desire to be famous were competing for priority—and on top of all that: mere anger about Authority. Mas Marco was, it seems, primarily inspired by dreams and ideals. He wanted to have contact with his readers and his fellow-writers as much as he wanted them to have contacts among themselves so that a new community of people, no matter how small in number, would be created whose Malay voice could be heard by natives and Europeans alike. A community of individuals who made each other aware of evils and abuses in Hindia through print and discussions. Of individuals who were willing to actively do something about the abuses and evils in the land of Java. In the name of solidarity and equality (*"sama rata sama rasa"* is the phrase Marco coined) or of any other ideology, for that matter. The life of the local population should be improved.

Marco started his career in Bandoeng, as an apprentice at Tirta Adisoerjo's journal *Medan Prijaji*—"the voice for all rulers, aristocrats, and intellectuals, prijaji, native merchants and officials as well as merchants of other subordinated people with a status that is equal to the children of the land all over Hindia Belanda" as the journal's subtitle has it. Tried and tested in Tirta's hectic enterprise, in 1912 he moved to Solo where he became an editor of *Sarotomo*, the mouthpiece of the recently founded Sarekat Islam, an association that was set up in an effort to defend the commercial interests of native

traders in Central Java. Next to his journalistic work, he ran the Solo office of Sarekat Islam and organized rallies and meetings [Shiraishi 1990 : 56]. His life was not exactly easy, but Marco had a lot of energy and ire, like so many of his colleagues. Within a couple of years after its foundation, the Sarekat Islam had been made a mass movement which alarmed colonial authorities because of the strong appeal it turned out to have for the little man; its sudden emergence forced Batavia to rethink its policy towards “the natives” once again.

Still trying to keep Sarotomo alive against all odds, Marco founded the Inlandse Journalisten Bond (Union of Native Journalists) in Solo in 1914. The Bond may not have many more members than he himself and his closest associates but operating in the spirit of his militant mentor, Tirto Adisoerjo, it served at least as a pretext for starting *Doenia Bergerak* (The world is in motion) as the Union's journal.

“The world is in motion” published articles, letters, essays, by Mas Marco himself, by his close friends, and by companions in distant places like Bekasi, Semarang and Madioen who were fully aware they were forging an alliance that went beyond the boundaries of family and village. Admonitions, complaints, instructions, they were published rather indiscriminately, so it seems. *Doenia Bergerak* indeed helped to keep the conversations and discussions going in Central Java—and often enough, the editor could not refrain from inserting his own remarks in the writings of others, as challenges, as reminders, as conspiratorial advices.

A good example is the following piece in *Doenia Bergerak* 12, written by someone in Besoeki who called himself Catharysman. An unusual name indeed, but then, these were the days of pen-names and pseudonyms; as though Malay writings were composed by masks, as though Malay did not have an origin, a source in reality. In lively and witty Malay, Catharysman tentatively defines the power of the press, denounces the Government, and challenges the newspaper's editor—and naturally Mas Marco cannot refrain from replying :

Ingatlah : soerat kabar itoe soeatoe sendjata jang paling tadjam. Djika memang masih ada apa-apa haknja toean 2 jang masih selaloe dirintangi, moeatlah didalam soerat kabar, dan tjariilah goetji-goetji wasiatnja, simpan dengan baik-baik. Inilah soeatoe sendjata bagi journalist. Soerat kabar tiada dibawah pengaroenja orang besar, orang kaya, bangsawan dan lain-lain sebagainja, tetapi dibawah pengaroenja kebenaran. Dan djika ada soerat kabar jang ta'soeka mendjadi pengaroenja kebenaran, kami bilang teroes terang, redacteurnja, redacteur gedjos, ontjom. Apa toean Marco ta'maoe mendjadi atau ta'berani moeatkan karangan jang mengand-oeng kebenaran? Kalau ta'maoe, njata sekali toean Marco Radacteur gedjos, atau journalist likken. . . . ternjata ia soedi menoentoen kaoem bodo. Apa journalist itoe takoet kalau terkena persdelict? Boekan journalist sebeloem pernah naik tangga gedoeng Raad van Justitie. Bagaimana perasaan toean Marco? (boeat kami sendiri, selama kami misih soeka bergelar redacteur, kami tentoe melakoekan koewadjiban kami itu sakit t/m mati. Kalau ta'salah

Journalist itoe haroes (mesti) brani mati, asal sadja patinja itoe tondjo berpaedah oentoek si tertindes. Tetapi apakah kami berani mati? Beloem karoean. Red.).

[Remember : a newspaper is a very sharp weapon indeed. Really, if you still have some right which is constantly thwarted, please publish about it in the newspaper, look for its secret and preserve it well. This is a weapon for a journalist. Newspapers are not under the influence of big people, rich people, aristocrats and the like, but under the influence of the truth. And if there is a newspaper that does not like to be the influence of truth then—and we say this straight—its editor is a driveller, a piece of cake. Is Mister Marco not willing or not brave enough to publish a writing that contains the truth? If he is not, then it is clear that Mister Marco is a driveller, a sucker of a journalist. . . . as it turns out he is willing to guide ignorant people. Is this journalist afraid of being hit by a press delict? Has not any journalist ever climbed the stairs of the building of a Court of Justice? What does Mister Marco think? (As for us ourselves, as long as we want to be called editor, of course we will perform our duties, from pain to death. If we are not mistaken, a Journalist needs (should have) the courage to die, if only its core is a fight that is useful for the oppressed. But do we have the courage to die? Not yet for sure! Ed.]

Marco Kartodikromo was visible, not to say audible in his newspaper. He did not hide his opinions. He teased his readers, and invited them to join him in criticizing colonial authorities for their mismanagement and caprice. Combining his journalistic work with other activities, his voice ran into his writings as much as his writings ran into his voice. He gave speeches and talks, wrote tales, and encouraged people to resist injustice and oppression. And did he ever love the excitement of being seen in his Western dress!

We are talking about 1914, about a world in motion, so effectively evoked in Shiraishi's book that mainly deals with the land of Java—and Java was the world of Mas Marco. It was a world in which the Indies government's policy of expansion, efficiency, and welfare could not but collide with local individuals who wanted to have a say in that policy, too, and called up other locals to join forces, confront the Regeering, and call it to task whenever necessary. These were the days when the individual voice was not yet supposed to be in tune with anonymous and faceless Parties, with demands of common action, and when exemplary deeds of the individual satria (knight) were more relevant and better conceivable than workers' strikes and politicians' actions. These were the days when individuals tried to set new ideas and dreams into motion in order to transform Javanese and Hindian society and work towards a new order to be achieved in the far distance. They were having a hard time in finding a place to express themselves, and the story of Mas Marco is exemplary for the story of most of these individuals who challenged surveillance and intimidation in a diffident way. Also in Marco's career, one newspaper followed the other. *Medan Prijaji*, *Sarotomo*, *Doenia Bergerak*, *Pantjaran Warta*, *Soera Tamtomo*, *Persatoean Hindia*, *Sinar Hindia*, *Sinar Djawa* : each of them was a new

attempt to create a locus of stability, a form of activity that produced a point of social belonging as much as an ideological allegiance. Each of them was a kernel of resistance against colonial rule and capitalist manipulation—and each of them had difficulties to survive. Sarekat Islam may have set Java into motion, but in a land full of illiterates, printed materials were not the best tool to keep that motion continuously going. Rallies, demonstrations, and strikes were needed, as well as rumors, slander and gossip. The experiences of bankruptcy, bans, shutdowns must have been exhausting and often disillusioning, yet to his bitter end Mas Marco continued his battle against the tranquility and order the Dutch tried to impose.

And at the time the writer Takdir Alisjahbana, fascinated by European culture, launched his ideas about “literature” and “tendenz” under the safe aegis of colonial benevolence as if he was the first one who expressed them in Malay, Marco Kartodikromo died in his place of exile, Boven-Digoel, silenced and pushed aside by those very same colonial authorities.

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In the very first issue of *Doenia Bergerak*, Marco launches a scathing attack on Dr. R. A. Rinkes, a member of the so-called “Welvaarts commissie,” a commission that had been given the task to make a survey of the socio-economic situation of the population of Java so as to enable colonial authorities to implement their ideas about welfare and well-being. It is an interesting piece of writing because it is so virulent and witty in form. Surely Marco wanted to be heard.

His Excellency Dr. Rinkes and all the members of the Welfare Commission love us Natives dearly. What is more dearly loved : one's own body or the bodies of other people ?! I trust that the W. C. members do love the little people but still, they love themselves far more. Marco also loves himself very much and that is why he keeps on shouting because if his shouts are fulfilled, he too will share in the (general) happiness. [cf. Shiraishi 1990 : 83]

At the time, Rinkes was the Government's Advisor of Native Affairs, and in that function he informed and advised the Government in matters concerning activities among the native population. By attacking the authoritative advisor so bashfully, Marco had a safe guarantee of being carefully and annoyedly followed. A challenge, a provocation that asked for a reaction.

It was the same Rinkes who in 1917 was appointed Head of the Office for People's Reading (Bureau voor de Volkslectuur, soon renamed Balai Poestaka) in Batavia. In that function he succeeded in engaging the Indies' Government to play a more active role in the transformations that were taking place in Malay writing. From then on, the Government did more than just ban certain Malay writings (Marco's among them) by making an appeal to the Law ; it also actively developed politically correct alternatives by making an appeal to Authority, in two self-fulfilling movements. By actively entering

the field of Malay, Rinkes' Office became a key player in a hotly contested arena—what is Malay? what can be said in Malay? what should be said in Malay?—and it succeeded in assuring itself a pivotal place in the formation of a new form of Malay writing that some ten years later was given a distinct name: *kesoesasteraan* (literature). Wishful forgetting and shrewd suppression became predominant; little or no space was left for the confrontational form of writing Marco had been exploring in such a playful and bumpy manner.

Rinkes was Marco's target, but of course the editor of "The world is in motion" could not refrain from making himself very visible, as well; in that speedy and sparkling style of his he wrote:

How about Marco? What sort of person is he? Marco is a person from the class of little people. He never stepped through a school door. His views are not broad. Etc. etc. Nonetheless, by the ordaining of the one and only God, Marco has been given two ears, two hands, one head, one mouth etc.—just like most people. Marco's two eyes are not different from the two eyes of a graduate from an Universiteit. If Marco sees something white, no doubt that something also appears white in the eyes of the educated. And so on. And so forth. [cf. Shiraishi 1990: 83].

The Dutch called him "crazy" in their reports from Central Java; Rinkes and his colleagues were determined to keep him under careful surveillance. Marco was dubbed a dangerous man who, in his craziness, could create a lot of unrest among the local population. The children of the land were apparently more tolerant to the eccentricities of this young man, a typical representative of the *kaum moeda*, a new type of personality in the Indies with which most colonial officials had been familiar since Abdul Rivai's descriptions in his *Bintang Hindia*, obligatory reading for all civil servants, in 1905, some ten years before [cf. Poeze 1989: 94–95]. European educated they were, more or less knowledgeable about events in the world, frustrated by the way the colonial state was closing in on its citizens, and trying to find ways to get out of Dutch surveillance and be accepted as full citizens, as equals in the land of Hindia.

In *Student Hidjo*, the *kaoem moeda* are simply described as "those who understand Dutch" (*jang mengerti Bahasa Belanda*)—and they show this understanding not only in their conversations—a mixture of Malay, Javanese and Dutch, witty and not seldom carried by spleen—but also in their actions: they drink limonade, hold hands in public, read books and join in, or at least sympathize with the motion in Javanese society, embodied in the Sarekat Islam. "Noblemen of the Solo palace, merchants, government prijaji, and private persons, they all show their love for one another. Because of the influence of the Sarekat Islam, there is no difference among people in this time and age, people of high rank and people of low rank, they all recognize one another as brothers and sisters" [Marco 1919: 99].

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Doenia Bergerak : its language was Malay as was the case in most periodicals of the time. Malay was the language of youth and modernity, of newness and experiment, and the forms of Malay that were used on Java in writing and printing were leaning on the Malay that was spoken in the urban centres of Batavia, Semarang, Solo, Soerabaja rather than on the written forms that were preserved in manuscripts in the Malay heartland. Like most other activists, Mas Marco chose a linguistic exile, away from Javanese with its coldly hierarchical rigidity ; he preferred to stay closer to the language spoken in the multi-ethnic streets of Semarang and Solo, but also closer to what he considered the spirit of Dutch (“di dalam bahasa itoe hanjalah sedikit sekali bedanja tinggi dan rendah,” tells the pamphlet in *Student Hidjo* : “in that language there is hardly a difference between high and low”). By choosing Malay as his vehicle of communication, like so many others, he made a contribution to the reshaping of discourse in the Indies : Malay was increasingly accepted as the language of motion and movement, accessible as it was to Europeans, Chinese, Eurasians and natives alike. It was used to show the locals how a new world could be created, but also in order to be clearly heard by their Dutch surveillors and invite them to join the conversation.

Printed materials in Malay may have competed with manuscripts for attention ever since missionaries had become active in the Indies in the 17th century ; the victory of print over pen, however, had not started until the early 1880s. At that time elements transmitted through manuscripts and storytellers were gradually shouted down by the new elements, new forms, new dictions that were created by those who, unfamiliar with manuscript writing, took up what they heard in the streets of Batavia, Semarang, Solo, and Soerabaja and used it as the starting point in new forms of writing.

Doenia Bergerak explored the limits and possibilities of flexibility of Malay and its capacity to assimilate elements from other discursive formations. The paper smells like the vernacular of urban centres, full of rumors, gossip and tales “that had really taking place.” Printed in Latin script like all new forms of Malay in the Indies, it is interspersed with words and phrases from Javanese, Dutch and other European languages ; even Javanese sentences in Javanese script can be found in its pages which look more like illustrations than like attempts to attract Javanese readers. The language is witty, speedy, and sharp. The tales and reports about injustice, the complaints about bizarre Dutch rules and regulations, the anger about injustices of the colonial system make exciting reading, then and now. To its contemporaries it sounded like the “Malay” they heard around them, and they must have felt thrilled to join in. To us, some eighty years later, it reads refreshing against the background of the strongly standardized and stilted Malay/Indonesian we have become used to ; if anything, it should make us aware of the vitality Malay had so long as language engineering had not effectively taken control over it in the name of progress and order.

Reading through the pages of *The world is in motion*—and through the pages of *Student Green*, for that matter—it becomes clear that Mas Marco himself loved to play with Malay, a language which for him, the Javanese, lacked a center of authority. He tried out words, phrases, scenes that had never been used in Malay writing before; he could care less, so it seems, about the rules of spelling and grammar which the Dutch were trying to impose in the name of order and intelligibility, about what he was allowed to say or not. There is nothing of the sadness that was to pervade the writings of later wordsmiths like Armijn Pane and Hamka; there is just the enjoyment, the excitement, the thrill. Obviously, the author bubbled with anger—and the colonial officials wrote reports full of words of worry about him.

Being a journalist must have been a strange adventure at the time. Due to a limited circulation and defaulting subscribers, newspapers were constantly on the verge of bankruptcy. Competition, greed, arrogance, and personal feuds wrecked the as yet small group of people who—writers, journalists and activists at once—often fought bitter conflicts about strategy, policy, and money. Moreover, the Government in Batavia was cautiously following whatever appeared in print, anxiously deliberating how to get the spirit in the bottle again.

By labeling those who wanted to break Java open and make connections with the outside world as “criminals,” the Government could bring them at will to court for a offense against the press code. The “Law” was there—and it was to Authority to decide when to apply it, when to define “difference” and “other.” “He who by way of words, or by signs or performances or in any other way raises or increases the feelings of hostility, hate or contempt among the various groups of Dutch subjects or inhabitants of the Dutch Indies, will be punished, from an imprisonment of six days to five years/forced labor without chains of at most five years” [hij die door woorden of door teekens of vertooningen of op andere wijze gevoelens van vijandschap, haat of minachting tusschen verschillende groepen van Nederlandsche onderdanen of van ingezetenen van Nederlandsch-Indië opwekt of bevordert, wordt gestraft met gevangenisstraf van zes dagen tot vijf jaren/dwangarbeid buiten den ketting van ten hoogste vijf jaren] as the original formula ran.

Cautious and law-abiding officials subsequently changed the wording of the Law; its tone, however, remained the same. The Law was meant to sow fear; in some, it created diffidence instead. It may have intended to intimidate; in some, it created insolence instead. How seriously these admonitions and protests in Malay should be taken was to remain a point of continuous discussion among the highest officials of the Dutch Indies Government; sowing insecurity and anxiety the zig-zag policy of repression and freedom towards those who could at any time be accused of sowing hate among the population may have been more effective than a systematic clampdown could ever be in. The Haatzaai-artikelen were designed to stop people from sowing hate; if anything they sowed hate themselves.

Marco knew he was carefully followed. For him, the only question was when “they” would catch him. He was spiritually and mentally prepared, by picturing himself as a Javanese satria, a knight who, “searching the purpose in his heart” as Marco was to define him, was willing to sacrifice himself unconditionally, bones and marrow, for the good of the “nation” [Shiraishi 1990 : 85 sqq]. The image of the satria was to remain a recurrent one in Malay writing ever since, used by writers and politicians alike to vindicate their dedication to the nation.

But then, what was the nation? What was a *bangsa*? Apparently, Marco himself did not have a clear idea about “the Indies,” let alone of “Indonesia” for that matter. Echoing the Dutch term of *inlanders*, he alternately used terms like *anak Hindia*, *boemipoetra*, and *b. p.*; those words suggest that he had a feeling there were many people like him in the colony, in and outside Java, in the world. From his writings, however, it is clear that he was not yet able to think far beyond Java—and Java was big enough for his ire and energy. The *kita anak negeri* (we, children of the land) had to be shaken up, and he did it with his printed words as well as his voice, implicitly assuming that elsewhere others would equally challenge Dutch power, authority and knowledge. In particular literacy was to see to that, he knew; with the spread of literacy new allegiances would come into being.

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At the time of its publication, nobody seem to have realized that Marco's *Mata Gelap, tjerita jang soenggoeh kedjadian di Tanah Djawa* (“In a rage, a tale that really took place in the land of Java,” published in Bandung in 1914) was a innovative book. It is one of those tales that are forgotten before their echoes could be heard—and yet it opened new ground, new possibilities to its readers.

Mata Gelap tells the tale of a woman named Retna Permata who is the concubine (*nyai*) of a European, and then leaves her man for a Javanese playboy, named Soebriga.

After all, Retna Permata probably realized that because her master would return to Holland, she'd better look for a Javanese man as his substitute before her man left; a young nobleman, handsome and well-educated.

Of course Retna Permata did not really like to be one of those *njai*'s, even though she was more honorable by being taken care of by a Dutchman rather than by being married to (someone of) her own people. Retna Permata did not think of earthly goods anymore because she could make a very sweet life with Mister Soebriga. Once her master left for Europe, she would certainly acquire part of his possessions. Retna Permata may have been one of those *njai*'s; in her habits and behavior, however, she was not like most *njai*'s, maar like those Princesses.

[Sebab barangkali Retna Permata ada ingatan, oleh kerana toeannja akan pulang kenegeri Belanda, baiknja sebeloenja si toean pergi, lebih baik Retna Permata tjari ganti boet lakinja orang Djawa sadja jang moeda, tjakap dan bangsa menak jang terpeladjar.

Retna Permata memang sengadja tiada soeka poela djadi njai-njai, biarpoe dia lebih moelia dipiara bangsa Blanda dari pada kawin bangsa sendiri. Retna Permata soedah tiada memikirkan harta doena, sebab dia sendiri soedah bisa amat manis boeat hidoep dengan toean Soebriga. Begitoe djoega kalau toeannja berangkat ka Europa tentoe dia dapat sebagian dari harta benda toeannja. Retna Permata seorang njai-njai, tetapi adat istiadatnja tiada seperti njai-njai kebanyakan, maar seperti Raden Ajoe-Raden Ajoe belaka.] [Marco 1914 : 96 – 97]

Together with Soebriga, Retna Permata makes what looks like a merry-go-round trip through Java—drinking, dining, making love, having fun—but unfortunately her new man feels attracted to her sister Retna Poernama. The two start an affair in front of Retna Permata's very eyes but after some time Retna Poernama, afraid of the servants' gossip, decides to leave the menage a trois—only to start an affair with a friend of Soebriga. Etc. Etc.

Free love in the land of Java in the year 1914, a nyai leaving her European man for a native : those were certainly not common themes in Malay novels at the time in which prudishness ruled supreme and the woman is usually killed, either by her man or by the author, let alone in Dutch novels in which a concubine is usually pictured as a wicked being, driven by greed! The ease with which partners are swapped must have been pretty unusual, as well, not to speak of the sensual and tender meetings of the various loving couples in swimming-pools, bathrooms, and beds.

Mas Marco had warned his readers of *Doenia Bergerak* (DB) beforehand that not everybody should be permitted to read his tale :

We have been made the maid of DB and we have to use our own strength to see to it that our child becomes a good person. Therefore, if the comrade-leden of IJB and abonnés of DB agree and like to help the life of our child DB, we will publish a story book in Malay : *Mata Gelap*, a story that really took place in the land of Java, composed by Mas Marco in Solo. . . . Let us be straight about it : this book does not contain lofty lessons, it contains the all too familiar story, it is like those Dutch books called "roman." Moreover, we should not forget to warn you, toean-toean, who will buy that book. Let it not be read by children who have not come of age yet, boys nor girls. In particular the children who are still studying, they should definitely not read the book. So who must read it are people who have much *ervaring*, can weigh bad and good and have already acquired a stable way of thinking.

Didacticism, entertainment, and commercialism combined : the advertisement's wording was the best way, of course, to make the public curious. Noteworthy is also Marco's awareness that a distinction should be made between books for adults and books for children. The Dutch masters may have thought that all natives were children and that the only books worth publishing were aimed at school-children. Marco knew that there were many adults in the land of Java who had their own, grown-up taste. *Mata Gelap*

went apparently unnoticed. Dutch readers, censors, or judges did not step in. It was not a bestseller, and for want of contemporary witnesses we can only wonder what went through its readers when imagining these wild and fantastic scenes in Malay—and what effect it had on aspiring authors.

Doenia Bergerak, the periodical, reached a larger public with its directness and openness; it must have annoyed authorities much more than these “romans” like *Mata Gelap* would ever do, right from the beginning. Before long, Marco was sentenced to imprisonment when he took full responsibility for the publication of some inciting letters in his Journal. His stay in prison was shortened not in the least as the result of the vociferous criticisms of Hendrik Sneevliet who was a source of constant irritation for Batavia and was eventually banished from the Indies.

After his release in late 1916, his comrade R. Goenawan sent Marco to Holland in a well-intended attempt to protect him against himself. In the motherland he met Soewardi Soerjaningrat again who had been removed from the Indies together with Tjipto Mangoenkoesomo and Douwes Dekker in 1913 on the accusation of sowing hate among the native population. Marco had come to know Soewardi in Bandoeng where the two assisted Tirto Adisoerjo in publishing *Medan Prijaji*. Later in his life Soewardi, then the widely respected Ki Hajar Dewantoro, would acknowledge the influence Marco had exercised on his thinking; his friend’s ideas and attitudes had been important sources of inspiration in setting up his alternative educational system of Taman Siswa [cf. Tsuchiya 1987: 51]. Obviously, the author of *Student Hidjo* certainly did not sow hate alone.

Marco did not stay long in Holland, only some five months. Developments in the Indies forced him to return as he was to write in his poem “Dari negri Belanda”: “Nee! No! I have to leave/back to Java immediately/if necessary I am brave, determined/to attack those traitors!” [Nee! Tidak! saja mesti berangkat/poelang tanah Djawa dengan tjepat/kalau perloe saja berani nekat/menjerang kepada si kianat] [Marco 1918: 34]

Back in Hindia, he immediately resumed his life of walking a tightrope. He published some articles in *Pantjaran Warta* in which he called, among other things, for equality of natives and Europeans—and within months after his return in January 1917 he found himself in jail once again on the accusation he was sowing hate. During his one year’s detention he composed a number of tales, as he wrote in the introduction to *Student Hidjo* when it was published as a book in Semarang by Masman & Stroink in 1919:

This story was already published in our pampered child, the daily *Sinar Hindia*, in the year 1918.

Actually, this writing is the product of our pen when we underwent punishment in the case of a persdelict, in the civil and military jail in Weltevreden, for the period of one year. Although we could not write in newspapers while being in prison, we could compose books like *Sair rempah-rempah*, *Student Hidjo*, *Matahariah* etc.

Hopefully this book is of use for all its readers.

Marco Kartodikromo.

Semarang, 26 March 1919.

[Ini tjeritera telah dimoeat dalam soerat kabar harian pangkoean kami : Sinar Hindia didalem tahoen 1918.

Sesoenggoehnja ini karangan boeah penna kami, waktoe kami mendjalani hoekoeman perkara persdelict, di Civiel en Militair Gevangenhuis di Weltevreden, lamanja satoe tahoen. Maskipoen di pendjara itoe kami tidak bisa toelis menoelis didalem soerat kabar, tetapi kami bisa mengarang boekoe 2 seperti : Sair Rempah-Rempah ; *Student Hidjo*, Matahariah d. l. l.

Moedah moedahan ini boekoe bergoena bagai sekalian pembatjanja.

Marco Kartodikromo.

Semarang, 26 Maart 1919]

Sinar Hindia was the daily that Mas Marco joined after his release ; he ran it together with, among others, Semaoen, some years his junior and at the time a close companion. Semaoen, no doubt, derived as much inspiration from him, the Javanese knight of the word, as from Sneevliet, the European man of action ; his own publications and political activities were to land him in jail, too, and there he did what Marco did and took to writing. After his release, Semaoen was to write in *Sinar Hindia* that he regarded the prison "a place for meditation and asceticism," a place where one acquires "inner purification and new moral strength." This description of imprisoned spiritual life could have been written by Marco, and the story of civil servant Kadiroen which Semaoen published after his release under the title of *Hikajat Kadiroen* could not but steer its readers to a message that echoes the tale of Student Green's : we should strive for equality and justice on our own Javanese terms, but let us be pragmatic and work together with the European masters for the time being, for the benefit of all involved, for the sake of stability and peace.

Maybe Semaoen was more fortunate than Marco Kartodikromo : in the early twenties he was banished from the Indies and was sent to Europe where he continued the fight for justice and equality in the Indies in not yet clarified ways, constantly cornered and harrassed. Eventually he ended up in Tashkent before he returned to Indonesia in the early days of Independence. Meanwhile Marco had remained active in the growing resistance against the colonial system in his own erratic and stubborn ways, increasingly out of tune with the "movement." He had to pay for it : in 1927 he was sent to Boven-Digoel where he died of tuberculosis in 1932, an almost forgotten man with an almost forgotten oeuvre. A real knight, bone and marrow, who lived up to his ideals ; steadfast and uncompromising, he was crushed by the colonial state.

. . .

On one level, *Student Hidjo* reads just like another tale about love (*tjinta*) : its main protagonist, *Student Hidjo*, is first engaged with Dame Blue, then he has an affair with Betje, and eventually he marries Dame Violet ; this sequence is ornamented with loose reflections and musings on his feelings of love (*tjinta*) which Green has willingly ruled by

his parents : "I have to love Blue because I love Mother, daddy and our whole family!" (27) —and when he gets orders to return to Java and marry Violet, he has no difficulty in obeying them either ; as it turns out, his love for Dame Violet is as great as it ever was for Dame Biroe.

The exploration of the meaning of love in the land of Java is not the only theme that holds the novel together. As is the case in most contemporaneous Malay novels, in *Student Hidjo*, too, the women and the marriages are presented in terms of money and social scheming. Hidjo's adventures in money and status form a solid second thread through the texture of the tale. Striving for acceptance by the Javanese nobility, Green's father, a rich merchant, has almost bought his family a place in this class by engaging his son with a Raden Ajoe, Dame Blue. He then sends his son to Holland for an education that should be another guarantee for a place in the higher echelons of Javanese society ; his family's position seems completely safe when he succeeds in trading his future daughter-in-law for a lady of an even higher birth, Dame Violet, the Regent's daughter. In other words, *Student Hidjo* is as much about social mobility and trade as about love, and more than that : considerations of money and status determine the personal feelings of love that Green, Blue and Violet confess to have for their partners. Money guides individual feelings, it seems, under the benevolent eye of everyone involved. In this connection it is significant that the beauty of the women is more than once described in terms of the value of the jewelry they are wearing—Dame Biroe is worth 2,000 guilders, for instance, when she goes out with Green in the second chapter. Money buys rank and status. Money buys happiness, love, and harmony. Perhaps the Javanese nobility does not really operate very differently from their colonial masters.

Hidjo's three phases of love Blue-Betje-Violet—*Student Hidjo* almost reads like a tale about the dialectics of love—run parallel to the three phases of love the Dutch administrator, Willem Walter, goes through. Walter is first engaged to Miss Jet Roos, then falls in love with Violet only to be rejected, and eventually he marries Betje. Romantic sentiments rather than considerations of status and money are driving him, and they are doomed to fail in this land of Java where within the elite money and status are in control. Violet's father, the regent of Djarak, is all too willing to explain it to Walter : "the word 'love' is only on the lips of those who have had an European education and it is not yet clear how this will develop."

Love and money move the tale towards an happy end. *Student Hidjo* could well be read as a dialogue between the two which in their interaction call up a third theme : the connection between two races, Dutch and Javanese. Or maybe we should say the connection between two skins, white and brown. Or between two cultures, European and Javanese, that try to come to terms with one another—and eventually they do by ignoring each other, running parallel, following some kind of contrastive correspondence. As a matter of fact, *Student Hidjo* develops along correspondences in the double sense of the word. There is an exchange of letters between Hidjo in Holland and his family and

friends in Java, and as a result of these letters Green decides to go back to Java, no matter how beautiful (*bagoes*) Holland is. There is an exchange of letters between Walter and Jet Roos that make him decide to leave for Holland. There is an exchange of a pamphlet about the situation in the Indies between Walter—the ethical administrator—and Lieutenant Djepris—the diehard soldier—that makes the latter decide to be silent and not give in: the correspondence should be confirmed.

But *Student Hidjo* is also a tale of correspondences in terms of the tale's construction: events in Holland alternate with events in Java, and each alternation reads like a contrative comparison in which the Javanese perspective prevails and the conclusion is clear: Javanese and Dutch do not really fit. *Student Hidjo* offers us a series of scenes—the festive evening in Solo, the peaceful trips to the countryside, the warm ties between two Javanese families, the harmonious meeting of the Sarekat Islam—that altogether evoke Java as the site of community, continuity and harmony in an almost ritualistic, not to say sacred manner. From this site, Holland can only be perceived as the site of shock and fragmentation as illustrated by Hidjo's uneasy walks in The Hague and his disturbing experiences in the Royal Theatre and the Princess Theatre as much as by Willem Walters' bizarre performance at the Regent's party and his disappointing visit to the theatre in Solo. The conclusion—or is it the reason?—is obvious: Javanese do not feel at ease in Holland, Dutch do not feel at ease in Java. Or to put Marco's vision in more abstract Benjaminian terms: experience and continuity (*Erfahrung*) are hard to mix with encounter and event (*Erlebnis*). Different worlds altogether.

At the time Marco composed *Student Hidjo*, Javanese “tradition”—the *tata-tentrem* included—was losing ground to novelties that were increasingly hard to assimilate or incorporate because they were introduced by European authorities. Fragmentation threatened the land of Java, and in this tale Marco tries to ward this off by evoking a clear distinction between Java and Holland, by constructing a borderline between Holland and Java that is favorable and exhortative to his Javanese readers: be Javanese and accept the Dutch as your neighbors [cf. Benjamin 1991: 163 – 166]. A distant dream of continuity and harmony.

. . .

In the first scene, Green is told by his father that he has to go to Holland and then he is severely warned by his mother that Dutch girls are dangerous for his peace of mind, for Java, that is. Green's conversation is followed by an evocative scene of merry nightlife in Solo when Green, in his turn, conveys the news about his upcoming departure to his fiancée, Dame Blue; he absent-mindedly watches a Javanese play full of sensuality that does not disturb his peace of mind because of its familiarity. After that, the novel reads like a string of corresponding scenes of situations in Holland and Java. Hidjo's enjoyment of the panoramas he sees on his way to Holland runs parallel to Blue's and Violet's enjoyment of panoramas in Java; Hidjo's visit to the opera and Lili Green's Revue in the Hague run parallel with Walter's visit to the Regent's birthday party and to a show in the

theatre of Harmstond in Solo ; Hidjo's crisis runs parallel with Walter's crisis ; Walter's awareness of being a European outsider runs parallel with Green's awareness of being a Javanese insider ; and the merry Sarekat Islam meetings in Solo, full of jolly solidarity, makes a particular sense against the background of Walter's painful and lonely journey back home.

These contrastive scenes are interlarded with discussions, in Holland and Java, about the irreconcilable differences between white and brown—until in the end everything is in apparent order and harmony, be it in Javanese terms. The description of the married couples in Djarak, as quoted in the above, reads like an extended metaphor of the message Java should stick to Java, Dutch should stick to Dutch—and only in that way some kind of peaceful cohabitation is possible.

Why is Green sent to Holland, in the first place ? Not in order to acquire knowledge per se, as his father, Raden Potronojo, points out to him ; no, but "I am only a merchant, and people like me are looked down upon by people who are civil servants... my intention of sending Green to Holland is so that people who look down upon us will understand that people are equal (*manoesia itoe sama*), that is to say our child can study just as well as the children of Regents and princes." People are equal and should be given equal chances ; soon enough the Sarekat Islam meetings are to show it in practice : "because of the influence of the SI, there is no difference among people." (99) This influence is pictured as all-pervasive ; when the merchant approaches the Regent of Djarak, Raden Mas Toemenggoeng, the latter reaction is one of pleasure and humility (97) : "These days there are no low and high people. If we think about it, actually all people are equal. I am a regent and if you think about it deeply, my body is not different from that of a houseboy or a gardener working for the Dutch. With a general term you could say I am a servant (*boeroeh (boedak)*, too."

In this atmosphere of equality and solidarity, the marriages can take place and, as the last chapter shows, for the time being everything is in order in the land of Java ; for the sake of the common good, cooperation with the Dutch is a necessity, and some kind of dialogue seems warranted.

Upon his arrival in Holland, Green is lovingly adopted by a (nameless) family in The Hague. On the very first day, he makes a walk through The Hague with the two daughters of the family who force him to reflect on Holland's otherness.

The Hague is more beautiful than the cities in the land of Java but Green is not really surprised because he knows this world is a mere ornamentation that does not last.

"Mister Green, what is your opinion of the city ?" asks Betje.

"Beautiful (*bagoes*)," answers the one who is asked patiently.

"Better than the cities in Java ?"

"Of course it is more beautiful here."

"Would you prefer to live here or there ?"

Green is confused by this question, but because he has to show his good manners, he says: "If I could live here for good, of course I would rather live here."

At the dinner table, the same night, his future lover Betje continues the discussion about differences:

"Mister Green, what would you prefer to be: an Hindian or a Dutchman? ... Answers Green: "If my skin could be white like Dutch people's, of course I would love to be a Dutchman but because my skin is *bruin* (brown), it is better I am just an Hindian."

"*Dat geeft niks* (that does not matter)," says Betje to answer Green. "Brown! I am of the opinion that brown is beautiful!"

Under laughter and jokes ("brown is *faaain* (*bagoes*)," cries an excited Betje), Green's seduction into beauty and confusion makes a start.

The differentiation between Holland and Java—a process that is taking place with a lot of laughter on both sides—had already been initiated by some Dutch lady passengers on the boat to Holland:

Explains the lady to Green: "Anna just said that you are a Javanese and stupid."

"Nee, nee, no!" says Anna loud and clear, and with a laugh she throws her handkerchief to Green. The other women also start laughing about Anna's words as though indicating that the lady's words are true.

"Are you stupid?" asks Anna for fun.

"Yes, I am stupid," answers Green, slightly laughing as usual.

"Yeah, of course, you may be a candidate engineer, but you are stupid," says Anna to shake Green's heart. "A stupid Javanese, phew!"

"You are crazy, Anna," says Jetje, "you do not know how to behave." Laughter again.

The stage is set, the border is laid—and although Green keeps up appearances—Javanese have good manners, do they not?—, he knows that Anna is in love with him and tries to lure him into what he is made to feel like "otherness." The scene reads like a foretaste of what lies in store for him in Holland: Betje, the girl who is also trying to define her race, her people, her country in opposition to Hindian/Javanese and then tries to lure him to become "the other," leads Green into confusion (*bingoeng*) and then to the conclusion that he should turn his back to Europe as a whole.

How different from Controleur Willem Walter who desires to be lured into Java but is never accepted! He falls in love with Violet, drops his (pregnant) fiancée in the process—and is then rejected.

First there is the candid dialogue with the Javanese Regent, then the humiliation.

"This is the time of motion (*pergerakan*)," says the Regent . . .

"What do you think of *associatie* (mixture of foreign nations) in work as well as in marriage?" asks the Controleur to the Regent.

"Ach . . . it depends on those who implement the association. As for me, it is a compatible matter because there is in fact no difference between people, neither among Boemipoetra nor among the Dutch" . . . but association can only be implemented well when they are on the same level, with the same power. . . . For us, Boemipoetra, it is very hard to implement *associatie* with Europeans because the majority of the Europeans see us as mere servants. According to me, *associatie* is a strategy so that we, Boemipoetra, remain happy as slaves because the people who rule like to call us "brothers." *Associatie*, maybe I should call it an *associatie* of masters and slaves.

And using the Dutch proverb "pity is a bridge that leads to love" the regent then explains the Javanese attitude to marriage: the parents should decide over their children's partners (85 – 86).

That is candid and clear!

During the birthday party of Violet's father, the differentiation between white and brown is further explored from a Javanese perspective :

"I very much love Javanese customs, for pleasures as well as for other things," says Walter.

"So you want to be a Javanese?" Wardoyo asks, in for a good laugh.

His female friends start to laugh, and they wipe their very sweet lips with their silk handkerchiefs.

"Why would not I like it?" answers the controller to show his mirth.

Because people are laughing loudly, other guests come closer and have a look, as though they too want to give signs of their pleasure.

The controller shows himself to be fluent in Javanese, is given Javanese clothes to dance—and then the mirth among the Javanese guests is beyond description: "as though the Controller has a Javanese heart!" and amidst more jokes and laughter, Walter starts to dance :

He can not dance as well as Javanese but the people who look on feel pleased and laugh because he is so hilarious. People are applauding and cheering very loud indeed, and many of them are just laughing at the sight of this hilarious Controleur. The Controleur dances for a quarter of an hour, then he stops, but the other *prijaji* do not want to join him.

There he stands, the white man, all by himself, misunderstanding and misunderstood. The humiliation is complete when Walter's visit to the comedy in Harmstond Theatre turns into a tragedy: Violet and her parents are sitting far away from the infatuated

young Dutchman, and they leave before the show is over, not talking to him, not even seeing him. The only one who talks to him is, of course, his Dutch colleague who tells him that he should take better care of his Dutch fiancée. Jet Roos has desperately tried to get in touch with him; she feels that she is losing him, and she is pregnant. When Walter makes it clear to her that their relationship is over, she decides to have an abortion. A confused Walter decides to take leave in order to create a distance from his love for Java, personified in Violet.

Meanwhile, in Holland Green goes to the Royal Theatre to watch the opera "Faust," together with his landlord's family. The beautiful (*bagoes*) show confuses him, he feels like being made fun of (*tersindir*) by Faust as much as by the snorting girls. Marco gives a curious summary of Faust's story—maybe it is the way the confused Green interprets it—but even more interesting is the fact that Green is not just watching the opera as he watched the Javanese play in Solo and does not keep a distance. Now he feels directly addressed by Faust, by European civilization and he is clearly losing his personal will. Green makes a firm conclusion:

Better than acting like Faust when I am old, I should perform these acts right now. Because if I now follow the *adat* (custom) of young people who like fun, that is not vile because that custom is considered common. But when my hair is already grey, later, and I act like Faust, phew!

Some nights later Betje and Green together go to the Revue of Lili Green where Green in utter shock watches naked ladies hopping around on the stage ("Green tries to look at them through his opera glasses, but he can not look for long, because his heart rocks too wildly, maybe out of fear, maybe out of pleasure seeing them")—and then he is no longer able to contain himself. Forgetting all good manners, his promises to his mother, the Javanese code of honor (*adat kehormatan*), and his books, he follows the European example and throws himself, body and soul, marrow and bone into an affair with Betje. Like the shadowplay hero Arjuna he changes from the restrained and wise scholar (*pandita*) into an ardent lover. A deranging and distracting experience, worthy of Faust indeed.

Clearly, Holland with its lack of restraint bewilders and baffles Green. Holland is hard to resist, bringing up undesirable thoughts and ideas, evoking lust and desire. He is taken in by its beauty (*bagoes* is a recurrent word in the description of things and people Dutch). He is seduced by the Dutch girl who loves his beautiful skin and makes him act like a Dutchman. Most confused he may be by the extraordinary experience that he, a brown man, is able to give orders to white Dutch people who, in their turn, pay respect (*hormat*) to him for the sake of money. The very same white people who are so arrogant in the Indies! "If Holland and its people are only like this, then we Hindians should not be ordered around by the Dutch," Green muses. What kind of country is this? What kind of culture, so different from Java? And what is going on in his soul?

While Green tries to overcome his confusion in Holland, in Java his fiancée Blue has become a close friend of Violet. Just like Green, they make a walk to enjoy, but they do not see the vain ornamentation of a Dutch city, but the peaceful beauty of Javanese nature. No laughter, no jokes, just two nymphs who serenely watch the scenery and exchange their thoughts about Green.

From Java, Green receives letters, from his fiancée (“we are having a wonderful time, and Wardojo is like your mother’s new son”), her newly won friend Violet (“I hope you remember me, our families are very close these days, nature is great here, we had a good time with that hilarious Controller”) and the latter’s brother Wardojo (“we are having a wonderful time and your mother treats me as her own son”). Those letters from Java seem to bring him to his senses: there is no place like Java. Green decides to perform meditation in a vegetarian hotel in Amsterdam—on a “distance” from The Hague—in order to cleanse himself, Javanese style. “His thoughts became clear again and his love for his parents, for Violet, Blue and Wardojo grew ever so strong.”

I have to return to Java, because if I continue my studies here in Holland, it is not improbable that I will continue to be a Dutchman because I will certainly marry a Dutch girl. If I go that far, then it means that I leave my family and my people. Phew! Europeesche beschaving!

Whereupon Green writes letters to his parents and his friends in Java and tells them that he wants to come to Java because he is sick—although, he frankly admits to the girls, Holland is beautiful (*bagoes*). (83)

Green is sick of Holland and of himself giving in to it, Walter is sick of Java and of himself being rejected—so they both decide to leave for “home” again in order to regain some peace of mind.

All that said and done—and the borderline between Java and Holland seems clear enough by now—*Student Hidjo* offers its readers an even more explicit message of what is wrong in the land of Java and how the situation could (not) be improved. On the boat back to Holland, Walter is irritated by the statements of a Dutch Sargeant who thinks Javanese are just stupid and lazy. “The customs and traditions (*adat-istiadat*) of the Hindian population are ten times more socialized (*sopan*) than those of the Dutch!” and he gives his compatriot a Malay pamphlet to read, entitled “Bangsa Belanda di Hindia” (The Dutch nation in the Indies). In the pamphlet, written by an anonymous soilson (*bumiputera*), the Dutch presence in Hindia is criticized; it could have been written by Marco himself.

“Many of the Dutch in Hindia are former laborers and low class people who act like madmen here, they are arrogant and insult us as if we are slaves, and even worse: animals! The Dutch hardly know anything about Hindia, do not mix with the local population and have their vision of the land mainly determined by the negative stories other Dutch people tell them. Natives, in their turn, are afraid of the Dutch and show too

much respect for them in behavior as well as in language; the solution to this inequality is simple: every Dutchman who talks in Malay or low Javanese to a native should be answered in Malay or low Javanese. Deal with the Dutch on terms of equality, and show it by way of your language! But, dear reader," the pamphlet's author hastens to defend himself in the end, "We have not written this with the intention of *haat zaaïen* (sowing hate), we only want to open the eyes of the *boemipoetra* before it is too late." The final note is of a reconciliatory tone: "the faster Dutch and natives come to know and understand each other, the better it will be for Hindia and for Holland."

After this analysis of the misunderstandings between Dutch and Hindians, that very last sentence indeed sounds like a "before it is too late." While keeping a slight opening to possible improvement, the Malay author suggests that the difference is practically unbridgeable, and in case the musings of Student Green and Wouter Walter have left the readers still in doubt, the pamphlet makes it clear once and for all. It reads like a summary of the tale as a whole, a repetition which makes the narrator's purport clear, spic and span.

Marco constructs a barrier between Java and Holland. There may be some good Dutch people ("members of middle class and high class," but most of them prefer to stay in Holland, unfortunately) and they could peacefully live in Java for the time being, as the final page of *Student Hidjo* suggests. We should wonder, however, what was going to happen to them in far away Djarak, that never-never land, that fictitious place of peace and harmony, in the shadow of restive Solo, and it is tempting to make a connection with an early writing of Marco's friend, the founding father of the Taman Siswa educational movement, Soewardi Soerjaningrat, in which Marco's tale about Djarak clearly resounds:

If we wish to lead a national lifestyle, we should choose only those Western ways of life that are truly beneficial to us. Then we shall have escaped from the situation in which "love is blind," and we shall be able to choose calmly and with clear thoughts and feelings. Only then will *associatie* and *evolutie* be possible.

Adds Soewardi: "Obeisance to Western civilization has locked this land in darkness." Only those who manage to shake off this obeisance to the West are "free men," and only these "free man" are able to create and maintain a society in which "*tata tentrem*" rule rather than "*rust* and *orde*"; the stability and peace, that is, that are found in Javanese traditions and not in Western civilization [cf. Tsuchiya 1987: 61]. Soewardi's dream seems directly inspired by Student Green's dream of Java: he is the model of the "new" Javanese, the "free man" Taman Siswa wanted to create, anxiously watched by the Dutch Indies Government which had a vision of stability and peace of its own, and a different idea of what a Javanese should be.

Maybe *Student Hidjo* had a greater influence than has generally been assumed, after all; the tale itself may have soon be suppressed and forgotten, but the ideas it evoked

were to echo in Taman Siswa's finely tuned rejection of European culture.

. . .

Just like *Matahariah* the separate publication of which landed Mas Marco in prison once more at the end of 1921, *Student Hidjo* was no doubt meant to be a *boekoe tjeritera*, a tale, "a parable what in Dutch is called a *tendenz roman* . . . it pictures the acts of good and bad people" [soeatoe peroempamaan sadja yang dikata dalam bahasa Belanda "Tendens-roman" . . . menggambarkan kelakoean orang yang baik dan jang djahat]. The words that Marco used in December 1921 to justify the publication of an allegedly offensive cartoon in the journal *Pemimpin* and of the equally offensive novels *Rahasia Kraton Terboeka* and *Matahariah* hold for *Student Hidjo* as well :

Judged by the acknowledgement of the Government itself that the Government now follows the Ethical course (Ethics being the science of the moral life of Man), I think that there is nothing bad in picturing situations that have taken place here in Hindia, events of which I have made novels so that people understand better and eventually can improve their features which are not good.

[Kalau menilik pengakoeannya pemerintah sendiri, jang pemerintah sekarang berhaloean "Ethiek" (de wetenschap van het zedelijk leven des menschen) . . . saja merasa tidak ada boesoeknja, boeat menggambarkan keadaan 2 jang telah kedjadian di Hindia sini, kedjadian mana jang saja bikin roman, soepaja orang bisa lebih jelas dan achirnja bisa memperbaiki tabeatnja jang ta' baik].

Marco's defense at the Landraad in Jogjakarta in December 1921 is indicative of the transformations that were taking place in Malay writing, or rather of the growing instability that had slipped into Malay as a result of the spread of the press and the active participation in it by angry people. The defense is worth a careful look as it so clearly illustrates the way authorities were trying to keep political, societal, and intellectual developments in the land of Java and beyond under control "before it was too late." The use, the reach, the effect of Malay was at stake—and much more.

Press regulations had been substantially changed in 1906, in the spirit of the so-called Ethical policy that Marco refers to in the above quotation : the native population had to be educated and civilized in a more active way. The process should not only be steered by good-willing Europeans ; ample space and opportunity should be given to the children of the soil as well to elevate themselves.

Before that year, licenses for printing had been given out by the Administration ; thus it was possible for the authorities to stop books and periodicals from being published, if necessary without a clear motivation. From 1906, however, printing and publishing became subject to criminal law : authors (and printers) could be sued on the basis of their publications. How far in particular Malay publications had followed the Law and were published with a license before 1906 is not clear, to say the least. It cannot

have been without a reason that already in the last years of the 19th century authors and publishers often added a clear warning to their printings that they would sue anyone who copied their work without permission ; it looks as if they sought protection under a shadow that was to shield them against possible intrusions—and the mere fact that these warnings were given so much prominence shows that something serious had been set in motion.

Developments after 1906 soon gave cause to a growing anxiety among authorities ; they came to realize that freedom was not such a simple affair after all. The press was increasingly hard to follow, let alone to control, and certain publications allegedly challenged the stability and order which the Government deemed necessary in order to implement its policies. This, in combination with the growing social unrest (not in the least directly caused by the press), forced Batavia to redefine its policy of tolerance and openness ; the Laws on publications were redefined accordingly. Not without creating conflicts and hesitations within the higher echelons of the Administration, the so-called “hate-sowing articles,” already quoted above, were created and then several times reformulated.

Journalists and authors were supposed to be on their guard, and so was Mas Marco. The pamphlet about the Dutch in the Indies that summarizes *Student Hidjo* shows it in the phrase “we have not written this with the intention of *haat zaaien*,” and the almost jaunty “not to be quoted” [*tak boleh dikoetip*] on the front page of *Student Hidjo* is equally telling.

Formally speaking, i. e. in terms of the Law, “Mas Marco alias Kartodikromo” was labeled a criminal by the Landraad of Jogjakarta in 1921 ; in the Name of the Queen he was accused of “having wilfully offended in public the Government of the Dutch Indies and the authorities that have been appointed over the native population . . . and having wilfully in public expressed feelings of hostility, hate and contempt of the Government of the Dutch Indies and of the group of ruling Europeans in the Dutch Indies, at least (sic) between (sic) the group of Europeans and that of the natives (boemipoetera, anak Hindia).”

Marco Kartodikromo had been sowing hate, in short. Was it an accusation based on facts, and was any proof brought up before the Landraad ? Not really, of course. “Sowing” is a shrewd term because the plants that are to come out of these seeds are not yet visible. “Hate” evokes a feeling that is very hard to measure, and it is equally hard to prove its existence in people’s hearts. The accusation of “hate-sowing” is rather of a preventive character, meant not only to keep the people of the Hindies under constraint, but also, and equally relevant in this context, to keep Malay under control : Malay had to be organized along certain lines. Certain genres, certain terms, certain forms of discourse had to be silenced—and others had to be stimulated.

Marco expresses his amazement about the fact that other writings that were at least as inciting and hate-sowing as his own had passed unpunished. For him it was even more

amazing that some of the writings he was standing trial for now, had already been published before and had passed unnoticed at the time. His defense betrays, pretended or not, confusion, disbelief, and distrust. Why now? How about the others? What is wrong with my Malay? Why did the very same words sow hate this time?

Marco draws the only possible conclusion: I do not know where the limits are of the words that are forbidden by the *wet* (Law)—“saja tidak tahoe sebrapa batas-batasnja perkataan jang dilarang oleh wet.” And in a final attempt to defend the importance of the Truth that he had glorified in his *Doenia Bergerak*, he brings up the case of a Dutch Opziener (supervisor) of a sugar factory. The man had abused his Javanese workers who then reported the conflict to others, repeating the words of abuse the Dutchman had used—now, “is the *wet* a reason to punish the people who tell about that conflict? As a matter of fact, the words in the book *Matahariah* which is (one of the) the cause(s) to prosecute me are not different from the words in the story about that conflict just mentioned. Mr. Chairman en members of the Landraad, that is why I ask you to be acquitted of all charges.” A question of the validity of realism, to put it in literary terms—and some sorts of realisms were to be banned.

Marco himself already knew the answer to his question what was wrong with his language. He also knew that his request to be acquitted was to be rejected. He concluded his defense with a quotation of Dutch socialist/anarchist Domela Nieuwenhuis: “men moet hier letten op de persoon die het geschreven heeft en op de plaats waar het geschreven staat” [here one should consider the man who wrote it and the place where it is written]. That was clear enough: neither what happened nor how it was recorded was what counted, but who recorded it and in which material form it had been published. Not the facts but the voice—and some voices, some material recordings had to be silenced. Marco may have been right and true, he was not in the right, not in the truth, and that is why his Malay was wrong, that is why his novels were dangerous, his newspapers untrue. They were too realistic, too authentic, so to speak. His voice was wrong, in tone as well in content, because it was his.

Of course Marco was right in pointing out the unclarity of the Law. Witness the uneasy reports of Dutch administrators who duly kept their Superiors in Batavia informed about the actions and words of particular persons but did not exactly know where and when the Administration should interfere. Tjokroaminoto, Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo, Sneevliet, Semaoen, Darsono, Marco Kartodikromo: they were under constant surveillance because they recorded unpleasant but truthful facts about repression, abuse, and corruption. Witness the uncertainty that the Governor General himself showed to have in the famous case of Asymptoot who was accused of inciting hostility, hate and contempt but was acquitted while Marco was imprisoned on similar charges [de Moor 1987: 292]. Witness the staggering insults about “native laziness,” “insolence,” “diffidence” that Dutch newspapers and novels were free to publish without being charged, let alone punished. Such is the logic of repression. One-sided, capricious, and always

indicating insecurity.

. . .

The opposition that Marco was trying to construct between good and bad followed a line that was not permitted within the frame of reference that was prescribed by Dutch law-makers—and in Marco's view, these people were not interested in defending the good and the truth as they claimed to do, but in defending Dutch interests and societal stability and silencing some of those who spoke out. Truth (*benar*) and Good (*baik*) had become heavily contested words, and for the time being the natives were to lose that contest, in Malay as well as in Dutch. Discursive experiments in Malay were cautiously followed by the authorities. New words, new forms could be criticisms and therefore should be screened. And some voices should be muffled.

The Law guided what could be printed, in terms of tone as well as of content. It forced writers who used Malay to express themselves in double talk; they turned away from the points where Dutch and natives met and instead, kept to their own. The Law provoked them to define their identity in ways they had never tried out before. The Law set up borders and rules that had never been there before.

Nationalism was born, an ideology that tried to turn its back to Europe or, in Student Green's terms, to Faust. At the same time, however, it was tied to that same Europe in concepts and wordings, and it could best define itself in terms of Faust. In this movement, the myth of the "good" and "truthful" Malay language was created, the product of that uncanny cohabitation of colonial masters and restive urbanites—the situation in Djarak reads like a metaphor of it. Soon enough, nationalists were to name Malay "Indonesian," and they were to explore the limits of this "Indonesian" on their own in silent complicity with the colonial masters: they claimed it was theirs but they knew it was as much the creation of the Dutch. In this complicity, they turned away from the Malay as it was spoken in the urban streets and had been recorded in the writings of Tirto Adisoerjo, Kommer, Marco and the so-called Chinese-Malay authors. Yet another break in Malay writing was the result.

Student Green is relevant from other perspectives as well. It tells us that serious and deep contacts between Europeans and natives—often allegory-wise expressed in terms of marriages, love-affairs, and assassinations—were bound to fail. Europeans and their Laws virtually forced Marco and his friends to rethink and redefine their Javanese identity. More importantly, they forced them into an introspection that led to a glorification of Java in spite of all its shortcomings and its stultifying notions of hierarchy.

The Law made Malay writers more cautious in their wordings, and forced them to become aware that a clear distinction should be made between fictional and factual and that they should call them tales (*karangan*) and reports (*tulisan*), respectively. Since the introduction of print, they had been so comfortably intermixed by, for instance, Wiggers, Francis, and Lie Kim Hok, now they had to be clearly separated so as to bring the contest

for *Kebenaran* (Truth) more into the open. Newspapers were to operate in a different discursive framework than tales, Marco and his friends now realized, leading to a distinct and more direct referentiality to the world—and both *Student Hidjo* and *Matahariah*, published in serial form in *Sinar Hindia* in 1918, are interesting cases of this bifurcation: neither text was thought to be sowing hate at the time of publication in a newspaper. It is as though a newspaper was supposed to contain another kind of information than a novel, and allowed for another kind of freedom, another kind of referentiality, another kind of figurality.

Narrative serials had been a common phenomenon in Malay newspapers ever since they first appeared in the late nineteenth century, and as a matter of fact for many readers they became the most interesting feature of these papers. Tales—alternately they are called *tjerita*, *hikayat*, “novel”—and news emerged from the same origin—periodicals—and initially they showed a mutual similarity in terms of their continuity, their fluidity, their fragmented presentation of the world and their capacity of opening up the windows beyond the village. Both were inspired by considerations of commercialism—periodicals had to sell—and both were anxious about telling the truth—it is not without a reason that most of the tales are provided with the reassuring phrase: “this really happened in the land of Java.” Like everything else that was reported. They also shared the same public: merchants, civil servants and the recalcitrant odd intellectual rather than aristocrats and rulers.

The case against Marco’s *Matahariah* and *Rahasia Kraton terboeka* in 1921 confirmed the fact that the Law made, so to speak, roman/*tjerita* and newspapers into different genres, distinct genres, the rules and conventions of which had to be negotiated along different lines, on different terms. Different stories, different judgments: the realism of newspapers grew away from the realism of tales.

There is, in short, a connection between the imposition of the “Law” in the Indies and the emergence of the concept of Malay literature (*sastra* or *kesoesastraan*) as a distinct kind of writing as opposed to Malay journalism: writing news and writing tales were to become two distinct activities following different rules and conventions. Whereas reports and news were supposed to directly refer to reality in transparent words, literature was to cloak its information about society in terms of allegory and silence, increasingly removed from societal reality so as to avoid action by law-abiding authorities. The limits to Malay were set, by outsiders. Or conversely, Malay was not allowed to develop as freely and heterogeneously as it had for so long—and after 1920 only few authors had the courage to challenge the limits imposed upon them in the way Marco had.

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