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Geesteswetenschappen

Oeroeg and Bumi Manusia: Flipside of the Coin on Dutch Colonialism in Indonesia

MA Thesis

Laurensius Yoel Fabian

s4139925

Asian Studies, Faculty of Humanities, University of Leiden, The Netherlands

Supervisor: Dr. Suryadi

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Abstract

This study compares two novels, *Oeroeg* by Hella Haasse and *Bumi Manusia* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer. It focuses on two books that feature the same scene: the historical phenomenon of Dutch Colonialism in the Dutch East Indies. This thesis examines how two novelists present their perspectives on colonialism in the Dutch East Indies and the initial stages of Indonesia's struggle for independence. While dealing with the same topic, the two novels present differing perspectives on the subject matter. The aim is to adopt a neutral stance by selecting two authors representing opposing perspectives on colonialism in the Dutch East Indies. Haasse represents the colonizer (the Dutch), while Pramoedya represents the native Indonesian.

This comparative study identifies motifs common to both novels and illustrates the impact of colonialism on the characters and their actions. This analysis engages with the interrelationship between literature and colonialism. The authors' background is also examined to understand how it shapes both the writers' stances and the creative process. Furthermore, this thesis investigates how the socio-cultural conditions portrayed in both novels manifest in racial differentiation, the colonial education system, and identity issues.

In the discussion, the disparate positions of the two novelists are revealed. Haasse, a second-generation individual born in the Dutch East Indies, does not experience any sense of guilt regarding the events that transpired. Conversely, she believes she lost her homeland. On the other hand, Pramoedya experienced firsthand the cruelty and injustice during that period. Through Minke, he perceived the positive value of Western modernity. However, the discrepancy in status in court and social life did not align with his perspective. Ultimately, colonialism can be observed as a coin with two sides. Heads and tails provide different perspectives but remain intertwined with each other.

Contents

Abstract	ii
Contents	iii
List of Illustrations	iv
Introduction	
Research Objectives.....	1
Previous Studies.....	2
Theoretical Framework	4
Research Methods	4
Thesis Organization	5
Chapter 1: Literature on Colonialism	
1.1 Literature as an Optical Instrument of Colonialism	7
1.2 Literature as a Product of Colonialism.....	9
Chapter 2: The Novels	
2.1 <i>Oeroeg</i>	11
2.1.1 Losing Home, Losing Brother: The Synopsis of <i>Oeroeg</i>	12
2.1.2 Literature Queen of the Netherlands: Brief Biography of Hella Haasse.....	14
2.2 <i>Bumi Manusia</i>	15
2.2.1 Struggle of Romance and Independence: The Synopsis of <i>Bumi Manusia</i>	16
2.2.2 That Roman is Called Pramoedya: Brief Biography of Pramoedya Ananta Toer	17
Chapter 3: Motives Appeared through the Novels	
3.1 Racial Strife: Hegemony and Segmentation	19
3.2 Educational System: Modernity and Public Sphere	20
3.3 Split Identity: Sense of Loss and Belonging	22
Chapter 4: Analysis and Interpretation	
4.1 Racial Context Analysis.....	24
4.2 Educational System Analysis	26
4.3 Identity Analysis.....	29
Conclusion	31
Bibliography	33

List of Illustrations

Figure 1: <i>Oeroeg's</i> Book cover	12
Figure 2: Hella Haasse's Portrait	14
Figure 3: <i>Bumi Manusia's</i> Book cover	16
Figure 4: Pramoedya Ananta Toer's Portrait.....	17

Introduction

In the context of identity and administrative position, the Dutch East Indies are much discussed in various writings. It wasn't very easy because, on the edge of the Dutch colonialism period, the independence movement in Indonesia was at its peak, and it eventually gained independence in 1945. Thus, it was recognized by the Netherlands in 1949. Indies refers to a group of islands that are far away and are also described as a colony of the Netherlands (Maier, 1992). Dutch East Indies is one of the areas included in that term. The discussion about literature that takes the Indies as its object is also a hotly debated topic among writers. Does it belong to Dutch Literature? Or is it included in Asian Literature because of its geographical position in Asia? Or is it an independent category within Indies Literature because the language and Indo culture presented in the work do not belong to Dutch Literature? (Serie, 1992).

Explaining colonialism, this thesis dealt with how we can see that period, particularly in Indonesia, from the perspective of two parties—the colonizer and the colonized—that played a role through novels. I use two novels to contrive that era. *Oeroeg* is a book by a Dutch-born in Indonesia, Hella Haasse, and a story by famous Indonesian author Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Bumi Manusia*. Accordingly, both novels represent complicated Indies from the colonialist and colonized subjects' perspectives.

Dutch colonialism and the Indonesian independence movement are like two sides of a coin. It means that explaining colonialism cannot be done from just one perspective. The two parties are interrelated and have their perceptions of each other. According to Henk Maier (2004), a colony suggests an area permeated by a heterogeneous set of tensions between rulers and ruled. The colonial hegemony of the Dutch and the nausea of the Indonesian people are intertwined.

Nevertheless, it gave birth to a romanticized human relationship. We can see the depiction of this historical and human experience in *Oeroeg* and *Bumi Manusia*, how we see indigenous Indonesians who feel the cruelty of colonialism, as Pram depicted with discrimination and class differences in the figure of Minke (Rifai, 2010), and how the generation of Dutch people who were born and raised in Indonesia, as part of a minority white ruling and upper class, also do not want to lose their second homeland. Although far away, Indonesia is where they grew up, like the main character portrayed by Haasse in *Oeroeg*. A naturally born relationship must suddenly separate and live on its terms.

Research Objectives

This research aims to analyze the different approaches taken by Haasse through *Oeroeg* and Pram with *Bumi Manusia* in viewing Dutch colonialism in Indonesia and the Dutch East Indies colonial society. Moreover, this research also targets the socio-cultural situation and political significance of the two novels. I seek to give insights and other perspectives on Dutch colonialism that Indonesia experienced through literary narratives. This study—comparing

Oeroeg and *Bumi Manusia*, respectively—will contribute to and provide a deeper understanding of the Dutch and Indonesian relationship during colonialism.

Literary narratives, novels in this context, can mirror the reality of social, cultural, and political conditions at a specific time. In addition, literary narratives can also be a lens through which the author interprets perspectives on these conditions. In *Marxism and Literature*, Raymond Williams (1977) states that art can function to 'reflect the real world' and as 'the mirror up to nature.' Furthermore, he also argues that what art reflects is not just 'mere appearances' but a reality of the 'inner nature' of the world through what he calls the artist's mind.

The author's interpretation here becomes essential, and Fredric Jameson (1981) discusses how political perspective is not only a supplementary method but also the absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation. With this understanding, the writer can be present in a zone of contact with the world they are depicting, which allows a depiction through the writer's interpretation (Bakhtin, 1981). Concepts such as hybridity, class differentiation (Bhabha, 1990), and cultural hegemony that occurred in the contact zone (Fenoulhet, 2013) between the two countries will also be discussed in this study. Therefore, the main questions that arise and form the basis of this research are: *How were the long colonial relationship and sudden partition between Indonesia and the Netherlands depicted in two novels written by authors with opposite cultures and interests from both countries?*

From the main question above, we can then draw several derivative questions that cover other aspects of the novel, including:

- How do the socio-cultural and political conditions depicted by the two novels match the actual situation in Indonesia (Dutch East Indies) at that time?
- How do the friendship-romantic relationships of each character in each novel symbolize the pattern of colonial relations between the Netherlands and Indonesia?
- How does the educational system depicted in the two novels affect the relationship patterns of the characters?
- What is the stance of the two authors in describing their respective conditions through their novels?

Previous Studies

Many studies and articles from various angles discussing the two novels, *Oeroeg* and *Bumi Manusia*, have been published. These two historical novels have layers to be touched on.

The process of translating *Oeroeg* is widely discussed and studied by many intellectuals. This is because Haasse's *Oeroeg* considers the historical events in the Dutch East Indies and the complexities in the language used. This multilayered interpretation is finally also seen in the English translations discussed by Jane Fenoulhet (2013), which prioritizes two translated works

by Margaret M. Alibasah (1996) and Ina Relke (2012).¹ Some of the elements discussed give rise to different tastes and feelings in the English translation of *Oeroeg*. Starting from the paratextual information in the novel, the various names and spellings of the two translations, the different structure, styles, and perspectives taken by the two translators, and how the main characters in *Oeroeg* are portrayed with varying diction choices.

A more in-depth linguistic study is also written by Cristina Peligra (2019), who discusses how *Oeroeg* is translated into English and how similar the translation is to Italian. Peligra also discusses other novels by Haasse that were translated into Italian and English, namely *Heren van de thee* (1992) and *Sleuteloog* (2002). Briefly touching on that, Peligra discusses how the translation of these three novels into different languages can affect the flavor and message that Haasse wants to convey, both in terms of culture, identity, and hybridity, as well as the factors that influence the translators' choice in using particular diction.

Speaking of translations into many languages, *Bumi Manusia* is widely discussed from a linguistic perspective, especially regarding translation into English. Astri Dwi Floranti and Yasir Mubarak (2020) have discussed how translating *Bumi Manusia* into English experienced many obstacles, including translating idiomatic expressions. To summarize, a novel is a form of thought of the author, and through the book itself, the author tries to communicate with its readers. On the other hand, idiomatic expressions are a combination of words that form a meaning that cannot be translated directly and literally, word by word. This is a possible difficulty for readers of *Bumi Manusia* who read it in languages other than Indonesian to interpret the implied meaning written by Pramoedya in his book.

Apart from the linguistic perspective, *Bumi Manusia* is also discussed from the sociological and cultural perspectives. Carl Niekerk (2011) discusses modernity, sexuality, and gender as seen in *Bumi Manusia*. According to him, Pramoedya, through *Bumi Manusia*, defines 'modern' differently, namely by involving gender and sexuality in the figure of Nyai Ontosoroh, who comes from and lives in a primitive village but shows modern values. Furthermore, Niekerk mentions that modernity can emerge from non-Western cultures and various societies rather than mainly stemming from European privileges. On the other side, Jeffrey Thomas (2014) discussed *Bumi Manusia* from the perspective of cultural imagination and the rule of law, how *Bumi Manusia* very well depicted an imagined Dutch Colonial culture and how the law was applied in the Dutch East Indies during that period.

This thesis will take an angle on sociocultural during Dutch colonialism in Indonesia. The discussion of these two novels compares the different perspectives and nostalgia experienced by Haasse and Pramoedya. The stance of the two authors, the different imaginations contained in their books, and the output perceived by the readers after finishing these two novels.

¹ Respectively, the Alibasah version is titled *Forever a Stranger and Other Stories* (Kuala Lumpur [etc.]: Oxford University Press, 1996) and the Rilke version is titled *The Black Lake* (London: Portobello Books, 2012). This study uses Ina Relke's version of translation into English as the direct quotation.

Ultimately, the writing of the Indies has become a work of the imagination (Maier, 2004), a depiction of the history of colonialism and its movement that brings readers to see each author's personal, nostalgic feelings.

Theoretical Framework

The whole thesis is based on my interpretation as a reader of the two novels that provide images of Dutch colonialism in Indonesia through the authors' mouthpieces. This interpretation is described by Umar Junus (1985) as '*resepsi sastra*' (literary response or aesthetics of reception). Readers can freely place their interpretation of a literary work. The meanings given by the reader may differ from one another or over time. In understanding literary works, meaning-making can be done with two approaches: studying the text itself or studying the relationship between the text and its author regarding its socio-cultural and historical reference. The two novels I have chosen can be examined by comparing the texts, studying them for what they contain, and involving the relationship between the work and its author.

Realizing that even a tragedy should be viewed neutrally from both sides, I choose to compare two novels to observe Dutch colonialism in Indonesia. The hope is that the two novels represent two perspectives, from the Dutch and Indonesian sides. René Wellek and Austin Warren (1949) mentioned that comparative literature studies the relationship between two or more literatures. Newton Stallknecht et al. (1961) assert that this literature study method transcends national boundaries. It studies the relationship between a piece of literature and other areas of knowledge and belief. In this thesis, I am not only comparing the two novels with each other. Instead, I also compare these two perspectives against the reality of history. Compare the literature with the different areas of knowledge.

Furthermore, I base this comparison on the sociology of literature (Hall, 1979). John Hall emphasized that sociological appreciation of single texts often describes their content in different and frequently appropriate social terms. Furthermore, Hall explained how the specifics of social referents in a literary text reveal the atypical idiosyncrasy of their social views based on what the author experienced—this way of looking at the sociology of literature in social life more systematically. I tried to broaden my horizons by giving meaning to the two novels I chose.

Research Methods

The comparative method used in the analysis of *Oeroeg* by Hella S. Haasse and *Bumi Manusia* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer is based on qualitative research methodology. This method is employed to comprehensively understand how Dutch colonialism occurred in Indonesia through the lens of literature sourced from postcolonialism novels by Dutch and Indonesian authors. The primary sources for this research are the two novels previously mentioned. This

will be done by comparing the setting in the novels with what happened in Indonesia at that time through secondary sources, namely scholarly articles and news media.

In the process of comprehensively analyzing the novel, I am using the hermeneutics approach. Graham McCaffrey (2012) argues that hermeneutics is a research practice that remains true to its philosophical origins concerning its cultural context. Furthermore, he also points out how hermeneutics recognizes the historicity of culture and its insights within the prevailing cultural context. Sebastian Boell and Dubravka Cech-Kecmanovic (2014) propose a hermeneutic framework for the literature review. The framework consists of two major hermeneutic circles: the search and acquisition circle, which discusses how the initial process of selecting and searching for materials starts from the initial idea to the sorting and selection process, and also the analysis and interpretation circle, which describes the literature review from the classification process to the resolution of research problems/questions.

In addition to the hermeneutics approach, as with any discussion of novels, I will also analyze these two novels using the narratology approach. Susana Onega and Jose Garcia Landa (1996) suggest that narratology is etymologically the science of narrative, which is usually restricted to structural narrative analysis. One of the approaches I will use is the structure language of narrative about how the language of narrative has at least two areas of structure, namely beyond the sentence, and has various levels of meaning (Barthes, 1996).

Thesis Organization

This thesis commences with an introduction to the brief historical background of the general colonial relationship of the Dutch in Indonesia, with a particular focus on the period during which the two novels are set. It also discusses the theoretical approach and earlier studies that can support the literature review process of the two novels.

In the first chapter, I will discuss the relationship between literature and colonialism. Broadly speaking, I will emphasize the two roles of literature in the colonialism period: literature as an optical instrument to see colonialism and literature as a product generated by colonialism. Colonialism that occurred in Indonesia has passed more than half a century ago. The records written objectively in history books can be learned from various sources. Nevertheless, observing colonialism through literature, especially novels, brings us to a different, entirely subjective horizon. Literature is also a result of colonialism. To resist the repressive actions of the colonial state, the oppressed not only used the military, books, and writings. Being a sign of resistance and an effort to unite the nation in a context as big as Indonesia proves that literature is effective as an attempt to counter colonizers.

In the second chapter, I will cover the synopsis of both novels and a brief biography of the two authors. Haasse is personally unique. As a Dutch person living in a Dutch family, she was born in Indonesia and grew up and matured there. The environment she grew up in, as she writes in

Oeroeg, is very much surrounded by Indonesian. Haasse's perspective is 180 degrees different from what Pramoedya writes through Minke in *Bumi Manusia*. In writing these, the biography of the author is essential. How their nostalgia and personal life experiences shape the way they write.

The third and fourth chapters are interrelated with each other. In the third chapter, I discussed the salient motives that appear in both novels. There are many interesting ones, but I chose these attributive motives to answer my research question: racial contention, identity ambivalence, and the notion of a third space inside the educational system according to the Dutch East Indies period in both novels.

The fourth chapter is my interpretation and analysis to prove the motives I have written in the third chapter. Both novels are enriched with meaning. The interpretations and analyses are grounded in factual historical events. In this section, I endeavor to draw an understanding of the authors' stances on Dutch colonialism through their two novels.

The thesis concludes with a conclusion.

Chapter 1

Literature on Colonialism

“Am I forever to be a stranger in the land of my birth, to the soil from which I am loath to be uprooted? Time will tell.” (Haasse, 2012: 143)

The quote above is the last sentence of the entire novel *Oeroeg*. Like the narrator in *Oeroeg*, which will be discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis, Haasse had to be expelled from her homeland due to the end of Dutch authority in Indonesia. Haasse, with *Oeroeg*, takes the position of a colonizer lens, writing a story based on her personal experience as part of a group that came to a colony, settled and managed the area, had a family, and had to return to their home country after the country they came to liberate itself. The novel she wrote became both a product and a lens through which to look back at her personal experience of colonialism in Indonesia.

Taking a similar approach to Haasse, Pram also wrote about colonialism in Indonesia, but he took a different angle. He came up with Minke in *Bumi Manusia*, a Javanese with the privilege to enter the European social order of his time. Minke has a slightly broader perspective than the protagonist in *Oeroeg*. Minke stands on two legs. On the one hand, he has a European education, is associated with Europeans, and comes from a *priyayi* family.² On the other way, he is also in love with the illegitimate child of a Dutch's unauthorized marriage to an Indonesian woman. *Bumi Manusia* is a suitable counterpart for *Oeroeg*.

The development of literature during the colonial period or literature discussing colonialism will be a vehicle for us to reenact the period more personally. Therefore, the taste of fictional books derived from references to real experiences will provide a new, subjective point of view, depending on the author's direction. Literature is not only a product of colonialism that we can enjoy, but we also can learn more about it from both parties. To cover both sides.

1.1 Literature as an Optical Instrument of Colonialism

Through one of the chapters in *The Sociology of Literature* (1979), Hall discusses how, in the process of reading a work of literature, we must try to understand the text. Using Christopher Hill's *Milton and The English Revolution* as an example, John Hall states that we must realize there must be a middle way to see the relationship between the text and the social context raised in the literature. Furthermore, Hall also stated that we can at least take two benefits in discussing the relationship between the text and its context; we, as readers, can realize the existence of social referents in a work of literature as evidence to legitimize the social reality

² 'Priyayi' is a term originating from Javanese, which means the descendants of the elite in Java. To cover more on how *priyayi* and other statuses in Indonesia's class system in the past, see Hamish McDonald (1980), *Suharto's Indonesia*. Melbourne: Fontana, pp 9-10

that occurs. And vice versa. We, as readers, can also see the social reality that arises as an object that serves understanding in reading a piece of literature.

On the other hand, John Hall also mentions that literature as a representation of social situations can be slightly misleading. Taking Richard Crossman's *The Crossman Diaries* as an example, Hall states that to investigate the superior truth in a work of literature is too vague to be valid.

Moreover, he gives at least two examples of why literature can drive the opinions of its readers. First, Hall mentions that literary works can provide facts objectively but with a wrong interpretation. Presenting Thomas Hardy's book *Mayor of Casterbridge* as an instance, there is an event that makes the main character in the story sell his wife to a sailor in exchange for a sum of money. This incident is a social reference to a local custom in Dorset, South West England. Hardy's inaccuracy in interpreting the local custom proves that a fact that happened in society can be described differently and become a work of literature. It also illustrates that to tell something from an outsider's perspective; more effort is needed to explain the actual context of a phenomenon.

The second example written by John Hall is that literary works can also consciously not display the entire social reality that occurs. A writer can selectively choose which pieces of events he will put in his work and which ones he will not. The author's awareness of reality will later lead to an unbalanced bias between the facts and his work. Quoting Peter Laslett, Hall argues that a literary work as historical evidence must still be checked against an objective record of social events.

All of these approaches are what I want to achieve when discussing *Oeroeg* and *Bumi Manusia*. In looking at an event in the context of Dutch colonialism, we as readers of literature must still consider the facts that occurred and the fictional events fabricated by the authors. Reading *Oeroeg*, we will unconsciously be carried away by the sentiment of the rupture of a close kinship between the protagonist and Oeroeg at the end of Dutch colonialism. Partisanship is inevitable. We should also note that there is another perspective on colonialism that we need to comply with. In *Bumi Manusia*, the events that Minke experiences will also show how cruel the Dutch government was at the time.

French novelist Marcel Proust, as quoted by Hall, argues in his works that in a complex society, the self is served with the opportunity to assume many roles. Thus, he also stated that analyzing a truth in a literary work can be reduced in two ways. Literary works are a different form of formal sociology discourse, where a literary work cannot be disproved by evidence. The way afterward is that the characteristic of literary works is self-authentication. As George Orwell said, Hall quoted that literary works are an attempt by a writer to describe his personal experiences. It is legitimate for a writer to be biased, and we, as readers, have the right to side

with which bias. In the end, literature is an optical instrument for us readers to see a social phenomenon in the past through the eyes of the authors.

1.2 Literature as a Product of Colonialism

Besides being a tool to see colonialism from various subjectivities, literature is also a product of colonialism. The oppressed people use this product for their own interests. I endeavor to provide at least two evidence that literature is the product of colonialism: a medium of nationalism for the people and a channel of resistance against colonial oppression.

In his famous book *Imagined Communities* (2006), Benedict Anderson mentions that language becomes a foundation for forming a nation's solidarity effect. Language becomes a fundamental element. One of the most critical silver linings of language is its ability to be a tool for generating imagined communities. Especially for a large country separated by geographical contours like Indonesia, this is very important. So, it can be said with great confidence that Indonesian as the national language is a gift and a powerful force. Apart from that, Anderson also mentions that language written in print language is what gives birth to nationalism.

Seamus Deane, in his introduction to *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature* (1990), mentions that a literary tradition can also be a form of ambition realization that reflects a dimension of nationalism. Moreover, Deane mentions that colonialism is a radical disposition in its most potent form. Using the example of Ireland, the colonial situation caused Ireland to lose its specific history and language. This resulted in Ireland trying to make Irish English an independent language as a revival movement.

Still from the same book, Edward Said discusses William Butler Yeats, an Irish poet who became one of the leading figures in the 20th-century literary world in Ireland. Said mentions that Yeats is a settled presence in Ireland and British culture and literature throughout Europe. His work beautifully describes the experiences, provides aspirations, and presents a view of the suffering of people living in oppressed circumstances.

One of the other works that we can trace the trail of nationalism to is the Filipino novel *Noli Me Tangere*, written by legendary writer Jose Rizal. Anderson (1997), in his review of this novel, mentioned that Jose Rizal's educational journey to Berlin resulted in *Noli Me Tangere*, originating nationalism in the Philippines. *Noli Me Tangere* is written in melodrama and satire, depicting the period of Spanish colonialism against the Philippines in the late 19th century. The novel symbolizes nationalism and patriotism, which Anderson calls something that has to do with the love of Patria, not with race.

Literature also serves as a tool of resistance for oppressed people. Taking the example of 'intra-colonialism' in the form of the oppression of Dalits in the caste system in India, Bama Faustina wrote an autobiographical work, *Karukku* (1992). In *Karukku*, she recounts her journey as a

Dalit struggling for equal rights. In her article, KA Geetha (2011) mentions that *Karukku* as a work of literature becomes an effective tool as a channel of protest against oppression, in this context, the oppression of Dalits in the caste system in India. Furthermore, Geetha mentions that for Dalits, literature texts have become a method of resistance and raising awareness of a hegemonic structure.³

³ Although not a process of Western colonialism, I feel that the construction of caste in India as a system of oppression needs to be mentioned in the context of forms of resistance.

Chapter 2

The Novels

The Father of Indonesian Education, Ki Hadjar Dewantoro (Suwardi Surjaningrat), once criticized a national liberation festival celebration held in Batavia in 1913. In a pamphlet written in Dutch and Melayu entitled '*Als ik eens Nederlander was*' (If I were for once to be a Dutchman), he strongly protested against a country's liberation festival being held in another country that was still colonized. He stated that no matter how underdeveloped a community is, it is against oppression. If he were a Dutchman, he would not hold any liberation festival in a country whose independence was still being shackled.⁴ Pramoedya replicated a real historical action in the figure of Minke in *Bumi Manusia*. Minke is an educated student who writes a column in a native newspaper in the Dutch East Indies under a pen name, Max Tollenaar. There is a sense of regret that writing about the state of the Indies was not a topic of discussion in schools and society due to the limited number of intellectual and literate people in the Dutch East Indies at that time (Toer, 1981: 195). It is a similar situation in the eyes of Suwardi and Minke in *Bumi Manusia*, where people in the Dutch East Indies during that period were still underdeveloped and under the shadow of other nations.

Analogous to Pramoedya in *Bumi Manusia*, Haasse also replicates the independence movement in the Dutch East Indies. In the context of *Oeroeg*, one of the actual actions described by Haasse in his novel is how the Indonesian independence movement was initiated by the correspondence of young people who were educated and received higher education. Haasse depicts the awareness of independence in the protagonist's increasingly tenuous relationship with the figure of Oeroeg, who is involved in the independence movement (Haasse, 2012:102-103). In the relationship between metropole and colony, young and youth represent dynamism, progress, self-sacrificing idealism, and revolution (Anderson, 2006); Haasse successfully writes this in *Oeroeg*.

2.1 *Oeroeg*

Oeroeg was Hella Haasse's first novel published in 1948 (*Figure 1*). Through a short novel writing competition organized by The Association for the Promotion of the Book Trade's Interest (*Vereeniging ter Bevordering van de Belangen des Boekhandels*), Haasse with *Oeroeg* won the competition and was entitled to the publication of *Oeroeg*. *Oeroeg* was written during an era when literature still played an essential role in the intellectual life of the Netherlands. Literary works published during this period were considered to be of cultural and commercial

⁴ Summarized in English by Benedict Anderson in the chapter "The Last Wave" in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London and New York: Verso, 2006, pp. 113-140. The pamphlet itself was originally published by *Comite Boemi Poetra (Inlandsch Comite)* on July 13, 1913.

interest (Maier, 2004). Originally written in Dutch, *Oeroeg* has been translated into various languages, including English and Indonesian.⁵

Oeroeg has also been 'translated' into film. Screened in 1993, some small but significant differences exist between the novel and movie versions (IMDB, n.d.). In the novel, the first-person point of view (protagonist) used by Haasse has no name and does not even explicitly mention gender. It is later discovered from the protagonist's dialog with other characters that the first-person point of view as the narrator is a man. In the movie version, it is different (VOI, 2021). The movie, directed by Hans Hylkema, tells the story of a soldier named Johan Ten Berghe. Johan and *Oeroeg* grew up to become more than friends but brothers. However, there is no other reception about the movie. Additional information that can be known is that *Oeroeg* won the Nederlands Film Festival award and received a nomination at the Valladolid International Film Festival in the same year, 1993.

2.1.1 Losing Home, Losing Brother: The Synopsis of *Oeroeg*

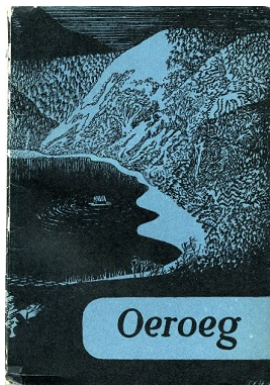


Figure 1
Book cover of *Oeroeg* by
H.S. Haasse, 1948.

“Oeroeg was my friend. When I think back on my childhood and adolescence, an image of Oeroeg invariably rises before my eyes...”
(Haasse, 2012: 5)

Oeroeg tells the story of a complicated friendship between the narrator, a Dutch boy born and raised in the Dutch East Indies, and *Oeroeg*, a native boy. Through this friendship, the novel explores identity, colonialism, and the political upheaval in the Dutch East Indies leading up to Indonesian independence.

The narrator's father was an administrator at a tea plantation in Kebon Djati, a region near Sukabumi in West Java. The father had a worker whom he trusted as a *mandoer* (overseer or foreman). From this boss-employee relationship, their children's friendship was born. The narrator and *Oeroeg* were born close together. The friendship that has existed since birth is like a beautiful destiny. For the narrator, *Oeroeg* is his closest friend to the point of being like a brother. The same goes for *Oeroeg*. However, their relationship remains unequal. This is the beginning of all the conflicts in the novel.

Because of the unequal relationship, many differences are born. From childhood, the narrator had privileges, a formal education, and a high social status. On the other hand, *Oeroeg* has no such access. *Oeroeg* started receiving formal education because of an incident that killed his father. In return, the narrator's father sends *Oeroeg* to school. Even so, *Oeroeg*'s school is still different from the narrator's.

⁵ One of the translations into Bahasa Indonesia, used in this thesis as comparison, was published by Padasan Publishers in 2014 with the same title, *Oeroeg*.

There are also significant differences in the school environment. The narrator's native friends came from the noble class. At one point, the narrator invited his friends to his house for a birthday party. They ate together, except for Oeroeg, who could not eat at the dining table.

After completing primary school in the tea plantation where they grew up, the narrator continued her secondary education in Batavia. Meanwhile, Oeroeg, who did not have the same access to formal education, continued to live with Lida, a Western lady who became Oeroeg's mentor, in her guesthouse in Sukabumi. Despite being away, they still tried to maintain their relationship, meeting almost every week. However, despite their seemingly close friendship, the social and educational gap began to show.

After finishing his education in Batavia, the narrator went on to higher education in the Netherlands to deepen his knowledge and pursue a future career. His move to Europe makes him increasingly disconnected from the Dutch East Indies and, indirectly, from Oeroeg. Meanwhile, Oeroeg remains in Indonesia, living in Surabaya, continuing his studies, and showing greater interest in social and political issues.

When the narrator returns to Indonesia during his vacation, he realizes that Oeroeg has changed significantly. This change is apparent in his appearance, more Westernized dress style, and flamboyant demeanor that attracts attention. Oeroeg also develops in his way of thinking and outlook on the world. Oeroeg begins to show an interest in nationalism, which grows through his interaction with Abdullah, an active figure in the independence movement. The narrator, who still sees himself as part of colonial society, feels alienated by this change and finds it challenging to understand Oeroeg's new direction.

This change created a distance between them. Their conversations are more challenging and spontaneous than they once were but are often awkward and full of tension. The narrator feels their once close friendship has become unattainable, limited by differences in identity, experience, and worldview.

Eventually, their relationship reaches a point of separation. The narrator and Oeroeg, who once shared a childhood full of memories, realize their paths are different. This separation is not only the end of their friendship but also symbolic of the more considerable changes in the Dutch East Indies, where tensions between colonizers and natives are building towards independence.

2.1.2 Literature Queen of the Netherlands: Brief Biography of Hella Haasse

Hella Haasse (*Figure 2*) was born on February 2, 1918, in Batavia, Dutch East Indies, and spent her childhood and adolescence there (DBNL, 2005). Her life in the Dutch East Indies was not easy. Haasse experienced a lonely childhood with minimal parental presence. Her father, Willem Hendrik Haasse, was active in the nationalism and fascism movement in the Dutch East Indies through the *Nieuwe Indische Beweging* organization. At the same time, her mother, Katharina Diehm Winzenhöfner, suffered from tuberculosis and had to undergo long treatments (Historiek, 2023). This complex family situation inspired *Oeroeg's* novel, especially in depicting the condition of a “broken home.” Before the outbreak of World War II, Haasse, like many Indies-born Dutch, was sent to the Netherlands for further education. She studied drama at the Amsterdam Toneelschool and met her husband, Jan van Lelyveld, while active in the student magazine *Propria Cures* (Diepstraten, 1984).



Figure 2
Hella S. Haasse, Photo by Eric Koch (ANEFO). Courtesy of Nationaal Archief NL (reference 923-4239), 1970. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10648/ab937890-d0b4-102d-bcf8-003048976d84> (accessed at 10-12-2024).

Sounds familiar? Yes, *Oeroeg* is a very personal work written by Haasse. She wrote *Oeroeg* as if she were the main character in the novel, as the narrator. She presents her childhood memories and retells them as a novel. Parallel to her personal life, both were born in the Dutch East Indies, both were the children of a Dutch administrator in Indonesia at the time, left Indonesia for college, tried to return there during the war, and got nowhere in their endeavors. Both lost their belonging. For their loved ones in person, for the land where they were born and raised (Peligra, 2019). As it has been written, *Oeroeg* was born out of a short novel writing competition

Haasse's literary career began in 1945 when she published her first collection of poems, *Stroomversnelling* (DBNL, 2005). She became widely known through the novel *Oeroeg* (1948). In addition, his works, such as *Zelfportret als legkaart*, reflect a combination of her childhood memories in the Indies and her reflections in the present (Fenhoulhet, 2010). In the book, Haasse admits that *Oeroeg's* writing was driven by her guilt toward Indonesian friends she did not fully understand (Maier, 2004). Other works, such as *Heren van de Thee* and *Sleutelooi*, also focus on colonial life in the Dutch East Indies. Through a different style, Haasse emphasizes that not all Dutch people in the Indies deserve to be called “colonial” if they are not involved in the repressive system (Maier, 2004).

The themes of Haasse's writing often reflect her longing for her homeland and her struggles with identity as a colonial descendant. In *Persoonsbewijs*, she described her writing “as a statement of longing and of affection for the land where I was born and where I grew up-and behind that, under it, of a desire to unravel my own dark side, the side in the shadow, which I do not know” (Haasse, 1967). As a diaspora, Haasse explored postcolonial themes through the perspective of a European disturbed by decolonization. Her writings can be considered a

“literature of repatriation,” reflecting a sense of loss for their homeland, which is now a foreign place (Peligra, 2019). In addition, Haasse's inspiration also came from her childhood reading, such as the novels of Oltmans and Jules Verne, which shaped her imagination of the tropical and colonial world (Maier, 2004).

Haasse made history as one of the most influential female writers in the Dutch literary world. In the 1980s, when only about 12% of literary awards went to women, Haasse won the Constantijn Huygens Prize (1981) and the P.C. Hooft Prize (1983). To top it off, she received the highest literary award in the Netherlands, the *Prijs der Nederlandse Letteren*, in 2004 (Ruwette, 2008). Haasse not only opened readers' eyes to the quality of women's literature but also inspired another generation of women writers to participate in the literary world (Ruwette, 2008).

Hella Haasse passed away on September 29, 2011, in Amsterdam, leaving behind an influential literary legacy in Dutch literary history. In her acceptance speech for the short novel competition award, Haasse stated her intention to contribute to “increased mutual understanding” (Maier, 2004). Through her work, she not only told the history of the Dutch East Indies but also shaped how the public perceived colonialism and its collective memory (Fenhoulhet, 2010).

2.2 *Bumi Manusia*

“An educated person must learn to act with justice, beginning, first of all, with his thoughts, then later in his deeds.” (Toer, 1981: 42)⁶

Bumi Manusia is the first of four books that comprise *Buru Tetralogy*.⁷ *Buru* is an island where Pramoedya was exiled in 1969, and he wrote a tetralogy about the Indonesian independence movement. Although it was first published in 1980, Pramoedya is said to have done the preparation and research to start writing the novel *Bumi Manusia* long before he was alienated under the rule of the second President of the Republic of Indonesia, Soeharto (Niekerk, 2011). *Bumi Manusia* was included in a list of 194 books that were banned from circulation in Indonesia because it was considered to have the purpose of spreading communism and Marxist-Leninist ideology during the New Order Period in 1999 (Rifai, 2010). Outside of *Bumi Manusia*, 21 other Pram's works were banned during this period, both original works and translations. Nonetheless, *Bumi Manusia* remains a progressive piece of literature that has influenced many people and has proven not to carry the values considered forbidden in

⁶ The quote is a direct transcript from the book *This Earth of Mankind*, translated by Max Lane (Ringwood: Penguin Books Australia, 1981). This study uses the Indonesian book *Bumi Manusia* (Jakarta: Hasta Mitra, 1980, *Figure 3*) and Lane's translation version to complete each other.

⁷ *Buru Tetralogy* consists of *Bumi Manusia*, *Anak Semua Bangsa*, *Jejak Langkah*, and *Rumah Kaca* (*Earth of Mankind*, *Child of All Nations*, *Footsteps*, and *The House of Glass*). This tetralogy was written and published because Pramoedya realized that the people of Indonesia must know their history. Started in 1956, Pramoedya conducts a deep, wide history research on the birth of Indonesia's Nationalism. (Teeuw, 1997).

Indonesia. Translated into more than 40 languages, *Bumi Manusia* is one of the most significant novels ever published in Indonesia (Gramedia, 2021).

Bumi Manusia spread its wings into cinema, as in 2019, it was made into a movie with the same title by director Hanung Bramantyo. Unlike *Oeroeg*, which added something to differentiate the film from the novel, *Bumi Manusia* attempts to fully replicate the novel with Hanung Bramantyo's signature flamboyant nuance and romantic directing style. This movie won several awards and was nominated for one of Indonesia's most prestigious awards, *Piala Citra* (Citra Awards) (IMDB, n.d.).

2.2.1 Struggle of Romance and Independence: The Synopsis of *Bumi Manusia*



Figure 3
Book cover of *Bumi Manusia* by P.A. Toer, 1980.

Bumi Manusia tells the story of Minke, a native who attends HBS (*Hogere Burgerschool*). Minke was born into a Javanese aristocratic family. His father was a regent. Because he was born into this family, he had the privilege of attending an elite school where most students were European children. In this novel, Minke often faces racial discrimination, from his school environment to the law and courts. Even Minke, a nickname in the novel, comes from his teacher. Minke is a diminutive of monkey, a racist behavior that occurs even in school. Nevertheless, he continues to fight for his right to be respected as an individual, regardless of his skin color and background.

As a romance story should, Minke falls in love with Annelies Mellema. Minke's first encounter with Annelies happened because Minke's school friend, Robert Suurhof, took Minke to Wonokromo. Wonokromo is a large village where Annelies lives with the Mellema family. Annelies has a Dutch father (Herman Mellema) who is unofficially married to a native Indonesian woman, Nyai Ontosoroh.⁸ This makes Annelies and her older brother, Robert Mellema, an Indo, Dutch-Indonesian *Peranakan*. Nyai Ontosoroh is a mistress and is considered a lower-class member. The life of a Nyai is often seen as dirty, sexual-driven, and uneducated, like a prostitute. However, Nyai Ontosoroh was tough and insightful. Minke learns much about life, courage, and the importance of maintaining self-respect from Nyai Ontosoroh. Ironically, during Dutch Colonialism, Minke, who received a Dutch-style higher education, saw the practice of modernity in Nyai Ontosoroh.

Apart from the Mellema family, Minke also interacts with many people from various walks of life. Minke's aristocratic family forced him to remain part of Javanese tradition. Minke, educated in European education, does not want to be bound by culture and wants to be a free man. From his family, he meets his colleagues, Sarah and Miriam, from the De La Croix family.

⁸ In a contextual, cultural meaning that day, 'nyai' was a term earmarked to women who were kept as a subordinate, maid, or concubine ('gundik' or 'selir') according to Joop van den Berg in *Soebatten, sarongs en sanjo's: Indische woorden in het Nederlands* (The Hague: BZZTôH, 1990), p. 62.

Minke lives with a European who is excluded from society, Jean Marais. Jean, an ex-soldier, became an ordinary painter. Minke had many friends and teachers at school, including Juffrow Magda Peters, who supported him in continuing to write for the newspaper. Minke became a Dutch writer in the newspaper under the name Max Tollenaar.

The conflict in the novel culminates when the Mellema family becomes a legal object in court. After Herman Mellema died in a brothel, the Dutch Mellema family came to claim custody of Annelies and her inheritance. Dutch colonial law at the time favored Europeans. This led Minke and Nyai Ontosoroh to fight against the unfair system. Minke had to see his loved one, Annelies, taken away before his eyes. He experienced inner and emotional turmoil. From this incident, he realized that although he had attended HBS, experienced modernity, and behaved like a European, his status in the eyes of the law remained indigenous. The Annelies incident was the culmination of the colonial hegemony over the colonized nation.

Bumi Manusia is a story of failed love and struggle, a story of courage against injustice—an attempt to maintain identity and self-respect under colonial oppression. Pramoedya beautifully depicts the complexity of human relationships that made *Bumi Manusia* an influential novel in Indonesia.

2.2.2 That Roman is Called Pramoedya: Brief Biography of Pramoedya Ananta Toer

Andries Teeuw (1997), through his book, tells how to understand the roots of Pramoedya's thought; we must start by understanding the life story of Pramoedya's father and mother, Mastoer and Oemi Saidah. Pramoedya Ananta Toer (Figure 4), born on February 6, 1925, was the eldest child of Mastoer and Saidah. Mastoer was a teacher. He taught at HIS Kediri, then left and became one of the first teachers of the IBO school established in Blora. In complement to his teaching career, Mastoer was also involved in politics through his membership in PNI (abbreviated from *Partai Nasional Indonesia* – Indonesia National Party) when Soekarno visited Blora. As the eldest child, seeing his father struggle through teaching and becoming a political party member would have inspired his fighting spirit and nationalism awareness from an early age.



Figure 4
Pramoedya Ananta Toer, as featured in *Kesusasteraan Indonesia Modern dalam Kritik dan Esei I*. Photo credit: HB Jassin (1962, p. 136).

Pramoedya realized that the relationship between his father and mother was not good; thus, they were constantly arguing. On the other hand, Pramoedya saw his mother working so hard to maintain the family. Pramoedya saw Saidah as a mother figure who was steadfast and brave, making her a role model for many of the firm and independent female characters Pramoedya wrote about in his works, including Nyai Ontosoroh (Teeuw, 1997). The figure of Nyai Ontosoroh in *Bumi Manusia* appears as a party against the injustices committed during the Dutch Colonialism period. The figure of resistance, especially since Nyai Ontosoroh was a

woman who was not officially recognized by the law at the time, was used by Pramoedya to show fellow prisoners that the spirit to live free and independent should not be demoralized by repressive parties, including the cruelty that existed in prison at the time. (Toer, 1995).

HB Jassin (1985), in his book, calls Pramoedya's work a work with the selection and use of words that have their world. With the diction he chooses in each of his works, Pramoedya is stated to be able to deepen to the core of the story and strip the problem very well. Pramoedya first met HB Jassin when Jassin was still an editor at *Pantja Raja* magazine in the late 1940s. Through *Pantja Raja*, Pramoedya published the short stories 'Kemana?' And 'Si Pandir'. Pramoedya saw the world differently and transcribed it into writing that matched what he witnessed. Seeing the ups and downs of his father's career, family circumstances, and journey as an office clerk at the Japanese news agency *Domei*, he wrote *Dia Jang Menjerah* and *Bukan Pasar Malam*. (Jassin, 1985).

Joining the army and fighting for Indonesian independence and revolution, he penned *Perburuan*, *Keluarga Gerilja*, *Ditepi Kali Bekasi*, and *Mereka Jang Dilumpuhkan* while still in a Dutch prison. Pramoedya's productivity is unquestionable. There are still many works from his cabinet that are not listed in this paragraph, not to mention the works he translated while he was still working, such as translating the romance *Lode Zielens*, Leo Tolstoy's short stories, and stories from Antoine de St. Exupery. Starting from an individual experience, Pramoedya's work became intellectual property belonging to everyone (Toer, 1995).

Writing a work to be enjoyed by many people collectively was one of Pramoedya's passions in his work. Through his paper, *Realisme-Sosialis dan Sastra Indonesia* (Realism-Socialism and Indonesian Literature, 2003), he wanted to return literature to its original position: from the people, by the people, and written for the sake of the people. Teeuw (1967), in his book, featured that the works of Pramoedya are so revealing for the socio-political and psychological developments in Indonesia and also have such a strong autobiographical strain rather than fiction.

Pramoedya was active in *Lekra* (*Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat*), an arts and cultural organization often referred to as a sub-organization of the PKI. However, in one of his interviews, he mentioned that he was not an important person in *Lekra* (Rifai, 2010). During this period, he was also at odds with *Manikebu* (*Manifest Kebudayaan* or Cultural Manifesto), a movement initiated by many writers, including the editor who helped him publish his works, HB Jassin. The premise was that *Manikebu* was born as a response to the actions of *Lekra*, which often mixed literature and cultural movement with politics (Tempo, 2001). His activity in this art institution also caused him to be accused of spreading communism, which led to his alienation at Buru Island. Pramoedya is indeed a very controversial figure. Despite all the things that have been done in Pramoedya's life, he is a highly respected literary figure and a powerful nationalist spirit messenger through his works. M. Rifai (2010) mentions that Pramoedya's life as a whole, from his birth to his death, is a romance in itself, like an epic story.

Chapter 3

Motives Appeared Through the Novels

“You are missing out on a lot, over here. You’re going altogether native, and that bothers me.” (Haasse, 2012: 50)

The passage of dialogue above is a quote from the narrator's father in *Oeroeg*. They came from the Netherlands and became plantation administrators. The narrator befriends Oeroeg to the point where he is considered out of touch with the Dutch and much more familiar with the indigenous Indonesians. This displeases his father and forces him to send the narrator to the Netherlands to continue his education there.

The perspective of Westerners, in this context, the Dutch who came to Indonesia, is described by Edward W. Said as an Orientalism. Said (1979) explains that Orientalism is an ontological and epistemological style and perspective that distinguishes ‘the Orient’ and ‘the Occident.’ East and West. This distinction can be any form: epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts — people, customs, minds, and so on.

Take this orientalism as a prelude to a highly problematic discussion. How the Dutch who came to Indonesia extracted crops from the land, taking advantage of the people's naivety at that time. Ruthless, in one sense, but very sentimental in another. The second generation of Europeans born and raised in Indonesia experienced identity confusion. In the end, they had to go home. Go home to where? I was born here. Indonesia is my land. Yet, my physical attributes are different from those of Indonesians. Existing social constructs also prove this.

On the other hand, so-called native Indonesians who have experienced schooling and modernity see this as colonization. The Dutch education system opened their eyes. The motifs and aspects that emerge in both novels are intriguing to discuss and scrutinize.

3.1 Racial Strife: Hegemony and Segmentation

Referring to Said's (1979) explanation of Orientalism, he states that the relationship between the Occident and the Orient is a relation of power of domination, which forms a level of a complex hegemony. This discussion on hegemony continues what Italian activist Antonio Gramsci (1972) had formulated. In his book, Gramsci mentions that cultural hegemony is an ongoing process that involves the dominant group (the colonizer) in maintaining and manipulating the great majority of people (the colonized) to remain in control. This manipulation can take the form of values, norms, and beliefs that rationalize social, racial, political, and economic inequalities. Arnout van der Meer (2021) asserts that domination in a cultural hegemony system is not merely based on force. Instead, a successful ruling group relies on most of the population's passive resignation.

In the context of the Dutch presence in Indonesia, Dutch authority did not come with a sense of right to conquest but rather by perpetuating the existing traditional elite stratification system. Java's nobles and aristocratic classes had their own hierarchical system (Sutherland, 1979). John Pemberton (1994) argues that the power system in colonial and postcolonial Indonesia is not merely an enforced top-down system but also the result of a pervasive cultural effect resulting from tradition. The Dutch authority adapted and collaborated with the remaining system and continued into a more extensive, more influential system.

Jacques van Doorn (1983) also expresses *Peranakan*, an intermarried relationship on a large scale with the local population until it yields the next generation. From an outsider's perspective, European colonists took indigenous partners on such a large scale that their majority population was always mixed blood. In the Dutch East Indies context, this mingling resulted in what is referred to as *Indo*. Doorn also quotes WF Wertheim (1949) on how the 19th-century colonial system in Indonesia was a typical caste society, with whites as the principal group and Indo-Europeans as the substratum within the European caste.

With all the hustle and bustle of cultural hegemony and the caste system, Doorn (1983) suggests the segmented society that prevailed in the Dutch East Indies. Colonial Indies were marked by plurality in all social aspects. European, Chinese, and Arab immigrants also played an important role in the exceptionally racially mixed society. This process of assimilation occurred in a social pyramid, not only from the social situation but also from the application of cultural to economic systems that reflect inequalities (Jones, 2013).

This imbalance of racial aspects is also reflected in the two novels. How in *Oeroeg*, Europeans act as bosses and natives as underlings. In the school attended by the Narrator, *Oeroeg*, a native from ordinary circles, is viewed differently from his friend, who comes from aristocratic Java. Especially from *Bumi Manusia*. Minke, who is *priyayi*, associates with people not respected in Dutch law, including *Nyai* and her illegal daughter. These will be analyzed further in the next chapter.

3.2 Educational System: Modernity and Public Sphere

The aspect of education is also integral in both novels. The Narrator and *Oeroeg* attend different schools, pursue different dreams, and encounter various kinds of people. Minke also gets all his knowledge about modernity and its comparison with the noble Javanese society from school. Tod Jones (2013) reveals that education is also aimed at improving the welfare of the Indigenous population by removing barriers to free enterprise. This leads to the stimulation of economic development. Furthermore, Jones also stated that the Dutch authorities' concerns about education began in 1848 to educate Javanese to become officials, followed by the ethical policy period (1901-1930), which quickly changed the educational landscape in Indonesia.

Regarding the ethical period, MC Ricklefs (2008) reveals that much effort was put into education. Briefly touch upon historical background: Dutch authorities in 1900-1905, Hurgronje, and Abendanon wanted a more European style for the Indonesian elite. They were followed by Governor-General van Heutsz (1904-1909), who prioritized primary and practical education for lower-level people. From here, the development of schools in Indonesia began. Three old *hoofdenscholen* were born in Bandung, Magelang and Prabalingga, later renamed OSVIA (*Opleiding School Voor Inlandsche Ambtenaren*). In 1898, the medical school STOVIA (*School tot Opleiding van Inlandsche Artsen*) appeared. First Class Schools appeared in 1907, later reformed in 1914 to become *Hollandsch-Inlandscheschools* (HIS). There was ELS (*Europeesche Lagere School*), which was at the same level as primary school. MULO (*Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs*) was born in 1914 to upper-class Indonesians, Chinese, and Europeans who had completed their primary education. After graduating from MULO, they entered AMS (*Algemeene Middelbare Scholen*), established in 1919. There was also *Gymnasium* and HBS (*Hogere Burgerschool*, for Dutch young people and upper-class Indonesians) for other advanced schools (Ricklefs, 2008).

Jan Aritonang (1993) highlights the various types of schools in the Dutch East Indies at the time. The regulations for students attending each school varied greatly. The *Staatsblad 1906* stated that each village was responsible for building a school for the decentralization policy as a second-class school in the Dutch East Indies. Later, it developed into *Standaardschool*. After graduating from *Standaardschool*, there was also a *Vervolgschool*, born in 1915. After 1921, there was also a second-class school for girls. In addition, there were also many vocational schools and *Kartinischool*, which embodied one of Kartini's dreams.

In terms of education, schools also teach Indonesian natives modernity. This learning style in the Dutch East Indies period is described by Dipesh Chakrabarty (2005) as pedagogical. As a developmental aspect of decolonization, modernization theory established the notion that the West was made into a model for everyone to follow. In this pedagogical style, people at the bottom of the hierarchy were meant to learn from those at the top. In this context, leaders are Dutch authorities who act as teachers through the educational system.

School is also a good representation of what Habermas said about the public sphere. Jürgen Habermas (1962) suggested the public sphere as an expression to describe a discursive arena in modern societies where everyone discusses matters of common concern. This arena is ideally detached from the state and market and is in an accessible area in the realm of rational communication. Nancy Fraser (2017) adds how this concept exists as a rubric for evaluating the legitimacy and efficacy of what passes for public opinion.

The concept seems utopian. In both novels, the arena for idealized communication in an equal and balanced manner is nowhere to be found. The Narrator considers Oeroeg to be his equal. However, his school environment and family perspective are not. In *Bumi Manusia*, Minke's

school is the closest area to Habermas' concept of the Public Sphere. However, there are still differences between Dutch and Indonesian in it.

This situation depicts the concept put forward by Homi Bhabha (1990) in his interview with Jonathan Rutherford. He describes the stages of the process by which diverse and multicultural societies negotiate to coexist. He starts with cultural differences that differ from one culture to another, one cultural practice to another, leading society to incommensurability. So, what he calls a notion of cultural translation is needed. According to him, cultures somehow, in some way, relate to each other through symbolic activities. Translation is necessary to understand each other. This process eventually becomes hybridity, a concept beyond binaries of identity, polarity, and the persistence of differences. This hybridity occurs in a third space, enabling other positions to emerge and dialogue. This motive will be discussed further in the next chapter.

3.3 Split Identity: Sense of Loss and Belonging

In *Oeroeg*, the Narrator is an exciting figure. As mentioned earlier, he comes from a Dutch family. However, he was born and raised in the Dutch East Indies. This makes the Dutch East Indies his homeland. His origins. However, this feeling is shattered when he has to leave Indonesia at the novel's end. In contrast, these feelings are not the same as those experienced by Minke. He comes from a Javanese aristocratic family—pure blood. Living away from the city where he was born and meeting many people in the *Wonokromo* area made him not feel at home when he returned. He criticized all the traditions that his family practiced. Instead, he feels at home in *Wonokromo*.

The sense of loss and belonging in a human being is complicated. To explain the narrator's feelings about *Oeroeg*, we can take a diasporic approach. Mala Pandurang (2018) argues that the first generation can sustain an attachment to the original homeland. Thus, connection to the present place of residence is an attempt at assimilation by the second and third generations. Pascale Herzig (2006) differentiates generations into 'the position of an individual in a family's migration history. After this, the first generation refers to the migrant; the second generation refers to people who were born in the country as a child of the migrant, and the third generation who were born in the host country.

In response, Minke felt something different. Bhabha (1994) interprets the phenomenon of being unable to identify either homeland or host land with the term 'unhomed'. When migrants move, they feel a sense of 'loss of home.' On the other hand, Minke thinks that he belongs to *Wonokromo*, where Annelies and her family live, not to his homeland, where his family belongs. Additionally, in his interview with Florian Kläger and Klaus Stierstorfer (2015), Bhabha explains two aspects of the term 'home.' According to him, home is normalized, naturalized, and original. There is thereness in the term home. We know the landscape, the language, and so on. Another aspect is that home is where we return to. In the context of *Bumi*

Manusia, Minke does not feel like he is in his original family in City B. He gets it in Wonokromo.

At one point, the narrator in *Oeroeg* and Minke experiences the same thing—a sense of loss. The narrator loses his friend Oeroeg; Minke loses Annelies. This is explained by Pauline Boss (2006) about the feeling of loss. Boss reveals that loss is not always about death or physical absence. It is also about psychology. Loss needs to be clarified. Our cluelessness about whether the person we love is absent or present, dead or alive, can create so much ambiguity. Minke felt this when he lost Annelies. He didn't know how Annelies was. Similar to Minke, the Narrator in *Oeroeg* is not unaware of Oeroeg's condition, and when he meets him for the last time, he does not recognize him anymore.

Chapter 4

Interpretation and Analysis

“I feel that it’s going too far to talk about such writings in HBS school discussion; it only makes us all dirty... the writer of this doesn’t even have a family name.” (Toer, 1981: 195)

The words pouring out of Robert Suurhof’s mouth are full of meanings that can be interpreted from various points of view. From the beginning of the sentence, it is possible that Suurhof felt that the writing discussed at HBS should be of high quality and contain brilliant ideas—perhaps Max Tollenaar’s writing in the newspaper needed to meet his standards. However, at the end of the sentence, racism is expressed. People without surnames do not deserve to be discussed and regarded highly for their writing. We can interpret the novels in many different ways. Therefore, in this chapter, I attempt to substantiate the motives that emerge based on *Oeroeg* and *Bumi Manusia*.

4.1 Racial Context Analysis

To introduce the racial context in which the two novels are set, we should look at the initial situation of the two novels.

“Then they sat down with me and my father to a rijsttafel meal ... Oeroeg had not been invited, and I was angry and disappointed.”
(Haasse, 2012: 52)

“I knew that the HBS brain inside the head of Robert Suurhof was only clever at insulting, belittling, disparaging, and working evil on people. He felt he knew my weakness: there was no European blood in my body.”
(Toer, 1982: 6)

Both authors describe the first circumstances similarly. The main characters in both novels portray unequal relationships. In *Oeroeg*, although the main character is very close friends with Oeroeg, the fact that there is different treatment in the situation of his birthday party carries a clear message. Inequality is there. Knowing this, the main character gets angry. This is natural because they were still children during this period.

Pramoedya portrays Minke as a person who can read the situation well. Minke knew there was equality there, even though he had attended HBS, which was very respected. Minke makes good observations. That way, he looks more careful in his behavior and is more strategic in doing things like a brilliant student from an elite school.

Furthermore, we can see how the main characters see their counterparts from their perspectives in a racial context. The narrator in *Oeroeg* first said, “*Oeroeg was not cruel; it was simply that he did not know the feeling Europeans often have of wanting to spare an animal and treat it with respect*” (Haasse, 2012: 7). Later in the novel, the perspective changes: “*I listened in silence as Oeroeg and Abdullah, all aflame, railed against the injustice of the colonial government, against the Dutch, and white people in general. Much of what they said struck me as unfounded or exaggerated, but I was at a loss for counterarguments.*” (Haasse, 2012: 102-103).

Look at how the point of view of the main character changes from the beginning to the end of the novel. We can see that the narrator sees his friend with more sincerity and innocence. He understands that there are racial differences. By knowing that there are racial differences, he also normalizes the differences in behavior toward animals. From this initial impression, the narrator also explicitly suggests that Europeans are more respectful towards other creatures, while natives like Oeroeg seem more vicious and chaotic. But in the end, he sees Oeroeg as a rebellious native. He recognizes the injustice of the colonial government. But he also defensively states that what Oeroeg and Abdullah, Oeroeg's friend, say is exaggerated. From these two conditions, we can conclude that the narrator judges that Natives are already flawed from the beginning and become worse in their thinking as they mature.

In *Bumi Manusia*, Minke was initially in awe of the Dutch. He thinks, “*Among the educated European and Indo communities, they were considered the best and of the highest standard in all of the Netherland Indies*” (Toer, 1981: 2). Minke also needs to mention the indigenous people. This can make us judge that Minke has, from the beginning, seen progress and modernity in the educated nation and set aside the natives who did not receive well formal education. The novel also tells us that Minke does not want to be bound by his family's culture.

Towards the end of the story, Minke finally realizes the dark reality of colonial society. Nyai Ontosoroh once said this to Minke, “*For them, Natives must always be wrong, Europeans must be innocent. So, therefore, Natives must be wrong to start with... we're facing a more difficult situation now, Minke!*” (Toer, 1981: 257-258). In the eyes of the law, the natives will always be wrong. Modernity comes along with the inequality of Dutch law. This realization will bring changes in the way Minke behaves after this. The struggle to be free from himself personally must be brought into a broader realm. See it from a bigger picture.

“*The person in question is not even an Indo. He is lower than an Indo... he is an Inlander.*” (Toer, 1981: 196)

“*Those who have the courage to surrender are stamped and trodden upon, Mother!*” (Toer, 1981: 115)

“*The division between their world and mine was complete.*” (Haasse, 2012: 104)

In *Bumi Manusia*, social construction is depicted in the dialogue excerpt above. In colonial society during that period, class stratification resembling caste was depicted. As an Indo, you can still get an education. You can still live and be adequately appreciated in the community. But as an Inlander? You must have guts. You must have a stance. If not, you will be crushed and thrown without direction under an authority. This is not depicted in *Oeroeg*. In several dialogues, discrimination and segmentation are explained. However, it is not as bold as in *Bumi Manusia*. Small details like this can be interpreted as a sensitivity that can only be felt by a native. The Dutch cannot feel this as the more dominant party because it is considered normal. When people like Oeroeg fight for equality, it is viewed as a deviation and rebellion, even to the point of betrayal.

We can see the contrasting differences in how the two groups see each other. Dutch people, like the narrator in *Oeroeg*, are aware of injustice. However, there is still a sense of righteousness there. The subjectivity of seeing the situation from their point of view is different from what is happening, as is the case in *Bumi Manusia*. Pramoedya describes more clearly how the Dutch authorities apply the law. Inequality occurs in colonial society's life in the Dutch East Indies—a hegemony.

4.2 Educational System Analysis

Discussing the education system in the two novels, I would like to highlight the visible types of education—formal and non-formal education. Before that, let's look at the social conditions around them to get an education.

“I now knew too that my father was paying for Oeroeg’s schooling, which I thought obvious, considering the way Deppoh had died.”

(Haasse, 2012: 52)

“Science and learning...made my personality rather different from that of the general run of my countrymen.”

(Toer, 1981: 2)

Circumstances in *Oeroeg* can be interpreted this way: if Oeroeg's father had not died, then Oeroeg would not have been able to attend school. This is coupled with the information throughout the novel that a school is indeed an exclusive place that can only be obtained because of status. This is precisely what happens in the real world. This is also the case with Minke's state at the beginning of *Bumi Manusia*. He realizes he has advanced knowledge and learning, which makes him different from the rest of the Dutch East Indies.

Both novels portray school as a place where modernity exists—a place of progress and development. Racism often occurs there. How other people, especially the Dutch, behave towards the natives who study there is very discriminatory. In *Oeroeg*, the narrator's aristocratic friend is valued more than Oeroeg. We can see that through this fragment of the story, *“It was then that I became aware, for the first time, of Oeroeg being regarded as a ‘native’—not as an aristocratic native like my classmate Harsono Koesoma Soedjana.”* (Haasse, 2012: 52)

In *Bumi Manusia*, it's even worse. A teacher changes a student's name because his tongue almost slipped, calling him a monkey. *“Mr. Rooseboom’s eyes popped out frighteningly and yelled: ‘Quiet you, monk... Minke!’”* (Toer, 1981: 26). From a noble family, Minke is not free from racism at school.

This piece of the story also shows something about school as a public space: despite being equal students, one's social status and background still determine the treatment of others. Oeroeg and Harsono Koesoma are indeed both natives. Their social status makes the difference. Minke is a native who attends an elite school. His teacher's treatment is still racist. School is still an equal contact zone for people from all walks of life to communicate. However, one's origin still determines one's position. This is what Oeroeg and Minke want to reform. Oeroeg dresses like a Dutchman and Minke changes his habits like a Westerner. They were trying to blend in.

No matter how the school is portrayed, it is still special to the people around the student, especially if they are natives or people who systemically cannot afford to go there. The acceptance of the people around them can also be seen in the novels.

For most people, getting an education is a source of pride. Sidris, Oeroeg's mother, proudly listens to her son, depicted in this part of the novel, *“Sidris... listened to her son with pride, uttering little exclamations from time to time, or licking her tongue in that way of hers that could express a whole range of emotions.”* (Haasse, 2012: 33).

Moreover, the reality behind Oeroeg being able to go to school was that his father had died, he came from an ordinary background, and school was a privilege in colonial social life at that time. So, without the help of the narrator's father, who pays for his death with this education, Oeroeg can not go to school.

On the other hand, when Annelies meets Minke for the first time and learns that he is an HBS student, happiness runs through her. Annelies, who naturally did not have many friends, felt very proud of Minke, *“Now I too have a friend who is an HBS student. You!”* (Toer, 1981: 15).

But still, there is always a negative side to everything. The staff and servants in the narrator's house become cynical towards Oeroeg. The cynicism gets worse and becomes resistance. They are realizing the difference between them. *“Initially this was expressed in trivial ways, such as*

addressing him teasingly as ‘Mr. Oeroeg’... but gradually their disapproval took the form of more or less open resistance” (Haasse, 2012: 34).

Minke's mother sees that Minke has moved away from the Javanese culture that is maintained in the family. Being an HBS student and being smart made Minke forget his traditions. She even said, *“That is the sign that you’re no longer Javanese”* (Toer, 1981: 114). For Minke, the reason is solid. He preferred to avoid squatting to approach people. He wanted to be a free man.

For others, school is also a safeguard for the future. Oeroeg was sent to school by the narrator's father. *“My father’s plans to find Oeroeg an office on the plantation after his seven years of primary education.”* (Haasse, 2012: 63). From this excerpt, we can see that the narrator’s father has plotted for him to work in the office at the plantation after his education is complete. In addition, we can also interpret this as a selfish gesture from the father figure. Oeroeg is expected to return and serve after being educated.

On the other hand, Minke was always labeled a regent after graduating—a government employee, if not a regent. *“This is how your road to high rank will be clear.”* (Toer, 1981: 110). Minke flatly refused when anyone told him that. Again, Minke wanted to be a free man. Besides that, Minke was a contributor to newspapers. His writings have often been published in various publications. He writes under a pseudonym and in Dutch, showing his proficiency and desire to have his writings read by the Dutch.

The novel also often shows teachers providing education on an informal platform. In *Oeroeg*, we can see Gerard as a leader for the narrator and Oeroeg. Lida, too. She is a guesthouse keeper who is very interested in Oeroeg and becomes a guide for him in developing himself and his nationalism. Minke has Jean Marais as the person who constantly reminds him of normality and daily virtues. When Minke is wavering and indecisive, Jean always helps him. One of the things that caught my attention was that in a social construct still conservative and early in its development, Lida, Nyai Ontosoroh, and Juffrow Magda Peters emerged as women who were teachers and role models. Something that is still rare even today. Nyai Ontosoroh also often guides Minke to be independent, accessible, and strong. Nyai Ontosoroh inspired Minke to write in Dutch about her.

“A panther isn’t the same as a monkey, but it’s either one less than the other? A stupid question, you’ll say, and rightly so. The same applies to human beings. Being different – that’s normal. ... Oeroeg is your friend, isn’t he? And if you can be friends with him, how can he possibly be less than you or anybody else?”
(Haasse, 2012: 54)

“It was at this stage that Lida, who was only half aware of what we were getting up to, decided to step in... from the very beginning, Lida doted on Oeroeg.”
(Haasse, 2012: 60-61)

“I advise you to test the truth or otherwise of public opinion... you will be judging a family which is perhaps better than the judge himself.”

(Toer, 1981: 43)

Minke writes about Nyai Ontosoroh in his writings titled Een Buitengewoon Gewoone Nyai die Ik ken (An Extraordinary Nyai that I Knew).

(Toer, 1981: 94)

Eventually, the school as an educational system is a changemaker. School is the manufacturing of a forward-thinking person. It transforms a raw person into a more fruitful and opinionated one. Oeroeg gained enlightenment and nationalism by associating with many people, sharpened by attending school. Minke is a brilliant person. With schooling, he became a more objective person. As Jean Marais said, he wanted Minke to be fair since his mind.

“In his new milieu of radical students and young agitators, Oeroeg had turned into an orator.”

(Haasse, 2012: 103)

“I considered my clothes and my appearance to be a product of mankind’s earth at the end of the nineteenth century: the time of the birth of the modern era. And I truly felt: Java and all its people were a not too-important corner on this earth of mankind.”

(Toer, 1981: 118)

4.3 Identity Analysis

“I think it is fair to say that Oeroeg is imprinted in my being like a brand, a seal.”

(Haasse, 2012: 5)

“I knew many Pure and Indo-European girls. Why was it only Annelies I saw before me?”

(Toer, 1981: 40)

The quotes above express the personal attachment between the two characters to their respective partners. the narrator to Oeroeg and Minke to Annelies. The relationship between the narrator and Oeroeg is already very close. They were born around the same time; their families were already related; Oeroeg's father died for him, and they went to school and grew up together. As Dutch, he was told he had no friends from the same circle. Only Oeroeg. This is also the case with Minke. He attended an elite school and met many pure Dutch and Indo women. No one captivates his heart. Annelies stole his heart and feelings from the first meeting.

Love at first sight. A relationship that creates a sense of belonging. Until a point where separation ruined the relationship.

The difference in seeing the land they come from actually makes the comparison of this novel unique. A second-generation Dutchman born and raised in the Dutch East Indies greatly loves the land. He is depicted as trying to relinquish his identity as a Dutchman and blend in with Oeroeg and his people. He is putting effort into becoming a native citizen. Even so, the native people still see the narrator as an outsider. He is still a white person who speaks Indonesian, not a native Indonesian.

On the contrary, Minke tries hard to relinquish the Javanese culture attached to him. By studying at HBS, he has seen everything. Modernity and the progress of civilization. He has compared what happened in Europe with the reality he faced in his family—different values.

“Go away,’ he said in Soendanesse. ‘Go away, or I’ll shoot. You have no business being here.’ ... his eyes glittered dark like the surface of Telaga Hideung, with the same refusal to reveal what lay submerged in the deep.”

(Haasse, 2012: 112)

The feeling of attachment to something is indeed something complicated. On the one hand, we can see from the narrator’s figure. He can love and be attached to someone who has been close since birth. But from Minke, we learn that compassion can come out of nowhere. Just a flash. So is the feeling of love for the homeland. Foreigners who come to a country, settle down and have families, produce children who love the land. Someone who has been rooted there for a long time experiences enlightenment through the foreign education they receive. Ultimately, the complexity of a person's identity depicted in both novels reaches the same finish line: separation. Separation from the person he loves. In the case of the novel *Oeroeg*, the narrator must also part with the land he loves.

“Don’t go too far, Gus, don’t go too far with your non-Javaness.”

(Toer, 1981: 288)

Conclusion

“I knew him as I knew Telaga Hideung, as a reflecting surface — I never fathomed the depths.”

(Haasse, 2012: 142-143)

Reading a work of literature, we don't just appreciate it as is. We can learn the depth of a story from various perspectives: historical, sociological, cultural, psychological, and so on. Taking the period of the late 19th to mid-20th century with the theme of Dutch colonialism in the Dutch East Indies, both novels provide insights from enjoyable instances. Reading *Oeroeg*, the reader is brought to a sentimental diasporic feeling. A second generation born and raised in a country that is a colony of its metropole. It's a harmless approach. On the other hand, *Bumi Manusia* shows the bitter pill that indigenous Indonesians have to swallow as they are powerless against the foreign authority brought in. Fundamental class differences, unequal position in the eyes of the law, and victimization in their own land.

In *Oeroeg*, the realization of a racial difference comes later. Haasse takes us through his past experiences, from birth to adulthood. The naivety of the main character in *Oeroeg*, when he sees racial discrimination, grows as he matures. Because of this, discrimination against indigenous Indonesians is not so visible. This is not the case with *Bumi Manusia*. Pramoedya straightforwardly shows that racial disparity is real. Pramoedya also describes in more detail how society works. Dutch and Indo are in different legal and social reaches. The aristocratic class was the right hand of Dutch authority and marginalized people like Nyai Ontosoroh.

This study also highlights how the education system was seen and worked during Dutch colonialism. In *Oeroeg*, school is a gift from those who are more intelligent to those who are left behind. There is a pedagogical style in Haasse's language when talking about *Oeroeg* and native Indonesians. *Bumi Manusia* portrays school as a realm of balanced discussion between Dutch, Indo, and Indonesians. The fact that those who can go to school are those with privilege is there. However, Pramoedya depicts it as a bargaining position for Indonesians and does not show a condescending attitude from the Dutch side.

The inner struggle is a side of humanity well addressed in both novels. After discussing big ideas like racial differences and modernity, discussing basic human things such as the identity crisis becomes interesting. In *Oeroeg*, the main character brings us a diasporic feeling. Born and raised in a country, then forced out of it, the love that grew naturally is erased by reality. Minke in *Bumi Manusia* is still determining how he should behave. He has received a European education and way of thinking but is still haunted by guilt towards his mother for leaving the Javanese traditions he hates. On the other hand, he hates European law for taking away someone he loves while feeling the different legal position experienced by native Indonesians.

My interpretation after reading *Oeroeg* and *Bumi Manusia* leads this thesis to one significant conclusion about both authors: Haasse writes about the Dutch East Indies in a careful style. She indeed talks about racial differences, educational segmentation, and identity struggles. However, her style of language is very safe. Moreover, in the context of colonialism, Haasse does not take the position of the dominant party. She takes a diaspora position. She feels she is not guilty of Dutch Colonialism but rather a victim—one who lost her birthplace.

On the other hand, Pramoedya writes more bluntly. Taking Minke's point of view, he describes the colonial situation more broadly. He describes the feelings of each group of people more loudly and vigorously. This is understandable because of Pramoedya's condition and position as a person from the colonized country in the context of Dutch Colonialism.

The similarity between these two novels is that the ending is equally unhappy. Both have separation as the ending. In *Oeroeg*, the narrator's separation from Oeroeg depicts the burning of a bridge. The relationship between the two that had grown since birth must be lost. So, too, with Minke. He must let Annelies be separated from him. Both of these individual separations are symbolic. Intimate human relationships represent the end of colonialism as a large societal structure. Also, the end of colonialism always takes victims: every human being who lives in its environment, from both of the entangled parties.

Through these two novels, we can also gain, at the very least, one clarity on what happened in the Indies Literature discussion. Haasse and Pramoedya, through their novels, both wrote about the Indies, historically and personally. Haasse came from the Dutch side—colonialist and Pramoedya from the opposite side. The most apparent difference between these two novels is how a writer's subjectivity influences how he views a neutral object. Haasse is a second-generation Dutchman born and raised in the Dutch East Indies. She was born into a settled social structure. She considered this to be normal. Pramoedya, on the contrary, is a native of the Indies. By gaining sufficient understanding, he realized that what happened was not human freedom. This approach makes Indies Literature have different tastes and sensations, even though they discuss the same phenomenon—Indies society.

Finally, this thesis aims to show the importance of a sociocultural approach to literature. It can bring us to a different dimension that is more intimate, sentimental, and refreshing. We, as readers, are expected to reflect the authors' experience. Comparing the two reminds us that one coin has two sides: top and bottom, heads and tails. These figures are intertwined with each other.

*“We’ve been defeated, Ma.” “We fought back, Child, Nyo, as well and honourably
as possible.”*

(Toer, 1981: 335)

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