



Greetings from the ED

For the past 60 years on April 21, Indonesians celebrate Kartini Day to honor the 19th century Javanese noblewoman who paved the way for women's emancipation. She is remembered for her quiet struggle to be free of the cultural shackles prevalent during her era, such as the ban against women getting an education and the arranged marriages women were forced to go through. In short, independent and free-thinking women were not allowed to exist during that time. Yet, Kartini was a thinker. She was able to obtain private tuition at home, intended mainly for her brothers. She thus learned to read and write. The books she read and her correspondence with her Dutch friends opened up a whole new world beyond her traditional sphere. She realized early on the value of education and set up schools within the confines of her home, especially for girls.

The legacy Kartini left behind has been interpreted in different ways by different groups. Are activists in Indonesia fighting for women's liberation like their sisters in the developed world?

Kartini is often described as Indonesia's first feminist fighting for women's rights. On the other hand, other groups at the opposite side of the spectrum invoke Kartini as a symbol of traditional gender roles of motherhood and femininity. Throughout Indonesia's nation-building efforts and rapid globalization, Kartini's narrative has been adopted and adapted to support the objectives of different groups.

Not surprisingly, there is the tug of war between adherence to traditional cultural

Ruminations

Party Line

In a letter written by Anna Marie Schauf to John A. McGlynn, Jr. in May, 1943, when she was a primary school teacher in Ithaca, Wisconsin, and he was at Advanced Flying School at Williams Field in Chandler, Arizona, she gladly announced, "Great news! We have a telephone installed now. Put it in this afternoon. In case you want to call me up some time my number is 5-F2. That means we're on Line 5 and our ring is 2 shorts.

The phone to which my future mother refers is the one in the upper left-hand corner of a photograph taken five years later in the living room of her parents' home. By today's standards, the size of the telephone contraption is most impressive.

As can be seen from the image of the wall phone in the second photograph below, taken at my parent's home in 1955, by the mid-1950s the dimensions of the common wall phone had diminished greatly to less than half of its previous size. Our number was, officially, "45-3F," but only Mrs. Bergen, the switchboard operator in Cazenovia, would have called it that. For us, the number was "three shorts."

Who was on our party line? Most of the other families in the valley: Stittleburgs, Cunninghams, Nearys, and the two Hanko families. Whether it was because of penury, poverty, or maybe just not wanting to be bothered by these newfangled things, I don't know, but our neighbors, Jake and Lorraine Mitchell, who lived at the top of the valley next to the stone quarry, declined to have a line.



John and Anna Marie McGlynn with their first three children in 1948, (from l to r) Eileen, Kathleen, and Maureen.



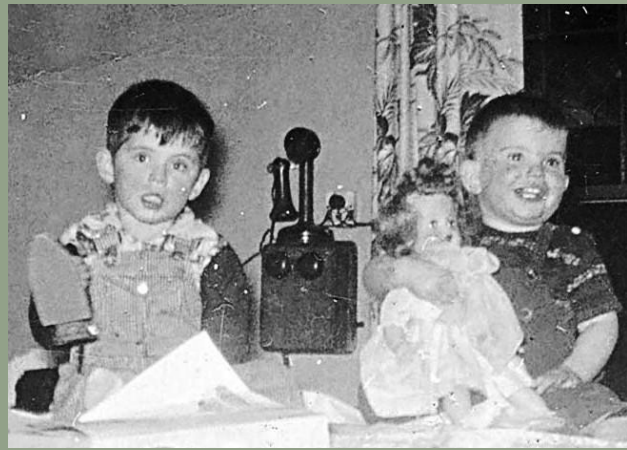
Source: publicdomainvectors.org

values versus the need to modernize women's roles to meet economic needs. Over the past six decades, we have seen major changes in women's status in Indonesia. More girls are going to school, more women are working outside the home, and arranged marriages are no longer the norm. Indonesian women can now be found working in almost all socio-economic sectors, even in politics. However, these achievements have not been equally shared among women around the country. There are areas where traditional customs still prevent girls from going to school and they are still being pushed into early marriages. Fulfilling Kartini's legacy is still a long way to go with full of challenges.

The subject of women's struggle for their rights appears in many books Lontar publishes, translates and promotes.

In the coming months, Lontar plans to hold a variety of interesting programs. Follow our activities via our website or newsletter. And please keep those donations coming. It's for a good cause.

Yuli Ismartono (yismartono@lontar.org)



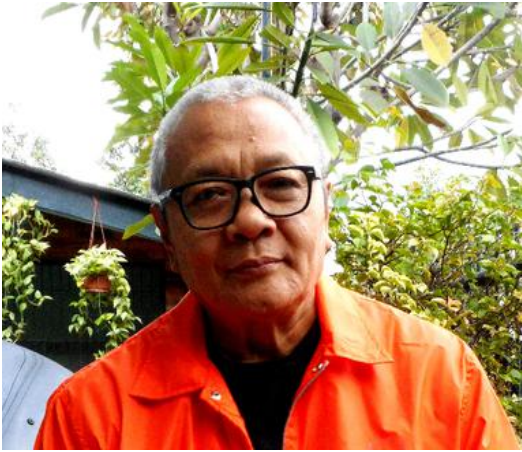
John and Mark McGlynn at play on top of the dining room table at Glynnspring in late 1955.

On a party line, every call to a subscriber on the line, the ringing tone that is, can be heard by other subscribers. I was too young to have any friends outside my family circle and thus no one to call, but I do remember, when our telephone began to ring everyone in the house, especially my mother, would pause in whatever they were doing to discern who the call was for. Often, a subscriber would mistakenly pick up the receiver but then, when hearing others speaking, would immediately put the receiver down. There was one neighbor in particular, however, who picked up her receiver regardless of the number of rings and then would remain on the line, silently listening to the conversation. She was known as a rubber neck and her actions were seen as a disregard of phone etiquette.

There were other rules as well. Because the phone was attached to the wall, you had to talk in its location, in front of everyone else in the room. Therefore, you kept your voice down and you didn't "hog the line," keeping your call short and conveying only what information needed to be conveyed.

In August 1976, just three months after I first set foot on Indonesian shores, Indonesia became the world's third country to use a satellite for domestic telecommunications. Up until that time only the countries of Canada and the United States had domestic satellites in orbit. For Indonesia, this was a grand venture President Soeharto had announced exactly one year previously in an address to Parliament. In that speech (as published by the Department of Information), he remarked, "A Nation whose people can communicate with one another easily, a Nation that greater understands national problems, and a Nation with broad education will be capable of speeding up development and strengthening unity. This adds greatly to national resilience." He called the satellite system "Palapa," the name of a mythical fruit and a reference to an oath taken by Gajah Mada, the 14th century Javanese general who vowed not to eat of the fruit until the archipelago had been united under one rule.

IN MEMORIAM



Yudhistira Massardi (Source: X.com)

YUDHISTIRA ANDI NOEGRAHA MOELYANA “ANM” MASSARDI (28 February 1954–2 April 2024) began writing when he was in junior high school. He worked as a journalist for *Tempo* magazine and as an editor for *Jakarta Jakarta*, *Editor*, *Humor*, *Indonesia Visual Mandiri* and *Tiras*. He also served as deputy chief editor for *Lelaki* magazine (1976–1978).

A multi-talented author, Yudhis, as he was known, published two collections of poetry, four short story anthologies, seven novels, several plays, and numerous literary essays as well.

One of his collections of poetry, *Sajak Sikat Gigi* (Toothbrush Poems) was named by the Jakarta Arts Council as the best book of poetry for the period 1976–1977. His debut novel, *Arjuna Mencari Cinta* (Arjuna Looking for Love), published in 1977, won the Buku Utama Foundation Award for the Best Novel for Young People. Another novel, *Mencoba Tidak Menyerah* (Trying not to Give up), won a Jakarta Arts Council award in 1996. His anthology *99 Sajak* (99 Poems) won the Poetry Day Award in 2015. His plays, *Wot* and *Ke*, received awards in the Jakarta Arts Council Playwriting Competition. Lontar published the former in *The Lontar Anthology of Indonesian Drama*.

RIP, Mas Yudhis.

The initial cost of the Palapa system, consisting of two satellites and 40 earth stations, was budgeted at US\$ 400 million but, with cost overruns, the actual cost has been estimated at closer to US\$ 1 billion (approximately 5.5 billion today). This was at a time when the majority of the population lived below or near the poverty line. Outside the public sector, only successful private companies and the wealthiest of citizens could afford to have a phone.

Friends of mine who started a business in Jakarta in the early 1970s once related they had had to take out the rupiah equivalent of a US\$ 10,000 loan from Standard Chartered just to obtain a single phone line for their start-up company. This explains why in 1977, I had to travel 16 kilometers from the home where I was boarding in Pasar Minggu to the Skyline Building on Jalan Thamrin, Central Jakarta, where the international call center was located, and there wait several hours before entering a booth where I would be connected by telephone to my parent’s home. Here again, as with party line calls, calls were kept short. The absence of private phones also explains why, when one wanted to make a date with your *pacar* or beau, you had to write to them at least one week in advance in order to give them sufficient time to reply to your invitation. Just as the use of a party-line phone dictated a certain kind of etiquette, the lack of a phone and the inability to communicate with others cheaply and easily necessitated another set of rules.

In the two decades between 1977 and 1997 Indonesia launched seven more communications satellites and, while I have no statistical data to back up this assertion, by the mid 1980s it seemed that most middle-to-upper income homes in Jakarta were equipped with phones. No longer did I have to send a letter of invitation for a date and wait for days with baited breath for a reply. But now, fast forward to the introduction and widespread use of the internet in the early 1990s, growth in the use of pagers later that decade, the introduction of cell phones several years later, and then the birth of smart phones, text messaging, Whatsapp, and all those other communications devices and applications one “can’t live without.”

Being on a party line meant sharing a single phone line with several other households, meaning that you could listen in on other people’s conversations and they could listen in on yours. Today, “being connected” is very much the same. But is there any way to safeguard one’s privacy in such a situation? Well, there are rules of etiquette but in an era when private opinion is publicized and dirty laundry is aired ever more frequently, it would appear not, not unless you follow the example of Jake and Lorraine Mitchell and decline to connect to the party line.

John McGlynn (john.mcglynn@lontar.org)



Source: Facebook

COKORDA “COK” SAWITRI (1 September 1968–4 April 2024), was a novelist, a poet, a scriptwriter for theater and a dancer who performed in modern theater and traditional Balinese performances. Born in Sidemen, Bali, besides writing and dancing, Cok also conducted workshops about literature, dance and theater, and was a leading activist in social, cultural, interfaith and humanitarian issues. She established several arts communities, including Kelompok Tulus Ngayah and Forum Mitra Kasih Bali which focused on gender parity.

Cok Sawitri was the author of several novels, all of which were based on famous figures in Balinese history. She also authored several collections of poetry and short stories as well.

Cok received the Dharmawangsa Award for literature for her novel, *Sutasoma* in 2010. Her novel, *Janda dari Jirah* (The Widow from Jirah) was translated into English and published in the U.S. Her novel, *Tantri, Perempuan yang Bercerita* was short-listed for the Khatulistiwa Award. Lontar published a collection of her short fiction titled *A Lonely Death and Other Stories*.

Few contemporary Indonesian authors, Balinese writers included, possess such an in-depth understanding of history, philosophy and Balinese traditions as did Cok Sawitri. She will be greatly missed.

Surat dari Pejompongan

YUDHIS

Kawan Moer,

Aku kepingin kau mengingat-ingat lagi obrolan kita tempo hari, tentang kenapa orang Indonesia menyenangi puisi protes. Jika tidak salah ingat, aku pernah mengatakan bahwa puisi Indonesia itu bereaksi kelewat cepat terhadap keadaan di sekitarnya. Belum berkontemplasi terlalu dalam, sudah menyimpulkan dan jadilah puisi sebagai ungkapan reaksioner.

Saat itu kau tersinggung karena itu kesimpulan itu cenderung merendahkan puisi-puisi penyair Lekra yang pernah kita bicarakan dulu. Atau, puisi protes dari penyair non-Lekra semacam Taufiq Ismail dan generasinya yang banyak muncul hampir serentak di sekitar peralihan dari kekuasaan Sukarno ke Soeharto, Mereka sama saja.

Kau menyebutku tidak punya “rasa korps”. Kontrev!

Tapi, kini aku mau menyinggung masa yang sesudah itu, penyair yang lain lagi. Kita tahulah, setelah Suharto berkuasa, puisi protes tidak berhenti bekerja. Di tengah tekanan rezim Orde Baru dan masalah pembangunan yang ditimbulkannya, ada pula penyair semacam Yudhistira A.N.M. Massardi. Dia menulis juga protes seperti yang dikerjakan Taufiq Ismail atau Rendra. Tapi, dia juga bermain-main sebagaimana Remy Sylado dengan “puisi mbeling”-nya.

Lantas, jika begitu, di mana keistimewaan Yudhis?

Buatku, Yudhis adalah penyair yang memandang masalah-masalah di sekitarnya dengan sangat kritis, tetapi ia tidak tegang dalam mengungkapkannya. Puisi-puisinya terang, sederhana, tetapi karena itu kita seperti tidak menemukan apa yang kelewat berharga dari bahasanya. Maksudku, bahasa yang digunakannya cenderung dipungut begitu saja dari bahasa keseharian kita. Kurang ada kegigihan menciptakan bahasa puisi yang menggugah.

Mungkin—ini mungkin ya—dia memang tidak bermaksud bersulit-sulit dengan puisinya. Salah satu sebabnya, kukira, ia hendak mencapai pemahaman pembaca yang lebih cepat, dengan begitu ia sudah cukup terpuaskan. Jika ini yang hendak dicapai, ya memang segitulah harkat puisi-puisi Yudhis.

Tetapi, dalam lanskap perpuisian Indonesia sepanjang 1970-an ia dicatat sebagai salah satu yang penting juga. Aku ingat, kemenangan buku puisinya *Sajak Sikat Gigi* dalam penghargaan buku puisi pada 1977, diprotes sejumlah penyair senior. Bahkan, oleh penyair yang karyanya sama-sama menang bersama buku puisi Yudhis. Seakan-akan sikap itu hendak menegaskan bahwa penyair yang *slengekan* dan masih baru tidak bisa dong disejajarkan dengan penyair-penyair yang sudah makan asam-garam perpuisian Indonesia.

Sikap itu sejatinya kesombongan generasi tua dalam memandang



The 13th edition of the Makassar International Writers' Festival will be held this year from May 23 to 26. The Festival is organized by Rumata Artspace, an independent not-for-profit institution founded for the purpose of promoting Indonesian culture — literature, film, and other creative work, especially that being produced by authors and artis from Eastern Indonesia.

MIWF prioritizes human rights and financial transparency. All events are carried out with the principle of zero-waste.

Lontar has been a strong supporter of MIWF ever since its establishment by Lily Yulianti Farid and Riri Rivai Reza in 2011, and has participated in numerous editions of the Festival. This year will be no different.

At this year's festival Lontar will host a discussion about the recently-published collection of short stories, *At the Circus*, by Ternate-born author, Nukila Amal. We will also be involved in a panel about two other recent Lontar publications, *The Cockroach Trilogy*, by Nano Riantiarno and *Era of the Bat* by Ikranagara. Lontar has also planned a bazaar of Lontar books at very special prices.

For information on times and venues, follow Lontar's and MIWF's social media, respectively, instagram @lontarfoundation and instagram @makassarwriters. See you in Makassar!

pertumbuhan generasi muda. Saat itu, Goenawan Mohamad sebagai salah seorang juri, mengapresiasi secara positif pencapaian Yudhis sebagai yang potensial dan bisa berkembang. Puisinya segera terbedakan dari puisi-puisi Indonesia sebelumnya cenderung berat dan ditulis oleh penyair yang guru.

Buatku, pembelaan itu memberikan harapanku akan berkembangnya Yudhis mencapai *maqam* kepenyairan yang lebih stabil dan bernilai di kemudian hari. Tetapi, ini mohon maaf ya, jika kita membaca sajak-sajaknya yang terakhir, bagiku tidak banyak perubahan dari sajak-sajaknya ketika masih muda dahulu. Prinsip penulisan puisinya masih tetap sama: ringan, mengomentari apa yang terjadi di sekitar. Karena ia menua, ia juga mulai berpegang pada sesuatu yang menenangkan hati atau memantapkan jiwanya. Paham keagamaan, maksudku.

Dengan posisi begitu, sekali lagi, aku sih tidak menemukan perkembangan yang cukup penting dalam persajakan Yudhis, jika dibentangkan sejak 1970-an hingga tahun-tahun terakhirnya. Kita menemukan semacam pengulangan tema dan sikap kepenyairan. Bahasa puisinya masih cenderung berindah-indah—meski tidak sepenuhnya—tetapi juga hendak mencapai kebenaran pengucapan.

Dengan segala catatan ini, aku mengenang Yudhis. Puisi-puisi baladanya, “Rudi Jalak Gugat” misalnya, tetap bisa menjadi catatan penting tentang puisi protes yang memberikan kesadaran kritis buat pembaca. Memang, masih ada bayang-bayang Rendra di sana, tetapi perhatiannya pada soal-soal sosial yang ada, membuat awam selalu mengingatknya sebagai penyair publik.

Kita mesti melihat ini sebagai bagian dari tanggung jawab sosial seorang penyair di sebuah negeri yang penuh masalah semacam Indonesia. Tentu saja, tanggung jawab sosial ini dipikul Yudhis dengan kesadaran penuh. Sebagaimana dikatakan Rendra, seorang penyair mesti memberi kesaksian pada pembaca. Sebab pembaca rupanya masih menunggu sesuatu dari lapangan sastra. Seakan-akan, penyair mesti melayani apa maunya khalayak pembaca.

Ah, kau bisa bayangkan bahaya hubungan seperti ini, kan, Bung? **Zen Hae** (zenhae@lontar.org)

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