



Greetings from the ED

The sight of officials wearing colorful traditional attire during the national day celebrations of August 17 was a reminder of how culturally diverse Indonesia is with its hundreds of ethnic groups and local languages.

Back in 1945, when the nation's founders gathered to proclaim an independent state, the biggest challenge was how to unite the archipelago's 70 million people with differing cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The rallying cry at the time was *Satu Nusa, Satu Bangsa, Satu Bahasa* (One Land, One Nation. One Language), aimed at bridging the differences between the peoples of all the country's regions and islands.

Since then, successive governments have propagated Indonesian, the Malay-based centuries-old lingua franca of the archipelago, through education and mass literacy programs, to be the national and official language for formal, commercial and official, communications. Consequently, numerous local languages, especially those without their own writing tradition, are in danger of becoming obsolete—even though they are “protected” by the Indonesian constitution, which guarantees the right of local languages and vernaculars to exist and develop.

According to information found in *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, of the 700 odd languages spoken in Indonesia, 98 are now classified as “threatened,” 28 are “nearly extinct,” and 12 have vanished. Fortunately, the government is well aware of the situation and has taken steps to prevent further decline, such as integrating local languages in the school curricula, especially in regions where these languages are spoken; and promoting

Ruminations

Poetics 3: Hamartia

In a dramatic work, “hamartia” is understood to be a fatal flaw of the protagonist—lust, rage, greed, etc.—which alters the outcome of events from joy to catastrophe.

In the mid-1960s, when coming into Cazenovia, Wisconsin, from the direction of my family's farm three miles south, after crossing the trestle bridge spanning the channel that links the two halves of Lee Lake (a man-made lake created in the early 20th century following construction of a dam to provide hydro-power to a grist mill at the dam) the first building one saw on the southern side of Main Street was a two-story brick edifice housing Francis Hanko's Carpenter Shop. Francis and his wife Norma were good friends of my parents and Norma, or “Mrs. Hanko” as I called her, was my first-grade teacher until the middle of the 1957 school year when, visibly pregnant, she was forced to resign. (In those days, women in the “family way” were pressured, if not forced, to resign!) One Christmas, my parents gave my brother Mark and I a miniature barn Mr. Hanko constructed. Another Christmas, younger sisters Colleen and Christine were gifted wooden rocking horses, also the product of Mr. Hanko's capable hands. Over the years, as the market for handmade wooden objects such as tables, cabinets, and bookshelves declined due to the of cheaper mass-produced items for sale in Reedsburg and Richland Center, larger cities not too far distant, the local market dwindled and, in 1990, Mr. Hanko closed shop.

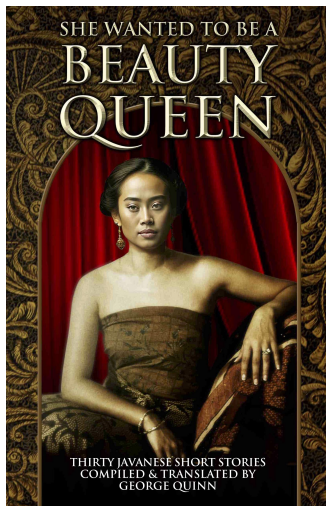
The next building one saw was the barbershop cum residence of the Hale family whose patriarch once monthly shaved the heads of my brother Mark and I after our father deposited us at the shop on his way to work at the post office. I can't remember what year Evan Hale retired but the place was then taken over by Jed Walsh whose turn it became to apply his manual clippers to our locks.



Sisters Colleen and Christine on their rocking horses; Christmas, 1959.

cultural events that celebrate local languages, including storytelling competitions, and traditional arts performances.

In June of this year, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology announced plans to “remap” the country’s regional languages and literatures, a project that will be included in next year’s Regional Language Protection Program, with a budget of Rp 9.1 billion. The Ministry’s Language Development Agency has been making efforts to revitalize regional languages since 2021. So far, 93 regional languages have been revitalized with plans to reach 100 by next year.



At Lontar, we have always valued the cultural and linguistic diversity of regions around the country. One of our most recent publications is *She Wanted to be a Beauty Queen*, the first-ever anthology of modern Javanese fiction in English translation. This follows such previous publications as *In the Small Hours of the Night*, the first-ever anthology of Sundanese short stories in English translation, *The Birth of I La Galigo*, a version of the Bugis classic, and two children’s books from the Acehnese. We hope you will continue to support our endeavors at preserving and promoting Indonesia’s rich literary world.

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The third building, which in the 1976 photo below has the sign “Jail Bait” above its front door was, in the mid-1960s, Peterson’s Bar and Grill, one of four taverns in the tiny town of Cazenovia (population 350)—that being the reason Cazenovia was called the “Las Vegas of Richland County,” an area in the state where much of the county was “dry.” The bar was owned and operated by Everett and Louise Peterson who, with their large brood of children, lived on the floor directly above the bar.

My father generously spread his coins and one-dollar bills among the four taverns but, on Friday nights, he most always deposited them at Peterson’s because of its Friday-night fish fry—the fish of choice being Atlantic cod except when there’d been a good grunion run in a stream nearby. On those nights he’d frequently arrive home with a waxed paper bag containing heavily-battered deep-fried fish, French fries, and mayo-laden coleslaw. Even when soggy and cold, this exotic cuisine tasted like manna to me. The grease-laden air of the bar, however, seems to have permeated the Peterson’s residential quarters on the second floor, which explains why the Peterson kids always came to school smelling like deep-fried fish.

The next two buildings, solid brick buildings with an external stairway between them, housed Raymond Hess & Sons, the burg’s largest mercantile enterprise. The smaller two-story building on the right housed the store’s large surplus inventory. The main store, which sold most everything in God’s creation, had once boasted a soda fountain and ice cream parlor but, when I was a boy, the former aspect of that venture was no longer in operation due to stricter and costlier Food and Drug Administration regulations. Nonetheless, Old Ray Hess continued to keep the ice-cream part of the parlor going for years to come and, during summer months, filled countless cones with vanilla or chocolate ice cream from five-gallon buckets.

The main store had at its front a newspaper and magazine rack where, after my monthly haircut, I would sit and read (and sometimes pilfer) comic books and *Mad* magazine before Old Ray peered over the counter at me and suggested I either part with some spare change or leave. While Old Ray and his wife lived in a home adjacent to the grounds of Cazenovia Memorial Park beside the dam, Young Ray, their bachelor son, lived above the main store, on the second floor, accessible via the stairway between the two buildings. Past the door to his quarters I would scurry when going to the third floor, a rental unit occupied, for a time, by the family of my classmate and friend, Debra Ferguson, whose mother one day inadvertently left on the kitchen counter a bottle of sloe gin which, I happily snatched sips from but soon thereafter puked out the third floor window.

Beside Hess’s, as you can see in the photograph, was a telephone booth but I can’t image how Ma Bell ever made a dime from that unit. No one I knew used it to make calls except “by collect.” After night games at Weston High School, located several miles outside of town in the middle

BOOK LAUNCH & DISCUSSION

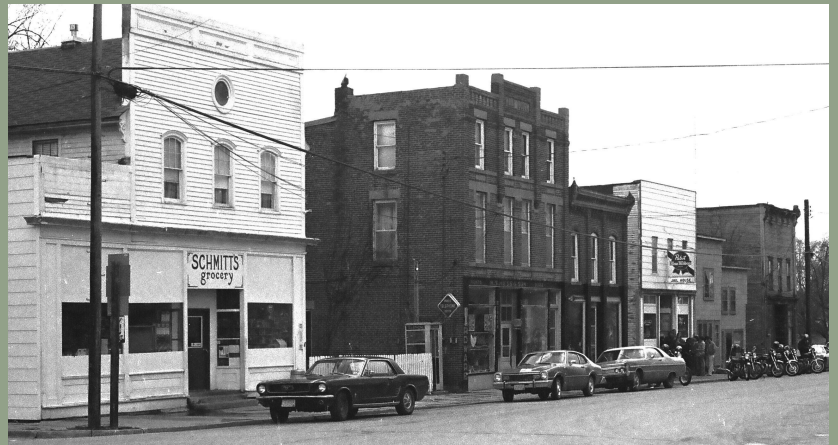
On Friday, August 23, Lontar launched, at Teater Utan Kayu, the novel *Against the Grain*, the English translation of *Manusia Bebas*, a novel by Suwarsih Djojopuspito. Speakers included Suwarsih's granddaughter, Dewi Widyastuti, a lecturer at Sanata Dharma University; Isyana Artharini, an author who has written about Suwarsih; and moderator Dhianita Kusuma Pertiwi, a literary scholar. This event, held in cooperation with Komunitas Utan Kayu, was made possible with support from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology through its DanaIndonesiana program for the arts. Additional assistance was provided by Indolit Club of Sydney, Australia.



Dhianita Kusuma Pertiwi, Dewi Widyastuti,
Isyana Artharini



John H. McGlynn, Dhianita Kusuma Pertiwi,
Dewi Widyastuti, Isyana Artharini, Ayu Utami



Main Street, Cazenovia, Wisconsin, 1976

nowhere, I would catch a ride into Caz, and from there make a collect call to Glynnspring, asking to speak to “Little John.” Anyone answering the phone would decline to accept the charges; all knew the call was a signal for a parent to drive to Caz and fetch me at the telephone booth.

Finally, at the four-way intersection of Main-, East Main-, Cazenovia Streets, and Hwy. 58, we come to Schmitt’s Grocery (and, very soon, the point of this story). Schmitt’s went out of business in 1989 but, at the time in question, was one of two grocery stores in Cazenovia. Although my family more often purchased the foods we did not grow or produce at Soltwedel’s Grocery across the street, an attraction for me at Schmitt’s, especially in wintertime, was a large iron grate in the floor near the front of the store where I would stand, pretending to think of what I wanted to buy, as warm air from an underground furnace below thawed my numbed fingers.

The store’s proprietors, Bob and Bette Schmitt, lived with their family in the back portion of the store and on part of the second floor as well. The other section was subdivided into rental units.

I was a student of Bette who taught, at Weston High School, a course called “Consumer Economics,” in which I may have scored a passing grade but truly did not grasp the vital importance of learning how to manage one’s financial affairs. As with so many other subjects about which I did not grasp the need to enlighten myself, my ignorance would lead to many future mistakes.

While “hamartia” is traditionally defined as a fatal flaw, contemporary theoreticians say its meaning is more akin to “to miss the mark” or “to err” because of ignorance. And isn’t this the case? Whether on stage or off, whether in personal or public life, and whether in the United States, Indonesia, or elsewhere, ignorance, I daresay, is almost always the root of catastrophe.

John McGlynn (john_mcglynn@lontar.org)



Indolitclub is a monthly discussion group where members read Indonesian literary texts either in the original Indonesian or their English translation in order to learn more about Indonesia's language, culture and history.

Founded in Sydney in 2018 by Toni Pollard, Indonesian language teacher and translator, and Kesty Pringgoharjono, former executive-director of Lontar, the club's wide membership is mostly made up of people with a background in Indonesian studies or who have lived in Indonesia—all with a love of Indonesia and its literature.

Before Covid, members met in person at a central library in Sydney but, during Covid, moved online to Zoom, thus permitting the club to attract members from outside the city and country as well. The club meets the third Thursday of the month at 10.30 AM Sydney time.

Around 25 members show up regularly for the meetings. The enthusiasm, experience, and knowledge that members contribute to discussions makes each session a fun learning experience.

Over the last six years Indolitclub members have discussed a wide range of textual material, from poetry to plays and from short stories to novels. Many are works that Lontar has produced.

New members are always welcome. For more information, contact Toni Pollard at tonipaddo@gmail.com.

Surat dari Pejompongan

RINTISAN

Kawan Moer,

Dalam peluncuran novel *Against the Grain* karya Suwarsih Djojopuspito—yang dinggriskan oleh George A. Fowler dari *Manusia Bebas*—di Teater Utan Kayu (TUK) Jumat dua pekan lalu ada satu soal yang sempat jadi pembahasan. Kenapa Suwarsih menulis dalam novel itu dalam bahasa Belanda, bukan dalam bahasa Indonesia? Bukankah pada masa itu, tahun tiga puluhan, rasa keindonesiaan di kalangan sastrawan sedang menguat? Apa yang didapatkan Suwarsih dari tindakan menulis dalam bahasa kolonial itu?

Orang lupa, bahwa novel ini pada mulanya ditulis dalam bahasa Sunda dengan judul *Marjanah* (baca: Maryanah), tetapi naskah ini ditolak oleh penerbit Balai Pustaka. Meskipun pada masa itu Balai Pustaka menerbitkan karya-karya dalam bahasa daerah, terutama Sunda dan Jawa, karena isinya yang dipandang berisi semangat antikolonial, makanya penerbit pemerintah itu menolak untuk menerbitkannya.

Penolakan ini tentu saja mengecewakan Suwarsih. Penolakan naskah buku oleh penerbit kolonial itu bukan sekali dua. Tulisan-tulisan karya pengarang Tionghoa Peranakan yang cenderung membawa tema di luar yang digariskan Balai Pustaka—pergundikan, perjudian, permadatan dan penyakit sosial lainnya—sudah pasti tidak akan terbit di bawah bendera Balai Pustaka. Itulah kenapa Suwarsih menulis ulang romannya itu dalam bahasa Belanda *Buiten het Gareel*—bahasa asing yang dikuasanya dengan baik.

Roman yang sezaman dengan *Buiten het Gareel* adalah *Belenggu* karya Armijn Pane. Roman ini pun tidak terbit oleh Balai Pustaka, tetapi oleh majalah *Poedjangga Baroe* dalam tiga kali terbit, kemudian diterbitkan secara utuh oleh Pustaka Rakyat, penerbitan yang dikelola oleh Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, yang juga mengelola penerbitan majalah itu. Baik secara isi dan gaya penulisan, *Belenggu* dianggap membawa warna baru dalam prosa berbahasa Indonesia masa itu.

Armijn yang juga mahir menulis dalam bahasa Belanda—terutama dalam tinjauannya tentang teater masa itu—lebih memilih menulis dalam bahasa Indonesia. Oleh karena itu pula, reaksi publik jauh lebih cepat muncul untuk *Belenggu*, ketimbang untuk *Buiten het Gareel*. Roman Suwarsih ini tidak menimbulkan gejolak sebagaimana roman Armijn. Kepeloporan Armijn dalam prosa dipandang hampir setara dengan Amir Hamzah dalam puisi dalam generasi Pujangga Baru.

Sementara kepeloporan Suwarsih menjadi tidak terbaca hanya karena romannya itu ditulis dalam bahasa Belanda. Padahal dari segi isinya, *Buiten het Gareel* menampilkan pandangan politis dan pribadi pengarangnya yang sangat kuat. Meski ditulis dalam bayangan autobiografi sang pengarang, novel ini pada akhirnya mesti dilihat

IN MEMORIAM



Vern Cork in 2022

Photo courtesy of Pamela Allen

Vern Cork, a translator of Indonesian literature, passed away at the age of 78 on August 1, 2024. Born in Sydney on January 11, 1946, Vern had a background in education as a teacher and librarian. He taught Indonesian language and literature in Sydney. In 1972, he visited Bali as an Australian Volunteer, helping to manage the library in Denpasar. Since then, his love for Bali grew stronger, marked by building friendships and conducting research into Indonesian literature. The result was *Bali: So Many Faces—Short Stories and Other Literary Excerpts in Indonesian* (1996). Eighteen of the 25 short stories in the book were translated by Vern and published in *Bali Behind the Seen: Recent Fiction from Bali* (1996). Vern emphasized that these short stories represent a kind of backstage or insiders' view of the complexity of human relationships and the tensions and concerns which lie behind the usually serene beauty that tour promoters and Balinese alike would wish the world to see.

Besides short stories, Vern also translated *Bali, the Morning After: Poems about Bali by Bali's Major Poets'* (2000). In 2006, Vern translated an anthology of stories by Balinese writer and journalist Gde Aryantha Soethama entitled *Ordeal by Fire*.

The world owes a debt of gratitude to Vern for making the works of Balinese writers accessible to a wide audience, across time, generations, and cultures. Rest in Peace, Vern.

Darma Putra

sebagai mutiara yang amat bernilai dan terlambat kita kenali. (Ah, tengoklah lagi suratku yang baru lalu, Bung!)

Meski sempat mengalami cetak ulang dua-tiga kali di Belanda, pembaca sastra di Indonesia seperti tidak mengetahui karya Suwarsih tersebut—sampai akhirnya sang pengarang menerjemahkan seraya menulis ulang novelnya itu dalam bahasa Indonesia menjadi *Manusia Bebas* pada 1975.

Sepanjang 1940-1970-an orang lebih mengenal Suwarsih dengan karangan-karangannya yang lain. Terutama sejumlah cerita pendeknya di majalah-majalah sastra, baik yang kemudian dikumpulkan dalam *Tudjuh Tjerita Pendek* (1951) atau *Empat Serangkai* (1954) maupun ceitra remaja yang baru terbit pada 1970-an, *Maryati*.

Ketika terbit pada masa Orde Baru, *Manusia Bebas* terlihat sebagai sebuah roman nostalgia, tentang masa lalu kaum pergerakan yang pada saat itu kurang dikenali lagi. Tambahan lagi, pada masa itu sudah muncul pula nama-nama pengarang perempuan lain yang menjadi bahan perhitungan. Karya-karya Nh. Dini, misalnya. Pembaca sudah telanjur menabalkan karya-karya Nh. Dini sebagai sebuah letupan suara perempuan yang pribadi dan berani di antara generasi pengarang yang didominasi oleh kaum lelaki.

Apakah dengan begitu *Manusia Bebas* adalah sebuah novel yang salah waktu? Sebuah anakronisme? Kukira, tidak. Sebagai sebuah novel yang pada mulanya ditulis dalam bahasa Belanda, nilainya tidaklah berkurang. Sebuah mutiara tetaplah mutiara di waktu kapan pun ia muncul dan memancarkan pesonanya. Kini pembaca sastra kita bisa mendapatkan lebih banyak lagi perspektif kepengarangan perempuan. Apalagi pada masa Reformasi dan sesudahnya.

Karya-karya Suwarsih—terutama *Manusia Bebas* ataupun *Buiten het Gareel*—pada akhirnya adalah sebuah karya rintisan. Ia muncul dalam situasi sosial politik yang khas, yang tidak bisa diulang pada hari ini. Siapa pun yang hendak membaca prosa fiksi dari pengarang perempuan Indonesia, mesti menengok kembali kepadanya. Tidak bisa tidak, Bung.

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