



# Lontar Newsletter

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## Greetings from the ED

If we are still unconvinced about the dangers of climate change, note the recent storms and floods that have recently devastated neighboring countries. Indonesia was spared this time around, but given its geography and topography, it is, in fact, the most vulnerable area in the region. As is well known, the country has experienced a deadly tsunami, earthquakes, flooding, volcanic eruptions, drought, and other climate change-induced calamities. The question is how prepared are we to deal with this probability? A 2021 survey by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication revealed that 55% of the Indonesians surveyed know “a little” about global warming while 20% claim they “have never heard of it.” If that is truly the case, it is a sad commentary on the state of our preparedness to deal with calamities that could impact negatively on the country’s socio-economic development. As such, a comprehensive information campaign to educate the public on basic climate literacy would be timely. Specifically, it should include the most vulnerable members of the population: children.

In fact, back in 2009, the Ministry of Education and Culture had planned to integrate climate change topics into the curricula of primary up to secondary schools. However, the Climate Change Education (CCE) program remains unclear and unimplemented as a separate subject matter. The reason for this delay may be the bureaucratic complexity involved in designing a curriculum that would satisfy all the ministries involved, besides that of Education and Culture, such as Forestry,

## Ruminations

### Oh, Brother

In this age when an increasing number of English-language name-tags and -cards announce their users’ gender-preferred pronouns—he/him/his, she/her/hers, and they/them/theirs—I am delighted to not have to deal with this issue in Indonesian, a language without gender-specific pronouns. This does, however, become a serious matter in translation when, if following the rules of English grammar, I must translate the genderless Indonesian “*dia*” into English as either “he/him” or “she/her.” Even when knowing a writer’s sexual identity—heterosexual, homosexual, or whatever—why should I assume that when a heterosexual male author is writing a love poem (in Indonesian) about a person whose gender in the poem is not specified, the author is writing about a member of the opposite sex? Can’t he be writing about relationships, in general? Many of the most affecting Indonesian love poems I know are emotionally gripping precisely because no gender is indicated.

Perhaps it’s my age or, maybe, linguistic rigidity, but I simply cannot translate the singular genderless “*dia*” into the plural “their.” All this is to say, I applaud Indonesian for its genderless pronouns—something not the case in honorifics, where you are going to hear the sound of one hand clapping. Not only are many Indonesian honorifics gender-specific, they are also indicative of people’s age and social relationship to one another. Further, most terms of address have familial connotations as well.

When in formal conversation with a person older or of higher social status, you call a male “Bapak” or “Pak” (“sir” or “Mr”) and a female “Ibu” or “Bu” (“Ma’am” or “Ms/Mrs”), which translate as “father” and “mother.” In an informal conversation with a person who is older you might call that person “Kakak” and, someone who is younger, “Adik,” the two of which may be translated as “older sibling/sister/brother” and “younger sibling/sister/brother,” respectively.

The use of these familial terms in conversation—And there are many more, especially if one includes honorifics from regional languages—makes it seem as if Indonesians are just one big happy family. Yet anyone who has lived through or knows of the authoritarianism of former president Soeharto, who called himself “Bapak Pembangunan” (“Father of Development”) knows well that the honorific indicates a superior-subordinate relationship, with “Bapak” being the former, the one in



Source: facebook

Agriculture, Environment, as well as relevant bodies like that of the Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysical Agency. Another reason could be that in terms of funding and resources, CCE competes with more urgent and relevant government priorities, such as programs related to the economy, job creation, food sufficiency and health issues. One could argue that CCE is no less important, given that it is designed to empower people with the basic knowledge and skills to survive natural disasters and mitigate negative impacts. Until the CCE officially becomes a stand-alone topic in schools, a general text book on the dos and don'ts of dealing with climate change and its repercussions, would be more than helpful.

We appreciate your continued support.

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charge. Similarly, and even in informal conversation, if the one person is called “Kakak” and the other is referred to as “Adik,” there is an implied inequality between the two speakers despite their more affectionate nuance than such alternatives as “Saudara” and “Anda,” those two cold-sounding “yous.”



With Mark on our mother's lap, December 1954

Perhaps throughout the world it's only single children who escape the obligation to show deference to older siblings and, maybe, it's only single children who don't expect a certain degree of subservience from persons younger than themselves. That, I don't know, but in my family of ten children, when an older sibling told a younger sibling to do something, the appropriate reaction was not to ask why but to skedaddle and do the elder's bidding.

One of my earliest memories dates from late 1954 when I was just two years and one month old. Until that time, I had been the baby of the family, the youngest child and the center of attention. Being the first boy in the family, after a string of five girls, I was, as my older sisters have often reported, spoiled, cherished, and adored. But that I don't remember. And neither do I remember my mother's inexplicable disappearance from the house on November 18 nor her return home several days later with a blanket-wrapped bundle of human flesh in her arms.

What I do remember is a feeling that, overnight it seemed to me, the dynamics in our household had changed.

Although I had outgrown the white wicker bassinet in which newly-born offspring slept, I still counted it as my own—even if I was now sharing a mattress in the larger wooden “baby bed” with my sister Jane. Suddenly, the bassinet had in it a new resident, a baby named Mark, and was no longer mine. And now, when my grandmothers came to visit, neither immediately hugged me to her bosom. Instead, they first went to the bassinet to coo over the eight-pound mound of jelly vegetating there.

Unconsciously, I realized (but did not willingly recognize) I had been usurped, a situation that did not change in the months ahead. In fact, sometime later, maybe even a year later, on Mark's first birthday—Time blends in early memory!—when my godmother came to Glynnspring with a gift in hand, a white enameled pisspot with a red handle that looked like an oversized version of the mugs in which my mother ladled hot chocolate for her children on winter mornings, I assumed it was for me. I loved that pisspot at first sight but when I tried to take it from my

## AUTHOR OF THE MONTH



Courtesy: <https://cabiklunik.blogspot.com/2013/05/jejak-nasjah-djamin-kuasai-seni-rupa.html>

Nasjah Djamin (Perbaungan, North Sumatra, September 24, 1924–Yogyakarta, September 4, 1997) painted and wrote short stories, poetry, novels, children’s stories and plays. He was a member of the Young Indonesian Artists Association in Yogyakarta, worked at the Musicology and Choreography Institute in Yogyakarta, and was the editor of *Budaya* magazine. He published four collections of short stories: *Sekelumit Nyanyian Sunda* (1961), which was adapted into a play in 1963; *Hilangnya si Anak Hilang* (1963); *Di Bawah Kaki Pak Dirman* (1967); and *Sebuah Perkawinan* (1974). He also published novels, including *Malam Kuala Lumpur* (1968) and *Dan Senja pun Turun* (1981); a children’s story, *Si Pai Bengal* (1952); and an illustrated story, *Hang Tuah* (1952). He received several awards, including the Art Award from the Indonesian government for his novel *Gairah untuk Hidup dan Gairah untuk Mati*, in 1970.

One of his short stories titled “Pilgrimage” was published in *The Lontar Anthology of Indonesian Short Stories Volume 1*.

godmother’s hand, she slapped my hand away and told me it was for my brother.

At that age, I would not have thought “What the f\*\*k!” but I certainly was vexed and, after she left, I stole the pisspot from beside the bassinet, smuggled it outside the house, and tossed it into the tall weeds of the swamp below the house. Oh, brother! Such be the workings of an infantile mind!

Mark was a robust child and by the age of four was equal to me in size. He was also more athletic and by the time I was seven and he was five he could easily beat me at most any sport. In the years ahead, in athletic bouts especially—football, softball, and the like—he was the one to beat, not I, the elder. Jump forward two decades Mark would become a successful engineer and then, in the years to follow, a shrewd businessman, a philanthropist, and a major employer in his community.

In May 1993, Mark came to visit me at my home in Jakarta, but for just one night, arriving on a Thursday morning at 8:30 and leaving the next day, Friday, at 12 noon. He’d been on a business trip to Guangzhou, southern China, but could only spend the night, he said, because he had to be back home, in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin, in time for his son Ryan’s first Little-league baseball game of the season. We had dinner at my home that night and the next morning, before leaving for the airport, he insisted we first go to the newly-opened Hard Rock Café at the Sarinah Building on Thamrin in order to buy t-shirts for his daughters, Mara and

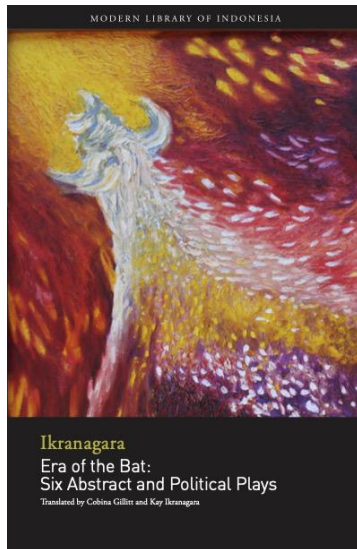
Ellen. Not that I was any longer envious of his superiority to me in many ways, yet still I marveled at the priority he gave to his children through which he quietly demonstrated the importance of placing “love” above all other sentiments.

When we were young I would never have thanked Mark for getting the best of me and though he will always be my *adik*, my younger brother, I see now that I am in debt to him for having taught me that age is not a signifier of sagacity and that one should never underestimate another person simply because of their more tender years.



Mark outside of Hard Rock Café in May 1993.

John McGlynn ([john\\_mcglynn@lontar.org](mailto:john_mcglynn@lontar.org))



The six plays in this collection by Ikranagara (1943–2023) were written and performed by his theater company Teater Saja (“Simply Theater”) between 1975 and 1997 during Indonesia’s New Order era (1966–1998) when freedom of speech was severely curtailed under the autocratic rule of President Soeharto. The New Order regime was plagued by corruption, collusion, and nepotism with widespread allegations of government officials engaging in illicit activities for personal gain.

Ikranagara’s plays comprise an ongoing dialogue on the purpose and usefulness of the arts and artists in the face of a corrupt and repressive authoritarian regime that stifles creativity while also renewing the original purpose of theater in Indonesia. Throughout his career, Ikranagara sought to find a place where he did not have to wear a mask but instead live and express himself honestly and authentically. Given the political reality in Indonesia at the time, that was impossible but he and other playwright-directors working during that period discovered that a combination of borrowing from and hybridizing traditional theater forms and aesthetics with the brutal absurdities of living in a censored and repressive society was the path to getting their theater produced and not shut down by the authorities—at least, for the most part.

## Surat dari Pejompongan

30/9

Kawan Moer,

Ketika film *Penumpasan Pengkhianatan G30S PKI* besutan Arifin C. Noer muncul di bioskop, aku sudah duduk di bangku Tsanawiyah. Dan sekolahku seperti tidak punya urusan dengan kewajiban menonton film yang menakutkan anak-anak itu. Berbeda dari generasi adik-adikku yang diwajibkan menonton film tersebut sebagai bagian dari pembelajaran sejarah Indonesia. Bahkan, mereka kemudian harus pula belajar mata pelajaran Pendidikan Sejarah Perjuangan Bangsa (PSPB).

Aku menonton film itu setelah bertahun-tahun kemudian. Meskipun saat menontonnya aku sudah bukan kanak-kanak lagi, rangkaian pembunuhan dan suara tembakan—lebih-lebih musik ilustrasi gubahan Embie C. Noer—terus-menerus mendekam dalam kepalaku. Aku dihantui oleh kematian yang mengenaskan dan wajah-wajah anggota Cakrabirawa yang dingin-bengis. Mereka turun dari truk tentara dalam gerakan lambat, diiringi musik besutan Embie itu. Ya Tuhan!

Namun, aku selalu terkenang pada akting Syu’bah Asa dalam memerankan tokoh Aidit. Kamera yang merekam dalam jarak sangat dekat wajah Aidit yang memimpin rapat sembari mengisap rokok kretek. Optimismenya tentang masa depan PKI. Peluang emas yang akan mereka raih sudah di depan mata. Ah, selalu ada yang mengesankan dalam akting Syu’bah itu—meskipun yang bersangkutan mengaku tidak meyakinkan dalam memerankan Aidit.

Akhirnya kita semua tahu, itu adalah film propaganda Soeharto untuk melegitimasi kekuasaan Orde Baru dan mendiskreditkan habis-habisan Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) dan gerakan kiri di Indonesia. Dan ia berhasil.

Film sepanjang 271 menit itu mungkin film Indonesia terpanjang tentang propaganda politik Orde Baru. Jika tetap menggunakan judul sebelumnya—yakni *Sejarah Orde Baru*—mungkin tidak akan terlalu kentara bagaimana rezim ini menggerus komunisme dan gerakan kiri. Namun, pemakaian judul yang sangat tendesius *Penumpasan Pengkhianatan G 30 S PKI* semakin jelaslah apa maunya film itu. Pertama adalah soal penumpasan. Menumpas artinya membinasakan sampai tiada tersisa. Kedua soal pengkhianatan, yakni pengkhianatan terhadap Pancasila dan itu dilakukan oleh Gerakan 30 September yang tiada lain adalah PKI.

Cermatilah, Bung. Tidak ada lagi garis miring antara G 30 S dan PKI—sebagaimana pernah ditulis sebelumnya. Jika dengan garis miring kita bisa memisahkan antara G 30 S dan PKI sebagai yang sendiri-sendiri. Mereka bisa berhubungan, bisa juga tidak. Akan tetapi, dengan menghapus garis miring itu artinya G 30 S adalah pekerjaan PKI. Dengan kata lain, penumpasan itu bukan hanya ditujukan kepada sebuah



## Festival Kebudayaan Yogyakarta 2024: Umpak Buka

### Pameran Azimat-Siasat: Seni Rupa & Arsip Sastra Yogya

Festival Kebudayaan Yogyakarta (FKY) adalah gelaran kebudayaan yang digelar setiap tahun sejak 1989 di Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta. FKY hadir untuk menjadi moda pencatatan, ruang edukasi, ekspresi seni, dan perayaan melalui beragam program lintas. Festival ini turut menjadi ruang bagaimana identitas kolektif terbentuk dan terus mencari relevansinya di tengah momen sosial yang terus berubah.

Festival Kebudayaan Yogyakarta (FKY) 2024 melalui program sastra mencoba membangun siasat keberlanjutan arsip sastra Yogya yang selama ini menjadi dokumentasi personal atau komunitas untuk dihimpun dalam satu kesatuan. Keterkaitan antara tradisi kesastraan di keraton, kajian sastra di kampus, dan praktik sastra di kampung atawa masyarakat akan terjembrani dengan adanya program Pameran Arsip Sastra Yogya ini.

Kami mengumpulkan ratusan arsip dari puluhan komunitas dan/atau lembaga sastra serta para sastrawan yang menyambi peran menjadi arsiparis untuk menjadikan pameran arsip sastra Yogyakarta ini sebisa mungkin menghadirkan arsip untuk dibaca ulang oleh masyarakat sebagai memori kolektif dan wawasan baru di bidang literasi baca, tulis, dan visual. Yayasan Lontar berpartisipasi dengan seri film dokumenter “On the Record” tokoh sastrawan Indonesia.

Festival dan pameran arsip sastra akan berlangsung tanggal 10-17 Oktober 2024 di Bawuran, Pleret, Bantul. Informasi lebih lanjut kunjungi akun instagram @infofky

gerakan, tetapi juga kepada sebuah partai yang memenangi Pemilu 1955—dan organisasi-organisasi massa yang terkait dengannya.

Karena film ini dibuat oleh rezim Orde Baru—dengan mempekerja salah satu bakat terbaik dalam teater dan film Indonesia: Arifin C. Noer—maka ia telah mengambil posisi yang jelas. Ini adalah film semi-dokumenter yang digunakan untuk melawan atau menandingi penelitian sejarah yang pada saat itu dilakukan oleh peneliti asing yang justru mengajukan fakta-fakta yang berlawanan dengan yang selama ini digembar-gemborkan Orde Baru.

Jika aku tidak salah mengutip “Cornell Paper” bahwa peristiwa ini adalah bagian dari konflik internal Angkatan Darat. Bahwa, tidak ditemukan bukti forensik para anggota Gerakan Wanita Indonesia (Gerwani)—organisasi perempuan terkuat masa itu yang juga digilas habis sebagaimana PKI—memotong alat kelamin para jenderal yang telah dibunuh ini. Intinya, sebenarnya, banyak hal yang salah dari apa yang propandakan oleh Orde Baru terkait soal ini.

Sekarang ini penulisan Gerakan 30 September cukup dengan G 30 S—tanpa embel-embel PKI. Artinya, gerakan itu memang ada, tetapi apakah ia melibatkan PKI atau tidak, sudah cukup banyak penelitian yang membuktikannya. Termasuk yang terekam dalam Cornell Paper itu.

Kendati demikian, perkara ini belum sepenuhnya terang bagi kita. Ada saja kabut yang menggelantung atau digelantungkan di atasnya. Sebab, meskipun sudah cukup hasil penelitian yang membantah propaganda Orde Baru itu, belum ada pula keberanian kita untuk berterus terang akan peristiwa ini.

Yang tambah repot sebenarnya karena kita adalah bangsa yang gampang lupa. Jangankan yang jaraknya hampir 60 tahun lalu, yang baru 20-an tahun saja kita sudah tidak ingat lagi. Atau, kita berusaha keras untuk tidak mengingat lagi peristiwa traumatis itu. Apaan sih Tragedi 98 itu?—jika boleh aku mengutip pertanyaan seorang anak dari generasi kiwari. Jika mau ditambahkan: Ngapain sih Prabowo saat itu?

Tolong kasih paham, Bung.

**Zen Hae** ([zenhae@lontar.org](mailto:zenhae@lontar.org))

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