

architexture

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Archi-text-ture: Architecting Through Writing

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Abstract—Architecture is often understood as a real and tangible science, in the form of space and form. This understanding is associated with the origin of the word 'techne' which refers to the engineering in the construction process of a building, an architectural work. Writing on new architecture developed around 1968, at a time when architectural criticism by Louis Huxtable became known although the form of writing, identification both in pictures and description, had been done since the time of the Roman Empire by Vitruvius and later interpreted by Leon Battista in the Renaissance. This paper describes descriptively several examples and categories of writing about architecture, especially in Indonesia. The study uses an exploratory study approach with reference to the theory of architectural criticism from Attoe's understanding. The descriptive exploration of this paper shows there are at least four categories of architectural writing in Indonesia, from those aimed at creating architectural narratives to making architectural texts which are then called archi-text-ture in the paper. The paper is not a final paper, because it is the start of a long textual journey, so it is made as an archi-text-ture construction process and to open up opportunities for further interpretation and development.

Keywords: architecture; exploration; criticism; text

I. Introduction

Architecture in its general definition is the art and science of designing and constructing buildings, bridges, and so forth; the science of building or it can also be defined as the design method and style for a building construction. The definition refers to work of designing and is also related to the construction process. The word "to design" itself means to arrange everything; or to plan; while construction means the arrangement (of model, layout) of a building (bridges, houses, etc.). With the search for the temporary definition of the word, it can be interpreted that the word 'architecture' can be used not only in understanding the process of designing a building, as well as it has now been widely understood, but can also be interpreted into the understanding of a "construction of thought". Leach states that architecture is a product of thinking (Leach, 1997), but what kind of thinking? Or to think in what way? General perceptions about architecture or processes in architecture or the one made focus on architectural thinking in the present paper is related to building

construction, as described above. However, it turns out that it can be developed into other fields.

Construction Christopher Alexander, Sara Ishikawa, Murray Silverstein in 1977 compiled a book entitled 'A Pattern Language: Town, Building, Construction'. If Dawes and Ostwald questioned about 'patterns' and then linked it with 2 other books of Alexander with the aim of finding a critical thinking process to compose a new pattern, which in this case is architectural theory (Dawes & Ostwald, 2017), the present paper tries to focus more on the use of the word 'language'. In the study, definition of the 'language' is "a system of conventional spoken, manual (signed), or written symbols by means of which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in its culture, express themselves. The functions of language include communication, the expression of identity, play, imaginative expression, and emotional release".

If the interrelation between architecture and language is observed further, an understanding of semiotics will emerge. The word 'semiotic', seen from its origin, departed not from architectural knowledge but from linguistics, which examines the signs and behaviour in the use of these signs. The

often-used study, which is based on the understanding of semiotics places architecture as a semiotic object which is then interpreted through the aspects influencing the formation of the semiotic object (Pellegrino, 2006).

The brief description above reveals that there is an opportunity to proceed architecturally and not by means of mere physical construction, but construction with thought through a language perspective.

In language there are 4 skills, which are grouped into two categories, namely (Sadiku, 2015):

Listening and speaking, as a skill unit that simultaneously occurs in the real world, especially in fostering effective oral communication.

Reading and writing, as a skill unit that fosters effective written communication.

This paper will focus on written communication, that is to say, how to read and write architecture, architecting through writing.

II. Method

6 This paper belongs to exploratory research. Exploratory research aims to formulate problems, clarify concepts, form hypotheses, and generally begin with an exploration of the literature (Sue & Ritter, 2012). Thus, this paper reveals the possibilities for further research; it is not a final paper, but a preliminary one.

As a theoretical reference for writing about architecture, especially architectural criticism, Wayne Attoe's understanding is used in this exploration. Wayne divides architectural criticism into three types, namely normative criticism, interpretive criticism and descriptive criticism (Attoe, 1978).

III. Results and Discussion

When understanding about architecture, the first thing emerging is the perspective of architectural criticism. The most often-emerging example as one of the architectural criticisms is the work of Louis Huxtable that reviewed the Marine Midland Bank building by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill which was published in the *New York Times* on March 31, 1968 (Lange, 2012). Louis Huxtable is also known as a full-time architectural critic and has once been a judge of the Pritzker Architecture Prize.

How is it in Indonesia? In this paper, the category of writing architecture in Indonesia is divided into several parts.

The first category is writing architects. Since the mid-1990s there have been interesting developments, in which, architects not only design but also write. This paper does not present a historical sequence according to the timeline, but

presents about the history randomly. The first example is Adi Purnomo's book, 'Relativity: an architect in the space of dreams and reality'. Mamo's book (Mamo is Adi Purnomo's familiar nickname - departed from his uneasiness with his statement: "After so long devoting himself to the world of architecture as a practitioner, I feel that this is distancing myself from the world of reality" (Purnomo, 2005). The purpose of writing the Purnomo's book is described: "...to try to evince the spectrum of work that is usually done by an architectural practice" which was then clarified with the statement: "Relativity is more of a personal record, a random collection of thoughts and works resulting from the struggles in the practice of an architect that I have done, am doing and want to live with". The same proposition was also stated by Baskoro Tedjo in his book through the statement: "This monograph is an attempt to share various processes and my approach is architecture, where ideas and beliefs about an idea are experimented, both on paper and in buildings" (Tedjo, 2012). Not only are individual architects 'interested' in writing about their works, but we can call Aboday, an architectural consultant who also later wrote a book, not just one book but two books that intertwine one another. In the introductory part of the first book, it is stated that media play a major role in Aboday's development process, and Aboday realised that the power of text sometimes exceeds the visual potential, so narrative becomes an important element that provides a different perspective on a work (Aboday, 2013). If in the first book, Aboday tells about the struggles of a new bureau at that time, in the second book he shows more of the process of contemplating the founders of Aboday and leaving the heart of the founder as revealed in the first book, but still about Aboday's travel records and his desire to expand its reach to the more general society. This was revealed by Gunawan Tjahjono in the introduction to Aboday's second book (Tjahjono, 2017). Of the three examples above, the same thing is the understanding that there needs to be a supporting narrative in the form of writing, in addition to the architect's own design. There are additional explanations that are deemed not sufficiently revealed in the design. There may also be things left unfinished in the design but which are of interest both to the architect themselves and to a public reader. The architectural narrative is not only for the benefit of the architect's promotion but also as a note for the development of their abilities and critical thinking which the general public also needs to know. The fact about critical thinking in the design process was carried out by Budi Pradono. In contrast to Adi Purnomo, Baskoro Tedjo and Aboday, Budi Pradono does not necessarily state his book as a design note or as a narrative that - perhaps - was not revealed in the design. In the introductory part of his book, Budi Pradono stated that the book was made as a reflection note of the work process and architecture (Pradono, 2015). He prefers the position of architecture - as a work - which contributes to the city where the building is located. So, the book does

not merely explain his work. Even in the first chapter, the meaning of clay city is presented. Pradono elaborates 'Clay City carries several layers of messages that only visitors can digest and imagine. Thus, architecture becomes a tool for building messages'.

The second category is the category of collaboration between architects and architectural writers. Sometimes there are difficulties for architects to recognise and narrate their works clearly, so it requires collaborative partners to describe more fully and clearly the desired narrative. The first example is the collaboration between Galih Widjil Pangarsa and Eko Prawoto. What is interesting is the introductory note from the author - namely Galih Widjil Pangarsa. Pangarsa stated: "writing about someone's work is quite difficult. Especially if there is a fairly large subjective tendency. Eko Prawoto and I (Pangarsared) are classmates at the UGM Yogyakarta Department of Architecture ... a tough and difficult act is to be brave - wisely - to show the mistakes of a friend. But the main thing one gets when studying a person's architectural work is to take lessons from their experience" (Pangarsa, 2008). The same factual condition happened to Anas Hidayat when collaborating with Andy Rahman. In the book 'Natabata', Anas Hidayat's attempt to understand Andy Rahman's architectural process is narrated. In the introduction, Anas Hidayat stated that the process of architect Andy Rahman in architecture occurred from 2006 and proceeded from 'experiencing' to 'living', then continued with the contention that formulating oneself is always not easy because it requires thorough consideration (Hidayat & Rahman, 2019). In the second collaboration of Anas Hidayat with Andy Rahman, it was revealed the two of them also carried out a process of 'living up to' architecture. If the book 'Natabata' focuses on material with its exploration, in 'Ngekos' (Hidayat & Rahman, 2020), the architectural discussion leads to a typology of functions, that is, flats located in one area, around a housing complex in Keputih, East Surabaya. The interesting thing about the second book is the introductory part was no longer written by Anas Hidayat alone, but it is stated that it was written by both of them as in the sentence: "After 'Natabata' book which was published in early 2019, in this book both of us are no longer...". It can be seen Pangarsa's notes when collaborating with Eko Prawoto were experienced by Anas Hidayat through the 'Natabata' and later addressed in the book 'Ngekos'. David Hutama also experienced problems with the perception of a work when collaborating with Sony Sutanto. Even in advance of the collaboration, David Hutama observed it in more detail with the statement: "The initial discussion of this book is to determine whether this book is about Sony Sutanto or Sony Sutanto Architects (SSA)" (Hutama, 2016). The second category involves two parties who, although they are both architecture graduates, have different architectural understandings from one another. Pangarsa clearly

explained that writing about someone else's work is not easy no matter how close the person is to the writer. Hutama even found a crucial problem at the beginning of the compilation of the book on Sony Sutanto's work, in that, he would expose Sony as an individual or as an architectural bureau entity? Hidayat even needed, until the second book - even though both of them were graduates of ITS (Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember) architecture and had known each other for a long time - to be immersed in Andy Rahman's architectural process.

Researching Anas Hidayat is interesting enough in order to study his gait and way of thinking. Hidayat calls himself an *arsi-TEKS* (here is referred to as archi-TEXT), namely an architect who deals with texts (Hidayat & Rahman, 2020). The idea for the title of this paper "Archi-Text-ture" was inspired by the Hidayat's term of "archi-text". However, the present paper will not discuss further about Hidayat's way of thinking in his archi-text. What will be presented in this paper is the Hidayat's process in writing the book '15 Cerita Arsitek Muda'. In this book, Hidayat's writing method is revealed, namely the interview. It seems natural that when writing something or wanting to understand someone's way of thinking, we do interviews, and it is common in all scientific fields. But what is actually interesting is when conducting interviews, Hidayat was attracted to the unique and touching stories influencing the design process, even the architect's thinking. Hidayat then explored the stories behind the design process so they are not only inspiring but also serve as a lesson for readers (Akmal, 2017). The narrative method which is not common, even tends to be extreme, is the strength and critical thinking of Anas Hidayat which becomes the strength of his narrative. Collaboration with several people was also built by Peter Yogan Gandakusuma and Murni Khuarizmi who later created the book '7 Arsitek Indonesia'. In the introduction part, Gandakusuma looks for another side of architecture that is not merely physical, but transcendental. This is reflected in the statement: "This book discusses architectural works and the subject of an architect who has a feeling, hope, love and passion for their architecture. Not only discussing the object of work, they also discussed the subjectivity of the architects. It is the architectural words and thoughts of these seven architects that need to be taken notes of, recorded and rewritten to become a product of discourse that can provide a perspective on dedication while working, a love for tracing the traces of the past and an endless passion to formulate a better future". I (Peter Yogan Gandakusuma-ed) argue that the subjective condition of architects needs to be understood first before discussing the object of their work" (Gandakusuma & Khuarizmi, 2015). The first and second categories share similarities in understanding the purpose of architectural writing, that is to say, in conveying narratives that are sometimes not revealed in the form of designs. The narrative can be conveyed from the side of the architect himself or with the help of colleagues who

act as a connector for thoughts in written form.

The next category is architectural reviews. Architectural writing of this form is distinguished from the second category, because usually architects and writers did not meet directly or even lived at different times. This form of writing is usually included in the category of architectural history reviews. There is a personal interpretation in understanding the architect's architecture. Attoe categorises it as writing with a biographical descriptive critical approach (Attoe, 1978). An example of the third category is the book "Membuka Selubung Cakrawala Arsitek Soejoedi" by Budi Sukada. The distance between Soejoedi and Budi Sukada were conveyed very straightforwardly in the background section of Budi Sukada's book in the statement: "I have never met Soejoedi, only heard his name whenever my senior students at the Department of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering, University of Indonesia talked about the best examples of Indonesian architectural work ... I've got to know him. Unfortunately, he didn't like public speaking, let alone writing. He only speaks through his works. So, there really is no way to get acquainted with him other than just starting from his works" (Sukada, 2011). Sukada even had to choose a 'microhistory' approach for Soejoedi's approach to architectural history writing, due to Soejoedi's span of work that lasted 20 years and the number of his works that were limited in number. The consequence of the 'microhistory' approach is that the reader of the book will have a different picture from one reader to another, and that is the intention and purpose of writing this book with the approach of a 'microhistory', providing space for interpretation of an interpretation of the architectural journey of one of the important figures of Indonesian architects. It was different in the context when Setiadi Sopandi wrote the book 'Friedrich Silaban', Silaban's great name and position during the Sukarno administration and the many artefacts of his works and writings that 'made it easier' for Sopandi to compile Silaban's book compared to Sukada, from the perspective of the availability of written material and the traces left by the architect. Sopandi then gave the Silaban book framework into the process of Indonesian national identity and tried to put Silaban's career and works in context, especially architectural and cultural discourses throughout during the early days of Indonesian independence until the beginning of the new order (Sopandi, 2017). If Sukada and Sopandi started from an introductory process and tried to introduce the architect to the general public in order that they can be understood according to the context of space and time, there is another example in the category of architectural commentary with a different perspective. Realrich Sjarief wrote Alvar Aalto's book initially not because he wanted to introduce Aalto to the public, but because Aalto was already one of the great figures of modern architects, but instead departed from the anxiety of finding a role model in his architectural process. It refers to a reflective process of seeking, seeking

within oneself. In the introduction of his book, Sjarief states clearly that: "Quality is not determined by how much quantity is worked out; quality is above quantity. Quality is not directly proportional to the popularity of a work. The evaluation of one work against another arises from the strength of the process of its creation... The architect is a human being who should appear honest, acting as they can. After the trip to Finlandia, our eyes were opened to the meaning of the totality of deep-rooted design" (Sjarief, 2020). Here, Sjarief actually wrote Aalto's book for himself, for his process of architecting because he was aware there was something missing in the process. Through Aalto, he found a new way, which could then influence his architectural methods. Therefore, the function of architectural writing is also a learning process for the architect himself that happened to transform into a book as a means of reminder or documentation of his learning process.

If in the first to third categories, discussions prioritise writing on architecture, whether written by architects themselves, in collaboration or in the form of architectural appreciation/criticism/reviews, in this fourth category there are fundamental differences. The fourth category is named archi-text-ture, because the text itself is a work of architecture, or in other words, writing becomes a work of architecture. The insertion of the word 'text' into the word 'archi-text-ture' was inspired by David Farrell Krell who changed from the word 'architecture' to 'archeticture', due to consideration of the fragment of the word 'tec' which refers to 'technics' and was later changed to 'tic'. The term 'tic' refers to the word 'ticture' which means *begetter*, referring to someone who creates something or can also be understood as a parent (Krell, 1997). This paper will not discuss in depth the context of architectural philosophy revealed by Krell, but her writings inspire the present writer to propose an architectural understanding as an understanding of architectural thinking construction in the form of writing, or written architecture.

'Text' is an English word, deriving from the Latin word *texo*, *texere*, *texui*, *textus* which means (1) to build carefully (2) plait (together) (3) weave. Thus, the definition of the word between architecture and archi-text-ture is not much different because it is based on the process of building, and even archi-text-ture provides the conditions for caution and weaving, a meaning that can be traced deeply.

An example in the 'archi-text-tour' category is Derrida and Eisenmann's 'Chora L Work' (Derrida, Eisenman, Kipnis, & Leeser, 1997). This book is the result of a collaboration between Derrida, a French philosopher and Eisenmann, an American architect. The collaboration is also related to the Parc de la Villette project under the coordination of Bernard Tschumi, a French-Swiss architect. It was made as an explorative experiment as well as concrete evidence of architectural deconstruction. On the other hand, it

shows Derrida's contribution in the design process though Derrida is not an architect or designer. The solution is to use Derrida's analytical exploration of Timaeus Plato and Chora's ideas (Cruickshank, 2010) for Eisenmann believed that with Chora his attempt to challenge the domination of 'presence' in architecture as a representation of the equality of presence and absence will become apparent. Eisenmann wanted to create a space where presence and absence work together against a traditional hierarchy that identifies presence with solidity and absence with emptiness. Chora refers to a refutation of the ideal binary that the two have tried to suggest criticising the philosophical tradition of western architecture. Although it can be said that the book Chora L Work is related to the Parc de la Villette, but unlike the first or second category, this book does not narrate the Parc de la Villette project or neither the concept of Parc de la Villette, but can be placed as a separate architectural work. It is confirmed that the shape of this book has gaps from the beginning of the page to the end of the book in several places and leaves the words with gaps in it disappear. Even though it looks like an architect's logbook looking for design ideas - because there are sketches, writing, analysis and so on - all of it is made in the context of the building process. Gaps in some places appear as a manifestation of absence among presence without having to be hierarchical with the solids and voids. Another example that is closely related to this Chora L Work is Bernard Tschumi's Manhattan Transcripts. Tschumi's work originated from the gap he recognised between concept and reality built into an architectural process. On this basis of unrest, the aim of the Manhattan Transcripts is to bring architecture to its limits by incorporating certain programmatic and formal concerns into architectural discourse and representation (Tschumi, 2012). Despite being complicated and difficult to understand, there is an understanding offered by Tschumi through this work, that is, the architecture is not just about space and form, but also concerns events, actions, and things happened in space. What is interesting is that both Tschumi and Derrida and Eisenmann's collaboration highlighted space. Prijotomo in his seminary paper entitled "Reading Writing (Javanese) and 'Reading' "Javanese Architecture" (Prijotomo, 2003) confirmed the correlation between the absence of "space" in Javanese script and Javanese architecture. Prijotomo stated: "Any writing is not a mere picture or sound-symbol; writing is a medium by which humans express what they think and perceive. This means that in writing human thoughts or feelings are unique and it is not impossible that there are thinking patterns and taste patterns hidden in the writing. Unfortunately, in the paper, Prijotomo did not explicitly explain its relationship with architecture. He only explained that there was a logic of thinking in Javanese writing which may be related to architecture. Prijotomo's answer only appeared in the book "(Re-) Construction of Javanese Architecture" (Prijotomo, 2006) which is a summary of Prijotomo's dissertation manuscript. In

the doctoral research, Prijotomo used Critical Discourse Analysis approach and put Javanese manuscripts - Prijotomo using Kawruh Griya - Kapatihan 1882, Kawruh Kalang - Sasra Wirjatmo and Griya Maron from Surakarta - into the understanding of the text so it can be studied from architectural perspective. In the conclusion, Prijotomo stated firmly "this research applies the meaning of a text in architecture by making architecture itself a text, as a record of utterances, and statements or considerations and people's thoughts from the tradition without writing." Architecture comprises an object of creative work and then becomes a recorder for public considerations and thoughts". An interesting thing was revealed from Prijotomo's doctoral research, in that, in fact the manuscripts studied by Prijotomo were archi-text-ture because the manuscripts discussed architecture through text, complete with writing logic without spaces/pauses.

The description above reveals that the genuine purpose of architectural writing is to form a narrative that is sometimes not revealed from a design drawing or a built-in product. There is another side needing to be revealed by architects so their thoughts can be conveyed in their entirety. Here, architectural writing acts as a complement to architectural design (first category).

In the process, an architect sometimes needs a partner who understands their thinking and puts it in writing (second category). Such a collaboration can produce a good piece of writing if the colleague aiding the architect to write has a good understanding of what is being conveyed, so collaboration sometimes occurs between close friends or friends during being in the college (as with the case of Pangarsa and Prawoto or Hidayat and Rahman), or a true observer who really follows the development of the architecture and is able to explore and critically write an architectural design process (as with the case of Hutama and Sutanto). The difference between the first and second categories is the ability to open up and trust a collaborator (reviewer).

The third category is more directed at architectural studies or criticism, which has taken place since the days of Louis Huxtable in 1968. Wayne Attoe has also presented his method of criticism. The thing becoming a problem is how the reviewer/critic creates a framework based on the data they have. As it is different from the second category, the reviewer/critic does not have the opportunity to conduct an interview - as in the example of a character reviewed/criticised has died - so the one being 'read' is 'text' in the form of writing or in the form of architectural works and enriched with various phenomena that were around them when the architect was working. This is where the *critical thinking* of the reviewer/critic is required.

The three categories above indicate the position in which written narrative in architectural

work plays a crucial role. Even from the examples above, the narrative must be packaged by the architectural firm itself, in the sense that the architectural firm has created its own book publishing field, for example, Budi Pradono and Sonny Sutanto. This is not due to distrust of the existing publisher, but rather to the satisfaction of an architect and an architect's perfectionism. Allegedly, this was done to maintain the integrity of the book concept.

In the process of 'construction' of the architectural writing, the first category is a complementary or even a complement to the architectural design because architects try to reveal things that cannot be conveyed by their designs, things that have been learned during the design process, or other things that are found and considered important for further review in the future. The second and third categories are reading and writing processes. The second category of readers who read is the architect's partner in charge of writing. The process of understanding after reading is necessary. Hidayat in the second book with Rahman has merged and has become "Dwi Tunggal". There are at least 2 reading processes on architecture, Andy Rahman, prior to merging into the 'Ngekos' book, namely the '15 Cerita' book and the 'Natabata' book. Meanwhile, the process in the third category, after reading and understanding the works or supporting texts, the writer made interpretations and a "framework"/framing of the material that had been collected. The role of the reviewer is dominant in this category.

In the third category, the book "Arsitektur yang Lain: Sebuah Kritik Arsitektur" by Aianti Armand appears (Armand, 2011). In the book, architectural criticism is conveyed more lightly and popularly. However, readers must have basic knowledge of the characters that Armand is talking about, such as Tadao Ando, Zumthor, Gaudi; or also basic knowledge of space theory, understanding of the house, the development of Indonesian architecture, and else. It is interesting because the book does not present beautiful pictures, but rather a composition of poetic words, such as the sentence: "To a man who loves me, I asked what house mean to him. He looked into my eyes and answered without hesitation, you". It is a way of conveying architectural writing with poetic literary rhetoric.

In the first to third category, there are processes of reading, understanding, and writing about architectural works, but in the fourth category, things are really different. Writing is precisely an architectural construction.

Reading is sometimes associated with other domains of knowledge such as philosophy in the case of Chora L Work, or the criticism of the hierarchical thinking tradition in the case of the Manhattan Transcripts, or to 'building' architectural knowledge having been stored in the knowledge of the linguistic tradition. Possibly the analogy approaching the description of this fourth category

is the writing of the novel *Laskar Pelangi* which was later appointed to a big-screen film. Andrea Hirata when writing the novel *Laskar Pelangi* did not think that the novel aimed to be a complete film with visualisation and audio. Hirata wrote about the situation in Belitung, most of which was his life story. Hirata wanted to make detailed explanations so the reader's imagination can reach what Hirata was describing in his novel. That is what Tschumi did in the *Manhattan Transcripts*. Reader's imagination has an important role in the archi-text-ture. This is where Prijotomo acts as a reader of texts originating from the tradition without writing. The texts Prijotomo encountered were those that were compiled based on oral tradition. The manuscript is not actually made for writing but is a recording of spoken speech. This was then interpreted and possibly imagined into architectural knowledge by Prijotomo. Therefore, the reading of Prijotomo's dissertation may also be reinterpreted. Hence, (re-) construction of knowledge can actually become knowledge. Therein lies the strength of architecture and also archi-text-ture because it always presents the opportunity to be reinterpretable according to the context and era.

Without touching me, he has kissed me and whispered at the doorway that never closed: "We're not done yet" (Armand, 2016).

IV. Conclusion

Writing about architecture is an attempt to perfect architectural thinking by architects and parties closely related to the world of architecture. It also evokes "memories" so the next generation can figure out the context of the time when the architectural work occurred. There are architecture (al) values that need to be conveyed in order that they can become lessons for architects' life in the future.

On the other hand, archi-text-ture appears as an opportunity for architect(s) who build their works through texts, not only with imaginative physical designs or real constructions. It has power in the sphere of imagination and interpretation, because by doing so, architecture in a broad context can develop more rapidly. Architecture and archi-text-ture are paired characteristics in architectural spatial thinking patterns; it is just that the architectural expressions are different.

Everything must be written, whatever it is.

Don't be afraid of not being read or accepted by the publisher. The important thing is write, write and write. One day it will be useful.

Pramoedya Ananta Toer – Greenhouse

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