

= Nyanyi Sunyi =

Njanji Soenji (Republican Spelling : Njanji Sunji ; Perfected Spelling : Nyanyi Sunyi ; Indonesian for " Songs of Solitude " or " Songs of Silence ") is a 1937 poetry collection by Amir Hamzah . Written some time after the poet was forced to marry the daughter of the Sultan of Langkat instead of his chosen love in Java , this collection consists of 24 titled poems and pieces of lyrical prose , none of which are dated . First published in the magazine Poedjangga Baroe , the collection has been republished as a stand @-@ alone book several times .

Analysis of Nyanyi Sunyi has focused on the theme of God and His relationship to humanity , as well as of aspects of human existence : fate , dissatisfaction , and escape . Literary critics H.B. Jassin and Zuber Usman view the collection as an attempt to address Amir ? s worldly problems . The collection has been noted as difficult to read owing to its usage of rarely used Malay and Javanese terms and basis in Islamic culture and Malay history . Despite this , Nyanyi Sunyi has been described as freer in its form than traditional Malay poetry , with what poet Chairil Anwar termed " compactly violent , sharp , and yet short " sentences which brought a new style to the Indonesian language .

= = Background = =

Amir Hamzah (1911 ? 1946) was a Dutch @-@ educated Malay writer of noble descent and devout Muslim . He was well @-@ oriented in traditional Malay literature , with favourites including historical texts such as Hikayat Hang Tuah , Syair Siti Zubaidah , and Hikayat Panca Tanderan . Amir likewise read works of Arabic , Persian , and Hindu literature . As a result , he had an extensive vocabulary .

Poet Laurens Koster Bohang considers the poems included in Nyanyi Sunyi as having been written between 1933 and 1937 , while Dutch scholar of Indonesian literature A. Teeuw dates the poems to 1936 and 1937 . The time was one of great emotional turmoil for Hamzah , who was required to marry the daughter of the Sultan of Langkat , who had funded his studies in Java . At the time Amir had reportedly fallen in love with a Javanese woman while studying , and was forced to leave her .

= = Contents = =

Njanji Sunji consists of twenty @-@ four titled pieces and an untitled quatrain . Indonesian literary documentarian H.B. Jassin classifies eight of the works as lyrical prose , with the remaining thirteen as poems . None of the works in Nyanyi Sunyi (and indeed none of Amir 's other works) are dated . At the end of the book is a couplet , reading " Sunting sanggul melayah rendah / sekaki sajak seni sedih " , which American poet and translator Burton Raffel translates as " A flower floating in a loose knot of hair / Gave birth to my sorrowful poems " .

The poems within the collection are :

Untitled poems

Untitled quatrain (" Sunyi Itu Duka " ; " Silence is Sorrow ")

Titled poems

= = Form = =

The poems in Nyanyi Sunyi , unlike much of Amir 's earlier work , generally did not follow the traditional pantun and syair format of four lines of four words . Teeuw notes that some , such " Batu Belah " , followed traditional European forms such as the ballad . Others were more free @-@ form , leaning towards prose poetry .

Amir 's diction depends heavily on old Malay terms which saw little contemporary use . He also borrows heavily from other Indonesian languages , particularly Javanese and Sundanes . The choice of words was influenced by the need for rhythm and metre , as well as symbolism related to particular terms . Ultimately , however , Amir is freer in his language use than traditional poets .

Indonesian critic Bakri Siregar writes that the result is " a beautiful wordplay " .

Translator John M. Echols writes that the poems are " difficult reading even for Indonesians " , while poet Chairil Anwar described the works as " obscure poetry " which could not be understood by persons without an understanding of Islam and Malay history . Indonesian literary scholar Muhammad Balfas notes that the work also has many allusions to religious texts , both Islamic and Christian .

Anwar opined that Amir , through *Nyanyi Sunyi* , brought a new style to the Indonesian language , with its " compactly violent , sharp , and yet short " sentences . In a 1945 article he wrote (translation by Raffel) , " Before Amir (Hamzah) one could call the old poetry a destructive force ; but what a bright light he shone on the new language " .

= = Themes = =

Religion and God are omnipresent throughout the collection , as evidenced from the first poem , " *Padamu Jua* " . Amir often uses the word " Tuhan " (" God ") . However , unlike his earlier poems which used it in a similar manner to " Dewa " (" Deity ") , in *Nyanyi Sunyi* the word is used as understood in Abrahamic religions , such as Amir 's own Islam ; Amir shows influences from Sufism . In some cases , writes Teeuw , Amir treats God almost as a lover , using familiar terms such as " *engkau* " (" you ") to address Him . However , Amir recognises that he cannot be one with God . Jassin writes that Amir seems aware of his own smallness before God , acting as a puppet for God 's will ; Teeuw notes that Amir recognises that he would not exist if God did not .

This is not to say that Amir accepts his lower position in relation to God ; in several cases , Jassin writes , Amir shows a feeling of dissatisfaction over his own lack of power and protests God 's absoluteness . Teeuw likewise notes a sense of dissatisfaction throughout the poems , writing that Amir seems to treat God as an entity that " only toys with humans , allowing them to be pushed aside and erased " . Elsewhere Teeuw writes that Amir questions fate and the need for him to separate from his love .

Aside from themes of God and religion , Amir also shows an awareness of his own humanity , recognising his own instincts and drives . Jassin writes that " Amir 's song is the song of a man 's soul " , showing sadness and joy which do not acknowledge class or creed . Teeuw notes a sense of distrust , a feeling that ? having once lost his love ? there is no reason Amir will not lose his next lover . Indonesian critic Zuber Usman , meanwhile , discusses the theme of love lost in relation to religion , writing that the loss of his Javanese lover led Amir closer to God .

Jassin writes that Amir uses " *sunyi* " (" silence ") as a way to address his worldly problems : regarding time , his own identity , God , and love . According to Jassin , by the end of the compilation physical love has drifted towards a spiritual one , with the answers supplied originating from the supernatural . Ultimately , however , Jassin concludes that Amir 's soul has not reached maturity ; he considers the collection 's last poem , " *Astana Rela* " , as but a temporary escape . Jassin finds that the theme of religion is likewise meant as an escape from Amir 's worldly sorrows , an opinion echoed by Usman .

= = Publication = =

Nyanyi Sunyi was first published in the November 1937 issue of *Poedjangga Baroe* , a literary magazine which Amir had helped establish . It was later published as a standalone book , and by 1949 it had seen its third printing .

In 1941 Amir published another collection of poems , entitled *Buah Rindu* (" Fruits of Longing ") , which consisted mostly of his earlier works . Jassin notes that the works in *Nyanyi Sunyi* appear more developed and mature than those in the later collection . Teeuw notes that the later collection was more explicitly about romantic love , rather than the religious love of *Nyanyi Sunyi* .

= = = Explanatory notes = = =

