LONTAR

Lontar Newsletter

Email: contact@lontar.org

April 2020

Greetings from the Executive Director

It would not be an exaggeration to say that our way of life has, in many ways, been irrevocably upended by the Covid-19 pandemic. From now on, in addition to the already-routine metal detectors and bag and body searches when boarding trains and airplanes (that were put in place after terrorism attacks in the past) the new normal, at least for the foreseeable future, will be face masks and temperature-taking devices prior to entering hospitals and supermarkets—the only buildings we are allowed to go to within the confines of local quarantine rules. Life must go on, however, and though working and studying from home has posed a challenge to educators, students, and parents, long-distance schooling is proving to be both feasible and effective. Through the state-run TVRI television station, students are allotted specific times to receive their assignments, based on their particular curricula. One improvement over the normal system is that an extra hour every day is dedicated to the subject of parenting. The system is far from perfect at present, but this method of distant schooling might very well be implemented on a wider scale to schools in Papua and other remote regions of the country.

Speaking of Papua…. Lontar is proud to report that in a small way, we have contributed to the promotion of writing in that region. Following a four-day creative writing workshop that Lontar held in Jayapura in January, participants in the workshop submitted 21 short stories. Following their evaluation, 14 were selected which will be published soon.

Ruminations by John McGlynn

Not a Finite Commodity

It's hot in Jakarta today with the noontime temperature around 32 Celsius and, what with everyone ordered to stay within the confines of their homes due to the Covid-19 virus running amok worldwide, it appears from media reports that this situation has given rise to two reactions: a siege mentality among one portion of the world's population and a sense of persecution amongst another. While the former group is saying "Protect your home and family; all others be damned!" (irrespective of the fact that we live in a world in which we are dependent upon the assistance of others) the latter group is saying "Screw you, f**kers; this is my world, my place to control" (as if their behavior, as irresponsible and reprehensible as it is, might not have a negative effect on others). Both factions are blind.

It was in early 1963, in either January or February, on a Wisconsin winter's eve so cold that only fear of God and Daddy could pry the nine McGlynn children from the house. My brother Mark and I had already stoked the huge furnace in the cellar with additional wood to make sure the fire would last the night.

It must be a Sunday evening because even though I'm at the top of the steps on the second floor of the house, having just coming out of the bathroom after a quick whiz, I can see my siblings scattered about the downstairs rooms, much in the way that was common on a Sunday evening at Glynnspring. We'd already had supper, the remains from Sunday dinner prepared by Mother earlier in the day after early Mass at Saint Anthony's plus all other leftovers that were to be found in the refrigerator: a mound of tuna-fish casserole from Friday's no-meat meal, a bowl of Grandma's noodle soup from the day before that, a third of a ring of bologna, and other dibs and dabs.

The older girls of high school age—Maureen, Eileen, Kathleen, and Mary—have taken control of the kitchen where they are munching on popcorn as they whisper and giggle about such earth-shaking subjects as the rumor of courtship between Franki Avalon and Annette Funicello, only stopping to sing along with "Big Girls Don't Cry" when it starts to play on WRDB-Radio, Reedsburg, Wisconsin. Middle child, Jane, is at the dining room table, chewing on an eraser and grumbling as she dots her I's and crosses her T's in a report she must turn into Sister Elena the following day. Younger brother Mark is absentmindedly shuffling a deck of cards

As elsewhere throughout the world, World Book Day on April 23 was commemorated in the mainstream and social media. Although a survey of 100 bookstores by the Indonesian Publishers Association (IKAPI) has shown a drop in book sales by 58.2% since the enforcement of social distancing, there are promising signs of growth in on-line orders, both for printed publications and digital books. This is a welcome development, especially with the increase in the number of Indonesian literary works being produced in the past few years.

Also in conjunction with World Book Day, *The Jakarta Post* chose one of Lontar's books for its list of nine "must read" works, that being *Eyewitness*, a collection of short stories by Seno Gumira Ajidarma translated by Jan Lingard and John McGlynn. Another "Lontar-related" book on the list is *There is No New York Today*, a collection of poems by Aan Mansyur which was also translated by John McGlynn. We urge you to read them and other Lontar books.

One book that all Indonesia-culture lovers should have is *Malay Seals from the Islamic World of Southeast Asia*, a large-size 850-page book that carefully catalogues more than 2000 seals that were sourced from collections worldwide. Published in association with the British Library and National University Press, this book would make an excellent gift for close friends and associates at the upcoming Idul Fitri holidays. Because of the detrimental impact that Covid-19 is having on cultural organizations such as Lontar (which depend on public support for their survival), I hope you will consider purchasing this book. Although priced at Rp. 2 million per copy, substantial discounts are available for educational institutions and bulk orders. For more information send a message to contact@lontar.org.

Here's wishing you the best!

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as he lounges on the on the daybed in the dining room and hogs the warm air coming from the hot-air vent behind it. Like Siamese twins joined at the hip, Colleen and Chris, ages six and four, are kneeling on the threadbare sofa in the living room, their backs to the room, staring at the black window as if it were a television screen and the billowing snow outside, their private show.

I'm not sure where Daddy is because I can't see him in his usual place, the rocking chair in the living room with a book in his hand, and guess that he's in the basement, cracking another pail of hickory nuts from the several bushels we had gathered in the Fall. I envy him. He's an expert at this task and almost always manages to crack open the hard shells perfectly, leaving the two halves of the nutmeat inside perfectly intact so that they can be used to decorate the fluffy white frosting on Mother's angel food cakes.

Mother, who is wearing a chenille housecoat over her long dress, is standing below me at the bottom of the stairs, in front of the hot air register in the entryway that separates the living room from the kitchen. She, too, is trying to keep warm.

As I come down the stairs to join Jane at the dining table—I, too, have a report to finish—Mother looks at me and says, "John, come here…."

"What did I do now?" I think, but only for a brief moment because she is speaking so softly, no tone of reproach in her voice at all.

I stand before her and look up, my eyes asking what it is that she wants of me.

She takes my hands and places them on her stomach, moves them around her abdomen, and then smiles at me. "I have a surprise."

Her stomach is slightly bloated and I wonder if she is ill. Then I felt something, a movement inside her, and almost yank my hands away but she presses them more closely to her flesh.

"I'm going to have a baby," she says with a smile.

Looking up again at her, my eyes wider than before, I see her smile break into a grin of pure delight.

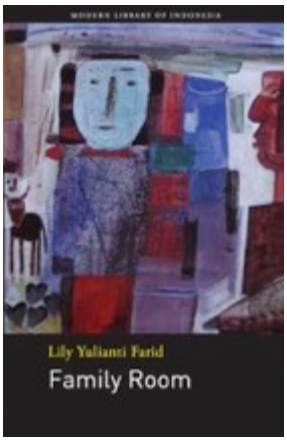
In a family as large as ours there were enough members for factions to form and for us to engage in childhood games of siege and persecution. Sometimes it was the older sisters telling the younger kids, "Get out of our room; you don't belong here!" Other times it was the brothers willfully maiming their sisters' dolls. On top of that, however, with each one of us having eight competitor-siblings there was always the nagging question, "Who does Mother and Daddy love the most?" Though each of us proclaimed "They love me the most!" I know we all secretly feared that the correct answer was someone else.

Author of the Month

Lily Yulianti Farid

Lily Yulianti Farid (Makassar, South Sulawesi, July 16, 1971) is a journalist and writer. Lily obtained her undergraduate degree from Hassanudin University in Makassar. She holds an M.A. in gender studies and development from theUniversity of Melbourne where she is now pursuing a doctoral degree, from where she also completed her PhD in gender studies in 2015. Lily has worked as a journalist at *Kompas* daily newspaper in Jakarta (1996–2000),then at Radio Australia, in Melbourne (2001–2004); NHK-Radio Japan in Tokyo (2004–2008); and *Nytid* news magazine in Oslo. Lily is a founder and director of Makassar International Writers Festival and co-founder/co director of Rumata's Artspace. She has released two collections of short stories: *Makkunrai*, in 2008; and *Maiasaura*, in 2008.

Book of the Month



Family Room

By
Lily Yulianti Farid

Translated by

Jan Lingaard;
John McGlynn

166 pages

Rp. 150,000

Thus it was that at that moment when Mother placed my hands on her stomach and smiled as she shared the secret that there was to be yet another child in the house, I came to realize that love is not a finite commodity, not something to be reserved for only "me" or "us." That Mother could love a child who was yet unborn and glow with joy from having another child growing inside her when there were already nine other children yammering for her affection, taught me the senselessness of caring for only the people one knows—that even as we love and watch over "mine" and "ours" it is essential that we look out what is best for "them" and "theirs" for we are all in this together; there is no other world than the one we ALL share.

The McGlynn siblings in December 1963, six months after the birth of the youngest. Front row, numbers 8 and 9: Colleen and Christine. Second row, numbers 5, 6, and 7: Jane, John, and Mark. Back row, numbers 1, 4, 3, and 2: Maureen (holding Luke, number 10), Mary (pretending to smoke a cigarette), Kathleen, and Eileen.

John McGlynn
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April Activities

Lontar in the News

9 Indonesian book translations to read on World Book Day

The Jakarta Post has choose "Eyewitness" by Seno Gumira Ajidarma translated by Jan Lingaard, John McGlynn as one to read.

Book order, please send email to contact@lontar.org

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Winning Short Stories from the Creative Writing Workshop in Papua

The Lontar Foundation in collaboration with Cenderawasih University in Papua and PTFI on February 28-29 held a creative writing workshop in the provincial capital of Jayapura. The program was led by novelist Dorothea Rosa Herliany, winner of the Khatulistiwa Literary Award and Ibiroma Wamla, writer and founder of the Papua Literary Community. One month later, the 20 participants, selected from about 80 applicants, produced 14 short stories, of which the best three were written by Jerry Fakdawer, Alfrida V.P. Yamanop and Natalia Dessy W. The winners of the short story contest will receive a prize of Lontar books and an all-paid visit to the PTFI jobsite.

Watch our Writers Who's Who on Lontar's YouTube channel.

Esha Tegar Putra
https://bit.ly/2VSMzGx

Zen Hae
https://bit.ly/2KNLGbD

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Sale of Lontar Publications Continues

You don't have to come to Lontar to buy a book; you can order Lontar's books online https://lontar.org or via telephone 021 574 6880, WA 0821 1408 1166
or email contact@lontar.org

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