LONTAR

Lontar Newsletter

Email: contact@lontar.org

June 2020

Greetings from the Executive Director

Five months into the Corona virus pandemic, people seem to be getting over their griping and groaning and starting to look on the bright side of things. One notable development is the increasing use of the internet for almost all our daily needs. Indonesians are going on-line now not only to order groceries, but even to consult doctors and lawyers.

Remote learning has been applied since the start of the pandemic but only selective schools in "green zones" or less-impacted areas will be allowed to re-open when the new academic year begins in late July. Given the fact that 38% of the country's 62 million students have no access to the internet and that many of these students live in high-risk districts, this has raised some controversy. There are also those who worry whether the re-opening is coming too soon and might spark a flood of new cases.

The good news is that with more time to spare as a result of less commuting and traveling, people have started to read more. New book clubs are being formed and group discussions are being held through a number of online hosting servers. This is encouraging news for the book industry, even though it means digital publications are on the rise at the expense of the print versions. Book stores report that adult fiction, children's fiction, and cookbooks are the best-selling genres.

Congratulations are in order for Indonesian recipients of The Sea Write Award, Southeast Asia's most prestigious literary award, including Nirwan Dewanto for 2018, Eka Kurniawan for 2019, and

Ruminations by John McGlynn

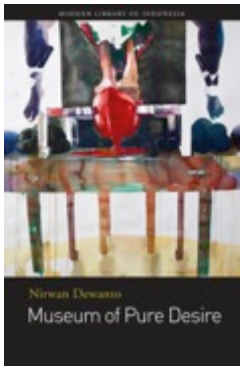
P-4 + 4-H

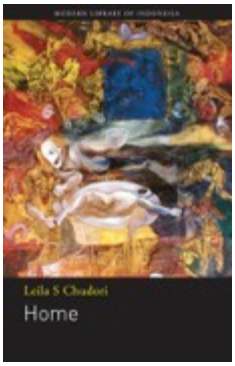
Anyone who knows anything about Indonesia knows that Pancasila is the nation's official ideology, the five principles of which include belief in God, a just and civilized humanity, national unity, democracy, and social justice. Anyone who knows anything about Indonesia also knows that in Indonesia there is no avoiding the use of abbreviations, one of which is "P-4" (Pedoman Penghayatan dan Pengamalan Pancasila), a program the Soeharto government established in 1973 as "Guidelines for the Understanding and the Experience of Pancasila." To give Soeharto's government the benefit of the doubt, one could say that this program represented a noble goal as well. Unfortunately, his apparatchiks went overboard by formulating 45 rules for the implementation of Pancasila in daily life which every civil servant who wanted to keep his/her job and every young person who aspired to work in the government or the military had to memorize and uphold—which, frankly, turned out to be a stomach-turner for most everyone. In this instance, it wasn't a question of throwing out the baby with the bathwater but, rather, drowning the baby in a tub full of water instead of letting him soak in a shallow basin. Heaven sakes, even God had limited His rules to ten. "You got to keep 'em simple and easy to memorize," I can imagine the Supreme Editor saying to Moses on Mount Sinai when He laid down His principles for life.

"Simple and easy" was the pledge I memorized as a youth when becoming a member of the Cazenovia chapter of the 4-H Club. The oath was mellifluous and repetitive, almost like a mantra, and spoken simultaneously with sign language: "[Hand on head like a salute] I pledge my head to clearer thinking, [Right hand on heart] my heart to greater loyalty, [Outstretched hands, as if to offer help] my hands to larger service, [Hands at the side with head erect] and my health to better living, for my club, my community, my country, and the world." (Note: "the world" was added later, in 1973.)

Originally an organization for rural youth, 4-H grew out of an American grass-roots movement in the late 19th century whose focal point was hands-on learning by rural youth. Researchers at the University of Wisconsin and other "land-grant universities"—federally-funded institutions of higher learning whose concentration was the teaching of agriculture, science, and engineering as well as classical studies—had come to see that adults in farming communities did not readily accept new-fangled farming techniques but that young people, who were much more

Leila S. Chudori for 2020. Of the forty Indonesian authors who have won the award since it was first established in 1979, Lontar is proud to have translated and published work by all but two of the authors, most-recently, the novel, *Home,* by Leila S. Chudori, and *Museum of Pure Desire*, a collection of poetry, by Nirwan Dewanto. The fact that these authors and the hundreds of other Indonesian authors whose work Lontar has published has very much helped to put Indonesian literature on the world map.





Whether Lontar will be able to continue its work in the months ahead is growing increasingly uncertain. Covid19 has had a severe and negative impact on Lontar's fund-raising—which is why we feel the need to announce a new Adopt-a-Book campaign. To this end we are looking for a band of angels to help us in this effort. Read about the campaign elsewhere in this newsletter and please, please, give serious consideration to helping us secure Lontar's ability to continue introducing Indonesian authors to the world's reading public.

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open to new ideas, would experiment and then share their experiences and successes with the adults who would then learn from their children—an important lesson that applies to this day.

When I was young, the adult leader of the Cazenovia 4-H Club was Gaylord Marshall, the town's blacksmith and it was at his home where he and his wife Ethel hosted most of the monthly meetings. The club was most active during the summer months when it was that most rural kids were learning practical things in life: planting, canning, cooking, sewing etc. At the start of each club year, members had to state their goals for the months ahead. For my sisters it was usually what kind of garment they would learn to make or what vegetables they intended to grow. Gardening was on my list too (which was something I had to do anyway, 4-H or not) but also insect collecting and woodcraft.

4-H was one of the first youth organizations worldwide to promote gender equality which was evident at all meetings and events where it was just as likely (and, often, more likely) for a girl to be the chosen as leader or top achiever. Egalitarianism was also evident. The club's motto is "to make the best better" and in my poverty-pocked community this was interpreted as "To make the best that you have better than it was" and, with the club's hands-on approach, there always a project even the poorest of members could excel in.

Meetings were a mixture of business and socializing. Through them, we learned basic rules of order but, just as importantly, how to better formulate our thoughts and to speak for ourselves. After recitation of the pledge of allegiance and the 4-H pledge members would then take turns providing a kind of progress report on their projects. At one meeting my sister Mary might show a skein of cloth and describe the sports outfit she intended to make. At another, my sister Jane might tell how she made the fringed scarf she was wearing that day. Meanwhile, other members might pass around the cookies they'd learned to bake—inevitably accompanied by paper cups of the fruit-flavored Kool-Aid that Ethel prepared for meetings.

Left: Mary McGlynn in 1962 holding the fabric that she would turn into a sports outfit. **Right:** Jane McGlynn in 1961 holding the fringed scarf that she made all by herself.

Author of the Month

Photo courtesy Teater Koma

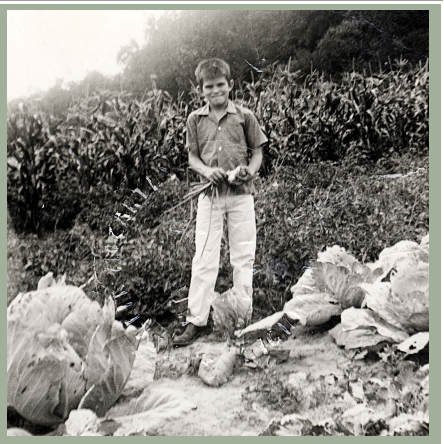
Nano Riantiarno

N. Riantiarno or **Nobertus Riantiarno** or **Nano Riantiarno (**Cirebon, West Java, June 6 1949) is an Indonesian actor, director, and playwright. Riantiarno studied at the Indonesian National Theatre Academy and the Driarkara School of Philosophy. While working with Teguh Karya at Teater Popular, Riantiarno performed in several plays and films. In 1977, Riantiarno established his own theatre troupe, Teater Koma. His works, with their highly political messages, were often censored by Suharto's New Order government. In 1998 he won the SEA Write Award for his play *Semar Gugat* (1995). His other works include *Rumah Kertas* (1977), *Maaf, Maaf, Maaf* (1978), *JJ* (1979), *Bom Waktu* (1982), *Opera Kecoa* (1985), *Opera Sembelit* (1998) *Republik Bagong* (2001).

Book of the Month

Lontar Anthology of Indonesian Drama Vo. 1-3

Rp.750.000



Left: John the Dork in 1965 standing in the middle of his potato patch. **Right:** Mark McGlynn in 1964 with his moster cabbages.

The high point of a 4-H year came in late August at the time of the annual Richland County Fair. There, 4-H club members displayed their projects: the produce they'd grown, the skirts they'd made, and the insects they had collected. Award ribbons—blue, red, pink and white in color—were appended to these displays to denote their merit and small monetary prizes were given as further incentive as well.

In my five years as a 4-H club member, I can't remember winning more than a couple blue ribbons which, at the time, bothered me greatly but gradually I came to see that it was not prize ribbons that mattered at all. Recount now the 4-H pledge and what it means: training the HEAD to think, plan, and to reason; training the HEART to be kind, sympathetic, and true.; training HANDS to be helpful, skillful, and useful; and training HEALTH to enjoy life, resist disease, and work efficiently. Combine these principles with those of Pancasila (especially the latter four) and I sincerely believe that you have the guidelines for how to run not just your life but a county.

In this fraught-filled time of a global pandemic where the leadership of at least one super power is marked by dishonesty, ineptitude, as well as outright chicanery and malfeasance, it is the individual who must stand up for "my community, my country, and my world" and to take responsibility for their safeguarding and well-being.

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Lontar Seeks Angels to Adopt a Book

Are you an angel? Would you like to be one? You can be helping Lontar.

The Covid-19 pandemic has raised havoc in Indonesia and around the world in virtually all spheres of life. Government and corporate response to this publich health situation has been massive but funding is needed to nurture and sustain the country's cultural life as well.

Lontar is largely dependent on financial donations to undertake its work. At this time, however, corporate support for cultural activities has pretty much vanished—which is why Lontar is looking for individuals who share Lontar's concern and are willing to serve as angels in an Adopt-a-Book campaign.

The cost of every Lontar publication differs but the average publication cost of a literary title is US$ 7,500 (Rp. 100 million). Of this amount, all but 15% goes to authors, translators, designers, editors, printers, and numerous creative contributors—all of whom are desperate for support at this moment.

As an "angel" it would be your responsibility to gather enough contributions from your circle of friends to pay for the production cost of one title—a kind of personalized crowd-funding effort. Lontar has a long list of forthcoming publications but right now, in order to get through this period of uncertainty we are looking for 15 angels to adopt titles.

In addition to Lontar's untold gratitude, angels will receive for their assistance the following:

- Written acknowledgment in the adopted book
- Complimentary copies of the adopted book
- A 40% discount on the purchase of additional copies of the book
- A 20% discount on the purchase of all other Lontar publications
- Recognition on Lontar's website
- Invitations to all Lontar sponsored events.

We sincerely hope that you will accept Lontar's invitation to assist us in this time of great need. For further information about how to become an angel, contact Yuli Ismartono yismartono@lontar.org

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

Afrizal Malna
https://bit.ly/2AesDpi

Dea Anugrah
https://bit.ly/388JUNc

Ratih Kumala
https://bit.ly/2YGrccx

Wikan Satriati
https://bit.ly/2NEN7ec

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