LONTAR

Lontar Newsletter

Email: contact@lontar.org

October 2020

Greetings from the Executive Director

At long last: a light at the end of the tunnel…perhaps. For the past three weeks, according to official figures, Covid-19 infection rates in Indonesia have been slowly trending downward. An additional encouraging note is that on October 26 only 3,222 new cases were reported, the lowest daily total since September 14. While there's still a long way to go before restrictions can be lifted, nothing is keeping us down as we proceed with plans to host a five-day virtual Lontar Literary Festival starting November 11 in commemoration of Lontar's 34th anniversary. This will be a major convergence of more than 75 authors, scholars, and performers, highlighted by literary discussions, musical performances, film screenings, and book launches. Further information about the festival can be found on the last page of this newsletter. Make sure to register and save the dates.

On top of pandemic-related problems, we are now also dealing with growing unrest over the enactment of the "Job Creation Law," the all-embracing omnibus legislation that has drawn protests in a number of major cities, some of them violent. As initially conceived, the bill was intended to clear hurdles to investment that would, in turn, serve to speed up economic development, but union workers and political activists perceive the law's clauses on labor and the environment as favoring only the rich and powerful at the expense of lesser advantaged segments of society.

Public communication does not seem to be the Government's forte, as was earlier

Ruminations by John McGlynn

Becoming, Part 2

When I was a boy, my family's home had four bedrooms on its second floor, each with its own name. The largest, at the end of the upstairs hallway on the left where my parent's slept was, naturally, "Mother and Daddy's Room." Across from it, on the far right side of the hall, was the "Spring Room," so named because out of its window you could see Glynnspring, a rapidly-moving stream that spewed from a cleft in the hillock below the house and into a trough in the Spring House where, throughout the year, cows' milk in ten-gallon cans were stored until pickup time and, in summers, watermelons and bottles of Schlitz, "the beer that made Milwaukee famous," were submerged in the 13-degree Celsius water to cool. At the top of the stairs and immediately on the left was the "Attic Room" because access to the attic and the mysteries of that dimly lit place was gained through a door inside the room. The smallest room, across from it and tucked between the bathroom with no hot water and a clothes chute that swallowed tons of dirty laundry over the years just to spit them on the cement floor of the basement two floors below was the "Tin Porch Room," called that way because through a door on its Eastern wall you could step onto the galvanized-tin roof of the screened porch that hung off the back side of the house. There, on the picket railing that hemmed its open sides Mother hung wet towels to dry and aired the colorful rag rugs that covered the floor beside the beds in each of the rooms.

While the Spring and Attic rooms were also known as the "girls' rooms," which my seven sisters would occupy over the years, I thought of the Tin Porch Room as *my* room, even after it became the "boys' room" when younger brother Mark graduated from the crib to claim half the space of the room's single-sized bed. Though Mark's presence in *my* bed sometimes made the space too close for comfort, I loved the room nonetheless. With its door to the outside and a tree in front of the screen porch which I could climb down, I was able to escape the house even after Daddy barked "lights-out." During the oppressive Wisconsin summers the open door cooled the room by several degrees and when older sisters were hogging the only bathroom and my bladder was ready to burst, I could take a whiz off the porch while watering the peony bushes below. Best of all though were the soothing sounds the open door ushered in: the constant ripple of Glynnspring waters and the patter of rain on tin.

In September 1976, after a week of exploring Samosir island I traveled by bus to Baligé to visit the Batak museum there and to meet *Inang baju* Nuria

shown in the difficulties it had to convince people to follow health protocols during the pandemic and, more recently, its responses to public protests of the Job Creation Law. Alternatively, the problem might be that many Indonesians lack a critical eye when it comes to the news they receive and selectively choose what they want to read, hear or watch. Whatever the case, perhaps it's time that "media literacy" is a subject that educators should consider including in school curricula.

As I have indicated in previous newsletters, this has been a very hard year financially for Lontar. Please join us at our upcoming Literary Festival and consider making a much-needed contribution.

Yuli Ismartono
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Indonesian Writers Profile on Youtube

Azhari Aiyub
bit.ly/361NMiD

Heru Joni Putra
https://bit.ly/3oClVhb

Iksaka Banu
https://bit.ly/3mzDxbJ

Kurnia Effendi
https://bit.ly/3bdhcwe

Sergius Sutanto
https://bit.ly/35Qr5hf

Ziggy Zezsyazeoviennazabrizkie
https://bit.ly/35M2Gt1

A 1940s photo showing the back- or Eastern side of my family home with its screened porch and, on its flat roof, the doorway to the Tin Porch bedroom. Not visible is the tree I used to to climb down which grew there in the 1950s.

Dondom, the aunt of Daméria Nainggolan, an Indonesian language major student I had gotten to know at IKIP Teachers' College during my ten weeks of advanced Indonesian language studies there. Though I thought of Damé as a "friend who was a girl," I perceived that she thought of herself as my "girlfriend." Whatever the case, she had given me a letter of introduction for her aunt and another for her grandmother who lived in Batunadua, a village five-hours by bus from Baligé.

I thought of Damé often during my time on Samosir. Damé was a gifted language teacher and always able to decipher what I was trying to say and then give it back to me in proper Indonesian but in the Batak homeland few people at that time could speak Indonesian with fluency. I missed Dame and her constant coaching.

After finding my way to Baligé and seeking out Damé's aunt at the hospital where she worked as a nurse, *Inang baju* Dondom invited me for dinner at the nurse's dormitory where I sang for my supper by giving English lessons to her colleagues before the evening meal. When I told her that I had a letter for her mother she immediately invited me to go with her to Batunadua the following day for a bride-giving ceremony where many of her twelve siblings would gather.

It is now Sunday the 26th of September, 1976, and I am in the home of Damé's grandmother, *Ompung boru* Gultom. In the kitchen, women are preparing the evening meal while the elderly matriarch rests on a rattan recliner in the corner while watching every movement even as she rereads the letter I brought for her. Occasionally, she peers at me with a gleam in her eyes and a hint of a smile. *Inang baju* Dondom is seated on the plank floor, massaging her mother's legs with her right hand while using her left to shoo the flies that hover near her glass of hot sweet tea.

Author of the Month

Azhari Aiyub

Azhari Aiyub (Banda Aceh, October 5, 1981) Up until the 2004 tsunami, Azhari studied at the Faculty of Literature and Language at Syiah Kuala University in Banda Aceh. He was one of the founders of Sekolah Menulis Dokarim, a creative writing school established in 2003. In the same year he published *Perempuan Pala,* a collection of stories about life in Aceh under Military Emergency rule which entered the long list for the Khatulistiwa Literary Award. In 2005 he won the Free World Award from the poets of All Nations of the Netherlands. After two years away from writing, excerpts from a planned novel appeared in *Koran Tempo* and were published again in 2015 as *The Garden of Delights,* part of Lontar's BTW series. His novel Kura-kura Berjanggut (The Bearded Turtle) won the Kusala Sastra Khatulistiwa award in 2018.

Book of the Month

The Garden of Delights and Other Tales
By Azhari
Translators: George A Fowler (English), Jutta Wurm (German)

Silently, I listen to their conversation, understanding only a word here and there, but I feel content to be among them. Only a day here and I am viewed as one of the family because of something that had taken place at the *hula-hula* the night before.

Ompung boru Gultom at her home in Batunadua, North Sumatra, in September 1976.

For the bride-giving ceremony, a communal meal had been prepared and all in attendance sat together on the pandanus mats that covered the floor, eating with their hands, sharing from the same dishes in the center of our circle, inhaling the scents of grilled fish, pork soup, suckling pig, green beans, and steamed rice. Surprisingly for me, my name was then called and I was given a separate portion of grilled carp to eat, after which Ana Sanggul Gultom, the youngest of Damé's nine maternal aunts, wrapped a woven *ulos* cloth around my shoulders and said to me, "With this *ulos*, I also give you a new name. You are now Saut, Saut Gultom.'Saut' means 'to become,'" she added, "and as you have joined us in this meal and taken this cloth, you are now a Batak and have become a member of our family."

Months later in Jakarta, when I told the tale of my Sumatran sojourn to a Batak friend he explained to me that by eating the carp and becoming Saut Gultom, it was now permissible for me to marry a Batak girl. I laughed as I thought of the letter Damé had given to me for her grandmother and the glint in *Ompung boru*'s eyes as she looked at me that Sunday night in Batunadua. Then, too, I recalled the contentment begat that evening by the awareness that I truly was becoming a person in my own right.

Looking through the open windows of the kitchen in Batunadua I watched mist-laden clouds float through the trees. Candles flickered in the light wind, causing shadows on the wall to tremble. As it began to rain, the drumming of raindrops on the tin roof of the Gultom home reminded me of my Tin Porch bedroom and the sounds I so often went to sleep by—if not the patter of rain, the gushing of water from an ever-flowing Glynnspring.

John McGlynn
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Festival Sastra Lontar

Memperkenalkan sastra Indonesia dan sastra daerah ke panggung internasional sudah menjadi salah satu komitmen Yayasan Lontar sejak didirikan pada 1987. Di samping menerbitkan terjemahan karya-karya penulis Indonesia dalam bahasa Inggris dan memperkenalkan mereka di sejumlah *book fair* di luar negeri, kami juga merasa perlu mengupayakan pertemuan sesama mereka dan juga khalayak pembaca dalam sebuah festival sastra, bukan hanya yang diselenggarakan oleh komunitas atau penyelenggara festival di dalam negeri yang telah meraih nama harum, tetapi oleh Yayasan Lontar sendiri. Itulah mengapa kami menggelar Festival Sastra Lontar.

"Literary Breakthrough – Menembus Batas" adalah sebentuk penerobosan dari pembatasan sosial yang telah kita alami sebagai akibat pandemi Corona yang melanda Indonesia dan dunia. Bersama pihak-pihak lain yang sudah lebih dulu, kami menempuh sejumlah ikhtiar untuk terus menghidupkan kembali nyala api kesusastraan Indonesia. Bahwa akan selalu ada bakat baru dan potensi kemajuan di tengah pelbagai keterbatasan yang merundung kita.

Festival akan diadakan secara daring sepanjang Rabu-Minggu, 11-15 November 2020. Di sini kamu bisa bertemu dengan para sastrawan Indonesia, penerbit, agen sastra, penerjemah, akademisi sastra, wartawan dan peneliti. Kegiatan yang bisa diikuti: ceramah, diskusi, obrolan sastra, pembacaan karya, peluncuran buku, pemutaran film dokumenter dan film pendek, dan penjualan buku.

Acara ini terselenggara berkat dukungan Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan dan kolaborasi dengan Jaktent (Jakarta Content Week).

Pantau dan ikuti sosial media Lontar untuk informasi terbaru:

Pendaftaran: https://www.jaktent.com/litfest/

IG: LontarFoundation

FB: The Lontar Foundation

Twitter: @lontarf

Surat dari Pejompongan

BANDIT

Pak George Quinn,

Perbanditan adalah tema yang telah lama menggoda saya.

Dalam masa kolonial saya bertemu dengan sosok si Pitung melalui telaah Margreet van Till, pada masa revolusi saya menemukan peran jago-jago di Jakarta dalam tulisan Robert Cribb, dalam dunia perwalian di Jawa saya menikmati buku anda *Bandit Saints of Java* (2019). Tetapi, di luar semua itu, saya lebih dulu mengenal sosok mereka melalui cerita rakyat dan manakib.

Bagi saya bandit adalah jembatan antara dunia bawah dan dunia atas. Ia melakukan, katakanlah, pembocoran sehingga air yang penuh pada sebuah penampungan terbagikan kepada pihak lain yang membutuhkannya. Ia tidak pernah menumpahkan air itu—kecuali jika ia terlibat dalam revolusi sosial berskala besar.

Dalam masyarakat agraris—saya kira, di masyarakat perkotaan juga demikian—hubungan bandit dan masyarakat adalah khas, saling menguntungkan. Mereka adalah "pembawa keadilan dan kesetaraan sosial" kata Eric Hobsbawn.

Selalu ada sosok pahlawan dalam diri seorang bandit.

Si Pitung, dalam bayangan orang Betawi adalah pembela kaum lemah—ditambah dengan glorifikasi melalui cerita rakyat dan budaya populer—meski di mata opas kolonial ia tidak lebih dari kaum kriminal. Begitu juga jika kita membaca kembali sosok Kusni Kasdut, Johny Indo, bahkan Hercules dari masa yang baru lalu. Mereka adalah juga pahlawan bagi orang sekitar mereka.

Pemahlawanan ini, jika bukan tulus, maka transaksional. Si bandit memberi perlindungan, masyarakat memberinya penghormatan. Sementara, kepada pemimpin-pemimpin resmi-formal, mereka telah kehilangan harapan. Ketika para pemimpin resmi-formal itu tidak memberikan rasa aman, pembelaan dan perlindungan, maka masyarakat mencarinya pada sosok "hitam" dari dunia bawah, mereka yang selama ini dicap sebagai sampah atau penyakit sosial.

Mereka yang terus-menerus digencet, yang putus asa oleh keadaan, akan merindukan dan mencari lagi sosok Robin Hood, Pitung, Sarip Tambak Oso, Jante Arkidam. . .lagi dan lagi.

Ini sebenarnya sama saja dengan fenomena munculnya agama-agama lokal di Nusantara. Bukankah—dengan modal "wahyu" yang tidak bisa diperdebatkan keabsahannya—para pemimpin ajaran itu adalah harapan baru; juru selamat revolusioner. Sementara, bagi otoritas tertentu, mereka adalah orang aneh, kaum bidah dan layak dilenyapkan?

Yang menarik dari sosok Sunan Kali Jaga dalam buku anda adalah aspek transformasinya. Dari seorang ningrat, ia menjauhi istana, menjadi berandalan, menjadi murid seorang sufi, lahir sebagai sosok baru: wali.

Soal terakhir ini tidak banyak terjadi dalam dunia bandit yang profan. Atau, mereka mungkin berubah, tetapi kita—terutama saya—tidak tahu.

Zen Hae (zenhae@lontar.org)

FESTIVAL SASTRA LONTAR

Literary Breakthrough – Menembus Batas
Rabu-Minggu, 11-15 November 2020
Stream online at jaktent.com
Recorded at Lontar's Youtube: Lontar Foundation

Kementerian Pendidikan & Kebudayaan

RABU, 11 NOVEMBER 2020

10:30-11:30 WIB
Opening: Keynote Lecture and Performance
Sastra Indonesia di Panggung Dunia / Indonesian Literature on the World Stage
Frau, Nirwan Dewanto, John H. McGlynn

11:30-12:30 WIB
In Conversation
Menua Bersama Sastra / Aging With Literature
Budi Darma, Martin Aleida, Toeti Heraty, Ni Made Purnama Sari

14:30-15:30 WIB
In Conversation
Penulis Indonesia dan Jurus-Jurus Mereka / Writers and Their Moves
Joko Pinurbo, M. Aan Mansyur, Ayu Utami, Stefanny Irawan

KAMIS, 12 NOVEMBER 2020

10:30-11:30 WIB
Discussion
Indonesia di Mata Saya / Through Foreign Eyes
George Quinn, Michael Vatikiotis, Jennifer Mackenzie, Yuli Ismartono

11:30-12:30 WIB
Book Launch
And Death Grows Intimate karya Subagio Sastrowardoyo
Goenawan Mohamad, Dian Sastro, Slamet Rahardjo Djarot, Zen Hae

16:00-17:00 WIB
Discussion
Menerjemahkan Indonesia / Translating Indonesia
Sabine Müller, Harry Aveling, Antonia Soriente, Toni Pollard

17:00-18:00 WIB
Chat and Film Screening
Mengenang yang Lama, Memajang yang Muda / Predecessors and Successors
Esha Tegar Putra, Tini Hadad

JUMAT, 13 NOVEMBER 2020

10:30-11:30 WIB
Discussion
Menulis Perempuan dari Dua Sisi / Women from Two Points of View
Erni Aladjai, Nukila Amal, Seno Gumira Ajidarma, Melani Budianta

11:30-12:00 WIB
Chat and Film Screening
Mengenang yang Lama, Memajang yang Muda / Predecessors and Successors
Sartika Dian Nuraini dengan Fanny Poyk

13:30-14:30 WIB
In Conversation
Yang Muda, Yang Berjaya / The Young and the Bold
Sabda Armandio Alif, Ziggy Zezsyazeoviennazabrizkie, Dea Anugrah, Dewi Ria Utari

14:30-15:30 WIB
Keynote Lecture
Dari Melayu untuk Dunia / From the Malay World for the World
Annabel Teh Gallop, Oman Fathurrahman

16:00-17:00 WIB
Chat and Film Screening
Mengenang yang Lama, Memajang yang Muda / Predecessors and Successors
Dewi Kharisma Michellia dengan Wulan Anggraini

SABTU, 14 NOVEMBER 2020

10:30-11:30 WIB
Discussion
Yang Politik, Yang Estetik / Between Politics and Aesthetics
Okky Madasari, Putu Oka Sukanta, Felix K. Nesi, Ronny Agustinus

11:30-12:30 WIB
Discussion
Menulis dari Tepi / Writing from the Edge
Nuril Basri, Rio Johan, Cok Sawitri, Mumu Aloha

14:30-15:30 WIB
Chat and Film Screening
Mengenang yang Lama, Memajang yang Muda / Predecessors and Successors
Ninus D. Andarnuswari, Triyanto Triwikromo

15:30-16:30 WIB
Discussion
Mengenang dan Membangkit Sastra Lisan / Giving Orality its Due Respect
Elisabeth D. Inandiak, Pudentia MPSS, Suryadi, Faisal Oddang

16:30-17:30 WIB
Discussion
Bunga Rampai dari Taman Sastra / Collection and Canonization?
Dorothea Rosa Herliany, Deborah Cole, Martin Suryajaya, Mona Sylviana

Pendaftaran / Registration:
https://www.jaktent.com/litfest/

MINGGU, 15 NOVEMBER 2020

10:30-11:30 WIB
Discussion
Lakon Nasional, Lakon Dunia / Local Drama, World Stage
Cobina Gillitt, Joned Suryatmoko, Nano Riantiarno, Shinta Febriany

11:30-12:30 WIB
Discussion
Latar Etnis dalam Sastra / Ethnicity in Literature
Azhari Aiyub, Ben Sohib, Clara Ng, Avianti Armand

13:30-14:30 WIB
Book Launch
Will Badrul Mustafa Never Die? Verse from the Front karya
Heru Joni Putra
Heru Joni Putra, George A. Fowler, Fariq Alfaruqi, Slamet Rahardjo Djarot

14:30-15:30 WIB
Chat and Film Screening
Mengenang yang Lama, Memajang yang Muda / Predecessors and Successors
Dhianita Kusuma Pertiwi, Angga Okta Rachman

15:30-16:30 WIB
Discussion
Sastra Diaspora Indonesia / Indonesian Wrting Abroad
Joss Wibisono, Etik Juwita, Soe Tjen Marching, Lisabona Rahman

16:30-17:30 WIB
Closing Discussion
Apa Makna Sastra Indonesia? / What's Does "Indonesian" Literature Mean?
Amanche Frank, Rain Chudori, Taufik Abdullah, Desi Anwar