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Editorial

Introducing Vol. 9 No. 2

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This issue of *Retorik* appears twenty years after the publication of the journal's inaugural issue, at a time that may prove to be no less pivotal than 2001. Just as the Covid-19 pandemic that had swept across the world began receding, with restrictions on movement being lifted in many countries, a new dark chapter in European history began to be written. If the social and political discourses of the years subsequent to 2001 were shaped in relation to the "war on terror," the coming years will certainly witness the consequences of what is now referred to as the "New Cold War." For Indonesia more specifically, the recent few years seem to represent a turning point, too. The first issue of *Retorik* appeared at a time during which Indonesia was undergoing far-reaching—so much so that the term commonly used to refer to that period, "Reformation," is something of a euphemism—transformations following the fall of the New Order regime. As evidenced by the series of protests that have taken place in the past three years, however, there is a growing concern that the aspirations of *Reformasi* may have been undermined, co-opted, or betrayed.

At pivotal moments like our own, times during which the future seems radically uncertain, there is an important role to be played by what Marx defined as *critique*, that is, "the self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age." There is perhaps no more succinct way to state the aim of *Retorik* than that the journal seeks to serve as a venue for such a practice.

This issue of *Retorik* includes one contribution pertaining to the Covid-19 pandemic. Elisabeth Nainggolan, Clariza Farell Kusuma, Azraa Tasya, and Kinanti Nur Putri Andina highlight one of the issues related to the pandemic that has not received the attention that it deserves: the anti-Asian—particularly East Asian—sentiment triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic. The authors report on Stop AAAP Hate, an American non-profit organization founded in 2020 in response to incidents of hate and discrimination against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, paying particularly close attention to the framing of the pandemic within mainstream American media.

The journal's engagement with the rapidly changing landscape of digital culture—doubtlessly one of the most prominent realms in which "wishes of the age" find expression—is reflected in two contributions included in this issue. In the first article of this issue, "Digital Creative Labour: Prosumption of graphic designer contributor in the Freepik microstock platform (Digital Creative Labour: *Prosumsi Desainer Grafis Kontributor dalam Platform* Microstock Freepik)," Vinsensiana Aprilia Nanda Jeharu analyses the online platform that has profoundly transformed the way in which artists and graphics designers work today. This issue includes another contribution on the theme of digital

culture. Ratna Kumalsari discusses the constitution of the female body on the Tiktok platform, proposing that women on Tiktok assume "posthuman" bodies. That neither paper could have been written until just five years ago and yet, at the same time, very few reading *Retorik* today would be unfamiliar with the subject matter of either paper, is a testament to the speed at which digital culture is susceptible to far-reaching change.

If the aforementioned three contributions are investigations into cultural phenomena that are current, the other three contributions included in this issue of *Retorik* affirm the contemporaneity—and perhaps, the *universalizability*—of thinkers and traditions of thought from which editors and contributors of *Retorik* have long drawn their inspiration. Hariyanto offers a reading of the "postmodern" theatre of Ki Enthus Susmono, drawing mainly from the works of Shoshana Felman and Roland Barthes. Umi Lestari and Linda Gusnita provide analyses of cinematic works produced in Indonesia, in their respective papers on the nationalism of Nawi Ismail and recent Indonesian films that are set outside the country, including *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, *99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa*, *Haji Backpacker*, and *Assalamualaikum Beijing*.

The contributions by Lestari, Gusnita, and Hariyanto attest to the lasting relevance of theoretical perspectives opened by thinkers such as Roland Barthes, Gilles Deleuze, and Jacques Lacan in the field of cultural studies in Indonesia, a relevance that owes not so much to the universal applicability that was intrinsic to these theoretical perspectives from the outset, but precisely to the efforts of Indonesian scholars to *test* their universality by bringing them to bear on locations and contexts initially alien to them. It might be said, then, that the three articles exhibit what is a particularly interesting and valuable aspect of practicing cultural studies in Indonesia, namely, the possibility of encounter between theoretical perspectives and objects and phenomena previously unknown to each other. In other words: the sort of encounter from which *thinking* may begin. •