Greetings from the ED

It was National Children’s Day on July 23 but there has been little reason to celebrate. As the Covid-19 pandemic continues to do its damage, it is the children who are among the worst impacted by the necessary restrictions. Organizations such as UNICEF and Save the Children Fund report worrying signs of deteriorating health and mental issues among young people, particularly those who live in marginalized areas. Malnutrition and stunting are major concerns as families struggle with reduced household incomes. Cases of child trafficking and child marriages have shown an alarming increase.

Experts say the most obvious impact has been on the widening education gap as a result of the learning-from-home policy, which is only effective with the necessary tools and infrastructure in place. At the very least, students must have a cellular telephone and/or laptop, a television set and a working internet service, all of which needs a steady supply of electricity. These essentials may be readily available in cities and towns, but not always in rural areas where many families cannot afford the expenses involved. According to statistics, in 2018 more villages in Java received a strong internet signal than in other regions across the country, except for Maluku and Papua, which only get 25 percent of a strong enough signal to facilitate remote learning. Clearly, a more equitable infrastructure needs to be developed while, at the same time, system must be reformed to include a curriculum specifically designed for distance learning.

Ruminations

Gloria

As an altar boy in grade school, the first “Gloria” I came to know was in the form of the Latin prayer, "Gloria in excelsis Deo," which I had to memorize and to recite at Mass. When Father Bornbach invoked the opening phrase, "Gloria in excelsis Deo," he’d dramatically extend his hands and raise them to shoulder height. At the word, "Deo," he’d join them and bow his head. Then continuing the recitation, he’d stand erect with hands joined and bowing his head towards the large crucifix as he intoned the words "Adoramus te," "Gratias agimus tibi," "Iesu Christe," and "Suscipe deprecationem nostrum," following which he’d make a large sign of the cross on himself. Like Kawi for Javanese mystics, Latin was the language of ritual performance for me.

This was in the spring of 1962. I was in the fourth grade and I truly believed I had been blessed with the vocation to become a priest but then, in the summer, when the next Gloria appeared in my life I knew that the law of celibacy was one I could not follow.

Being from a family of seven girls, five of them older than me, and there being a dearth of older girls on neighboring farms, my sisters were delighted when, in 1962, an even larger family by the name of Carraher moved to a farm not too far distant. The Carrahers had twelve children, including nine girls! And though the oldest three girls had already graduated from high school did not move to Cazenovia, that still left a half dozen. Camilla, the sixth girl in the Carraher family, was the same age as Jane, the sister closest to me in age, and upon their meeting the two of them immediately became best of friends. Thereafter Camilla became a frequent visitor to Glynnspring and usually came in tow with the next sister in line, Gloria, who was a year younger than I.
One thing we can rejoice in is the fact that when the chips are down, private Indonesian citizens and non-governmental groups rally to try and fill the gap left by officialdom. The efforts of food vendor Adi Sarwono in Lampung, Sumatra who buys and collects children’s books for his mobile Busa Pustaka library should be applauded. He and other such unsung heroes around the country are banding together to save the children. Lontar supports their activities and we look to you, Friends of Lontar, to help us in our mission. Stay safe and healthy.

Yuli Ismartono
vismartono@lontar.org

Upcoming Events

From August 19 onwards interested readers will be able to listen to a BBC program about Amir Hamzah which will include the reading of translations of his work published by Lontar. Go to:
https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3ct1rlk

Just as Jane and I had been playmates since early childhood, so too had Camilla and Gloria; thus it was natural that the four of us became a constant quartet; and with me being a boy, I was able to play the role of priest when they dressed up as nuns or that of Farmer John when they put on aprons to make mud pies for a Sunday picnic. I could also be the groom when one of them dressed up as a bride and the other two as bridesmaids in First Communion dresses with wreaths of dandelion flowers in their hair.

Many were the walks we took together: along the creek below the house to play in the shade of the large willow tree and up to the ridge where the field of alfalfa was being bailed for hay. During those weeks of summertime, it wasn’t too long before I got a soft spot in my heart for Gloria and though I never voiced my feelings, I waited as anxiously for her next visit to Glynnspring as Jane waited for Camilla.

The visit of theirs I most clearly remember took place near the end of summer. It must have been a Sunday because my parents were not home. I imagine that after dinner—the midday meal for us—Mother had gone with Daddy to Cazenovia where he was to umpire a baseball game and then Mother had either helped other members of the Legion Auxiliary sell slices of homemade pie and corn on the cob to the crowd or, perhaps, she had made a quick trip to Ithaca, seven miles distant, to check and see how Grandma Schauf was doing.

Whatever the case, they were not there and we, the pack of McGlynn and Carraher children, were under our own supervision. As such, there was no Mother to call out to me from the kitchen window and tell me to get the heck down from the tree beside the back porch when I got it in my mind to show off my prowess to Gloria by climbing the tree and leaping from a branch onto the second-floor deck that was the roof of the porch. An easy thing to do; I had done it numerous time before—and in reverse as well because the inner door of my bedroom led to the deck of the porch, through which I’d often sneak outside after “lights out” and then climb down the tree to lay in the grass and watch heat lightning crackle the sky overhead.

Swiftly scaling the tree, my dream of impressing Gloria was thwarted when instead of leaping Superman-like from tree to deck, the branch from which I was to leap snapped beneath my weight. Had I fallen onto the flower bed below, I might have come away only bruised and embarrassed but a bicycle was parked next to the tree and I fell head
downward and mouth forward onto the seat of the bicycle.

Fortunately, I was knocked unconscious and did not feel or, rather, do not remember the pain when my facial features were flattened by the metal seat and the next thing I recall is fourth-sister Mary carrying me into the house; third-sister Kathleen trying to stop the blood running from my mouth; and the other kids, wide-eyed in shock, as they stared at my mangled mien.

My parents did come home eventually and after Mother had covered the back seat of the car with a towel Daddy had placed me, corpse-like, on the seat, they rushed me to the emergency room at Richland Center Hospital. X-rays revealed no cranial damage but did show that one of my two front teeth had been ripped by the roots from my mouth.

There would be more Glorias for me in the years to come: Gloria Steinhem who so excited my sisters that I, too, became an inaugural subscriber to Ms magazine; the 1980 film, “Gloria,” starring Gena Rowlands, a favorite actress of mine (who was born in Cambria, Wisconsin, just 50 miles away); and the 1983 song, “Gloria,” as sung by Laura Branigan, which always pulled me to my feet and onto the dance floor at the Golden Cross discotheque in Jakarta. Another song being played at Golden Cross around that time was the gay anthem, “I Will Survive,” sung by Gloria Gaynor, the first lines of which go as follows:

“At first I was afraid, I was petrified / Kept thinking I could never live without you by my side / But then I spent so many nights thinking how you did me wrong / And I grew strong / And I learned how to get along.”

And isn’t that how it should be: to learn from experience, to pick yourself up from your falls, and to become stronger for it.

John H. McGlynn
john_mcglynn@lontar.org
Surat dari Pejompong

KAYU HANGUS

Kawan Moer,


Mahabharata boleh jadi lahir dalam kesusastraan India, tetapi juga ia telah menjadi milik Jawa atau Melayu bahkan dunia—bukan hanya milik Walmiki, tetapi juga Peter Brook. Homerus mungkin seorang yang agung karena menggubah kisah pertualangan dan kepahlawanan Yunani Kuno, tetapi ia juga sehimpun kaum nelayan di Santa Lucia saat penjajahan Inggris. Arjuna yang halus dan penuh kesaktian adalah juga petualang cinta remaja di masa Orde Baru.


Aku kutipkan bait paling akhir:

Hamzah Shahrnawi terlalu hapus
Seperti kayu sekalian hangus
Asahnya laut yang tiada berharus
Menjadi kapur di dalam baru

Hamzah Fansuri tentu saja sangat terasuki oleh mistisisme Islam. Tapi, para pengarang hari ini, yang mungkin tidak berurusan dengan soal itu, bisa melihat ini dengan cara yang lain lagi. Bahwa seorang pengarang...
The last 18 months has been a time of mostly grim news. For that reason, we are especially delighted to be able to convey the good news that as a result of “Beyond Home Borders,” the online fundraising festival that was held in May, Lontar will be able to publish up to a dozen new titles in the months ahead. Here’s a look at one of them.

**Abstract and Political Six Plays by Ikranagara**

The stage plays of Ikranagara from the period 1975 to 1997 show the enormous changes that were taking place in Indonesian theater during that period. They also provide insight into the role that the arts played in political and social change. At a time when playwrights had to submit their written scripts to the authorities for censorship, what was performed on stage was very different from what was in the submitted scripts. While the live performances protested against the corruption, collusion, and nepotism, the messages were disguised. These six plays are translations of the actual performance scripts, not the ones submitted to censors.