

CARNIVAL AND GROTESQUE BODY IN FARUK'S "BUS KOTA"

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Abstrak

Sastra tidak dapat dipisahkan dari situasi sosial yang ada ketika ia ditulis. Penulis, sebagai makhluk sosial, hidup dalam rangka sosial tertentu yang mempengaruhi dan ditanggapinya. Realitas sosial ini, jadi, dapat dilihat dalam karya sastra. Namun, ia tidak mesti akan dicerminkan secara langsung. Mikhail Bakhtin menulis bahwa karya sastra dapat membalikkan ideologi yang dominan dengan sifatnya yang carnivalesque. Cerita pendek Indonesia "Bus Kota", yang ditulis oleh Faruk dan diterbitkan pada tahun 1989, membuktikan pernyataan itu. Cerita ini membalikkan posisi dari usaha modernisasi dan perubahan sosial yang terjadi selama pemerintahan Orde Baru Soeharto. Perubahan ini dicerminkan dengan sebuah alegorigrotesque bertingkat yang berdasarkan hubungan seorang perempuan tanpa nama yang berasal dari pedesaan dan bus kota. Melalui teknik ini Faruk menunjukkan segi negatif dari modernisasi, tetapi akhirnya mengajukan pandangan bahwa itu sesuatu yang diperlukan.

Kata kunci: Faruk, Modernisasi, Orde Baru

INTRODUCTION

A cultural work, be it a painting, song, dance, or film, cannot exist or be understood divorced from the socio-political environment in which it was conceived. These cultural works will always reflect (although not necessarily directly) realities in the environments in which they were written, be they mores, political issues, sexual identities and constructs, or even a general idea of aesthetics. Literature is no different. It is written using language, a social construct, and the meaning of figurative language which is the basis for literature, such as metaphors and similes, is decided by society. Authors are members of society and thus shaped by it. Works have a social function. (Wellek and Warren, 1949: 89). The role of society in the creation of a work of literature can be explored through a sociological approach: the sociology of literature.

There are numerous theories for understanding the sociological aspects of a literary work. In the early 20th century, György Lukács introduced a theory depicting literature as reflective of

society; nearly fifty years later, Lucien Goldmann introduced his theory of genetic structuralism, in which literature reflects structures found within society, but does not necessarily reflect society itself. Antonio Gramsci's cultural theory, meanwhile, is useful for exploring how literature influences society (Faruk, 2012: 56–73, 130). Mikhail Bakhtin, in *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics* (1929) and *Rabelais and His World* (1940), suggested several concepts regarding how society is reflected in literature, and how literature can criticise society.

In general, it is agreed that a work of literature can only imperfectly represent society; it can never completely explore the society in which it was written, or even how the author understands his or her society. A work written in Medieval Europe by a nobleman, for example, may include dramatised (not necessarily factual) representations of knights, but completely ignore the common people.

In this paper we will analyse “Bus Kota” (attached in both Indonesian and English in the appendices) and use Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism, carnival, and grotesque bodies (further explained in the following section) to explain the author's point of view regarding modernity, as conveyed by a character in the story, as placed against a historical context; these concepts do not, however, assume a perfect representation of society in a work. Aside from this sociological approach, several aspects of Freudian psychology will be used to explore the significance of grotesque bodies found in the story.

Faruk's “Bus Kota”, originally published in the Yogyakarta-based daily *Kedaulatan Rakyat* on 4 June 1989, follows a young, nameless woman narrator who comes from a village in Kalimantan to an unnamed city to attend university. She attempts to use the busses to travel but finds them to be filled with leering men. After a particularly bad experience leaves her traumatised, she covers herself to avoid the busses, only to find that they are unstoppable. She considers dropping out of university and returning to her hometown, but discovers that the busses have penetrated even there.

METHODOLOGY

As stated above, this paper will use Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of monologism, carnivalisation, and grotesque bodies in explaining Faruk's “Bus Kota”. Before such an analysis

can be completed, it would be preferable to define each of these terms. The first term used here, monologism, is a term for which more context is necessary.

Bakhtin outlined several concepts regarding the narrative style in a work of literature, namely polyphony (his more innovative idea), dialogism, and monologism. Polyphony, although undefined by Bakhtin, can be understood as numerous voices, represented in dialogue, being included in a work without a single one becoming dominant; this style of writing allows for a greater element of surprise and, in Bakhtin's opinion, was created and pioneered by the Russian writer Fyodor Dostoyevsky (Morson and Emerson, 1990: 232). Dialogism, on the other hand, is a simpler concept based in everyday conversation patterns, in which there are numerous voices and forms of speech (heteroglossia). In dialogism, the writer is thought to have attached his own ideology to a character, who generally (but not always) becomes dominant in the plot. This presents a united perspective, and the voices of the other characters then become subservient to that which the author has attached his worldview ("Polyphony/dialogism", 1993: 610–612). Monologism, the most commonly used technique which Bakhtin identifies, is where the entire story, including all of its dialogue, represents a single point of view – almost always the author's. Bakhtin is disapproving of such a technique, believing that it “involves a failure to respect the autonomy of the other's voice” (Robinson, 2012a).

No matter the narrative technique used, when the author holds or wishes to promote a point of view which is against the norms of contemporary society he or she can present it using two related concepts, carnival and grotesque bodies. Bakhtin describes a literary work as functioning like a medieval carnival, destabilising the cultural hierarchies and equalising all participants in a framework without (m)any rules. The carnival is ever-changing, without a fixed structure or system, and thus never finalised. In a carnivalesque literary work this means that a dominant ideology can be brought to the level of non-dominant ones and thus have its flaws or shortcomings exploited, while a repressed ideology can be foregrounded and espoused; in other words, an ideology which is generally considered unassailable is shown to have its own flaws. This does not mean that the foregrounded ideology will become dominant in an extra-literary social setting, but this carnivalesque representation can remind readers that no ideology is perfect, and that the current system may ultimately be untenable (Robinson, 2012b; Barasch, 1993: 85–89).

This carnivalesque representation of societal reality can (but need not) be accomplished by reducing ideas to what Bakhtin terms “grotesque bodies”, an act which he finds present in early legends and continuing into the modern era. The elevated ideas dethroned in carnivalisation are equated with more mundane, physical objects, which often – but not always – take the form of a body, be it human or animal. The idea, once it has become a grotesque body, may take on characteristics native to the body with which it has been identified. Rendering an idea as a grotesque body delimits its generally accepted understanding, destabilises the concept, and renders it as a parody, “turned into something worldly which can be overcome, stripped of its metaphysical pretensions”(Robinson, 2012b; Barasch, 1993: 85–89). Something which has been rendered as a grotesque body can thus be freely explored and criticised, in terms accessible to the reader.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

“Bus Kota” was written during the 1980s, a time of increased economic development in Indonesia which took the form of modernisation based on Western models. The story contains no dialogue, but instead presents a monologism in which two points of view, that of the busses and men on them as well as that of the narrator’s parents, are subjugated to the point of view of the unnamed main character. The main character is the one with whom the author agrees, with whom it can be assumed he has included a portion of himself and who reflects his own worldview. This is not to say Faruk has inserted himself directly into the text, as Dante did in his *Divine Comedy*. Faruk is, after all, male, while the narrator is female. Instead, the text repeatedly emphasises its narrator as an individual: “This hatred stirred in *my* heart”¹; “*I* always feel bothered by them”; “*I* decided to make *my* stand“. It is she who dominates the story, from the beginning (“If *I* made the rules”) to the end (“*I*’m stunned”).

She is a virgin, untainted by the touch of men. Even though she can frankly speak of her own reproductive system (“hymen”, “vagina”, “breasts”), she is unwilling to use the term “penis”. Instead, she calls it *geliat* (literally “protrusion”, here translated “thing”), one whose name she either does not know or refuses to say. Her virginity is further documented in her dream: the busses penetrate the “narrow entrance into [her] womb”, breaking the hymen; a tight

¹ All emphasis mine.

vagina and unbroken hymen are traditionally accepted as signs of virginity (Guharaj & Chandran, 2003: 210). The main character is from a highly traditional setting, “the boonies, the depths of Kalimantan”; this is further supported by her turning to religion (as represented by the jilbab) when she is tormented by the modern world, taking up the jilbab as a “wall”. To this woman everything happens. It is from her eyes the reader understands the story and with her the reader empathises. Her stance is – on the surface, at least – decidedly anti-modernist. The busses are “feral” and “dreaded”, attacking one by one.

Her point of view is contrasted with the silent omnipresence of the city busses and their male passengers. These are present for the majority of the story, from “rid of those entire city busses” in the first paragraph to “plagued with the feral busses. Just like those over here.” in the penultimate paragraph. Although they do not speak, they need no words. The men’s “gazes crept over every inch of [the narrator’s] body”, something “stirring behind the one man’s pants”, and ultimately “trying to devour everything beneath [the narrator’s clothes]”. In her dreams the busses themselves “force their way through the narrow entrance” into the narrator’s womb. The writer, an individual woman, is “prey”, something to be hunted, controlled, and violated, something with which the busses and their occupants can fulfill their libidinal urges. How the men and, metaphorically, busses actually feel is not presented; the reader is given only the narrator’s view of the situation.

The narrator’s parents are presented only at the end of the story, in a single paragraph. Their views are reported by the author, not presented directly to the reader. They may, based on their reply that busses had become common in the village without asking their daughter to return home, silently support modernisation. Such a reading is supported by a question not answered in the text: who sent the narrator to the city to attend university, a decidedly modern undertaking? In an Indonesian context, where children are expected to do as their parents are told, this can only be the parents or guardians. The narrator, in paraphrasing the reply as “our poor village had already become plagued with the feral busses”, has shown the parents’ point of view to have a lower standing than hers, thus allowing her to overwrite their (unidentified) views with her own ideology.

But what ideology? To better answer this question, it is beneficial to examine the circumstances in which “Bus Kota” was written, beginning with events some thirty years earlier. Recognising the instability in the Indonesian government, rooted in several attempts at rebellion

and separation in the mid-1950s, in 1957 President Sukarno enacted his Guided Democracy policy, a strict quasi-dictatorship with isolationist policies. During this time he began efforts to nationalise numerous corporations in the area, including the shipping company Koninklijke Paketvaart-Maatschappij, and cut off Indonesia's economic ties with the West.

These events, although by no means the only ones, contributed to an economic meltdown throughout the early 1960s. The price of exports dropped dramatically, and inflation ballooned at rates which peaked at 500 percent per annum. This exacerbated the already present social and economic suffering of the general populace, which had been growing steadily worse since independence. Numerous localised famines threatened the general public, while political repression was at its highest since the colonial period. The government did nothing to stop the situation, and ultimately Sukarno was overthrown and replaced by Suharto.²

In contrast to Sukarno, Suharto's New Order government emphasised relations with Western nations in developing Indonesia's economy. His five-year plans, beginning in 1969, were almost entirely dependent on foreign loans and the oil trade (Ricklefs, 1993: 297). He used these funds to develop the country's infrastructure and agricultural capabilities. By the mid-1970s Suharto had established a capitalist-based economy, one which stabilised the nation's economy and political situation. This development ("pembangunan") programme was tied explicitly with a concept of modernisation, which often included the trappings of modernity, such as fast food and a standardised popular culture which overwrote tradition. This situation was not received entirely without conflict. For example, in the 1974 Malari incident thousands of students began rioting over Japanese dominance in the Indonesian economy, ultimately resulting in 11 deaths and extreme material damage, including the destruction of an Astra dealership selling Toyota-brand cars (Setiono, 2008: 1026).

Two aspects of Suharto's modernisation programmes are most pertinent to our discussion here: the increased dependence on modern forms of transport and the increased drive towards

² Sukarno's fall from power came after a failed coup by the 30 September Movement, where six respected generals and an aide were killed with their families and thrown down a well in Lubang Buaya, Jakarta, while some members of the Army read an announcement that they were taking over the government. This was quashed within thirty hours and many of those immediately involved were killed. The government's version is that the G30S coup was headed by the PKI, and indeed much of the backlash over the coup was targeted at PKI members, killing some 200,000 people. PKI publications – and some Western scholars – described the coup as an Army affair, while others have blamed (among others) President Sukarno, future president Suharto, the CIA, and the British. Ultimately, Suharto was able to convince Sukarno to give him control over the country by signing the Order of March the Eleventh in 1967.

establishing a modern (read, Western-style) school system. The more dominant of the two in “Bus Kota” is transportation. Automobiles and motorcycles had been introduced by the Dutch during the colonial period, but the feeble economy and tumultuous political situation meant that the industry’s growth was limited. The prosperity brought on by Suharto’s policies, combined with an open-door import system, led to an increase in automotive imports. By 1979 there were approximately 1.7 million registered motorcycles in Indonesia, with a significantly lower number of cars and busses (Witoelar, 1983: 24). The vast majority of these vehicles were imported from abroad, although efforts were later made to nationalise the technology (Soejachmoen, 2011: 17). By the 1980s traditional methods of transportation, such as pedicabs and carriages, were increasingly being driven out by automobiles, motorcycles, and motorised mass-transit vehicles. Motor vehicles, such as the Alfa Romeo driven by the protagonist of Sjumandjaja’s *Lewat Tengah Malam*, had become a symbol of prosperity and modernity..

The second form of modernisation discussed here, education, is related to the main character’s motivations for leaving her hometown and going to the city. Westernised education in Indonesia had been present since the missionary schools of the 19th century and saw a spurt of growth after the Dutch instituted their ethical policies in the early 20th century (Ricklefs, 1993: 156–159). Under the New Order, the system began to develop in earnest: between 1970 and 1990, the number of tertiary education facilities in the country doubled, from 450 to 900; the number of students increased sixfold, from some 237,000 to 1.5 million students (Kuipers, 2011: 152). A tertiary education became expected, beneficial, and a status symbol, with students leaving their hometowns to go to the universities (mostly concentrated in Java).

In “Bus Kota” modernity is presented through a grotesque body, a metaphor which devolves the ideal state of modernity based in development and renders it as a simple, corporeal object: a bus. Modernity, as such, becomes something which can no longer only be considered in abstract terms, but something which can be held and otherwise manipulated, something which interacts with individuals directly. These grotesque busses allow the writer to carnivalise modernity, illustrating its negative aspects.

The story arises from an expectation for the narrator to attend university. She is sent from the “boonies”, her traditional hometown in Kalimantan, to attend university and receive an education that will aid her in finding employment later on. It is through this sense of obligation which she comes into conflict with the busses, motor vehicles which are symbols of modernity.

Upon first seeing the crowded busses, she wants to “abandon [the] monstrosity, and go home“, but is unable to do so because she “needed that registration form” for university; she forces herself “into the belly of the beast”. Because she is focused on the perceived benefits of modernity she is drawn into conflict modernity’s less positive forces, the grotesque busses.

On the bus she discovers that “dozens of men” are waiting, a crowd which acts as one and shows no individuality. “*Their gazes crept over every inch*” of the narrator’s body, and later she stayed “pressed against the nameless masses”. She is faced with the impersonal anonymity of modernity, where awareness of self “‘evaporates’ into ‘an awareness of loss of meaning and reality’” (Kim, 2003: 12). She is but one in a “packed” bus, with nobody who cares about her discomfort. This anonymity and impersonality breeds a sexual deviancy. Anonymous men undress the author “wordlessly” with their eyes, with *things* “wiggling” behind their pants when she touches them innocently, violating a traditional view that women should only have sex with their husbands.

The narrator turns to tradition, something rooted in Islam – a religion which has been present in Indonesia since at least the 1200s (Ricklefs, 1993: 4) and is thus often viewed as traditional – as an escape from the anonymity and sexual deviancy of modernity. She begins “wearing the jilbab,” a traditional veil with “multiple levels of meaning” (Arimbi, 2009: 73), serving to empower the narrator and resist the influences of a secular, anonymous, sinful order. She attempts to resist modernity by turning to tradition, and indeed, in the jilbab she feels “safe for a while”, the traditional garment serving as a “thick iron wall” to protect her from the busses and the men on them.

However, tradition is unable to protect completely against the omnipresent malevolence of modernity, which she finds disturbing her in her most personal moments. It can only protect her outside, where the busses are “ravishing the streets”. When she looks in the mirror, she is “reminded of the wild eyes boring their way through [her] clothes, trying to devour everything beneath them”, and when she bathes she is “reminded of the rubbing and wiggling”. Ultimately, the busses “terrorise” her in her dreams. Although she attempts to hold on to tradition, modernity seeps its way into every aspect of her life: how she acts in her lodgement, how she bathes, how she sleeps. Ultimately even her hometown in the boonies is invaded by the modern busses.

By the end of the story the narrator is “stunned”, as the traditional has been completely overwritten by the modern. However, unlike the understanding promoted by the New Order,

modernity is not positive. Indeed, the narrator is unable to identify any positive aspects of modernity. She has found modernity not to be beneficial, but a filled with anonymity and sexual depravity, a situation which permeates every aspect of her life. The busses, as grotesque bodies of modernity, force the narrator to redefine herself, to take up the jilbab. Through carnivalisation, “Bus Kota” questions the New Order propaganda which promotes modernity as the path to development, indicating that the Indonesian people must redefine themselves to deal with modernity’s negative aspects.

This is not to say that modernity is not needed. This first layer of carnivalisation, one readily visible at the surface, is further explored with a second use of the grotesque body. The busses become not only grotesque bodies representing modernity in and of themselves, but decidedly phallic. At the surface, they are “huge iron tubes“, which the narrator hates not as a person, but “as a woman”. Significantly, no female riders except for the narrator are mentioned. The riders mentioned are groups of men, not loving men, but men who are like animals, with “wild” eyes trying to “devour” here. It is these men’s eyes which are “drilling” into the narrator, and she is “squished” between two of these men without a respite from their touch. Here, in the midst of these savage men, she is brought into direct contact with male sexuality for the first time: she must confront some unnamed “thing” poking into her buttocks. The busses are male domains, filled with a savage testosterone; contact with them traumatises the virginal narrator.

The phallic nature of the busses is most evident in the narrator’s dream, in which they act as detached penises, corporeal manifestations of male sexuality. In the dream she is chased by them until she falls, “legs asunder”, her body prepared to accept the busses’ masculine power while her mind recoils in disgust. Like the men’s eyes before, these dream busses “attack” with animal power, forcing their way into her womb and ripping her “vaginal walls ... to shreds”. She is penetrated by “dozens” of phallic busses, and although her conscious mind refused and screamed “Heelp!” her “veins throbbed with millions of megawatts of electricity”, an overabundance of stimulation.

This second layer of metaphor introduces a new level of grotesqueness, reducing busses (and, thence, modernity), to the phallus (or, as we will see later, penis). This reduces modernity further, from a corporeal symbol which is generally respected to a body part which is kept hidden from the public. Rather than become an example of the possibilities presented by modernity, these phallic busses are ancient ones, as old as mankind, trapping individuals in

confines of their making. This further carnivalises modernisation: it is no longer something to which everyone should strive, but something to be disgusted, something with a raunchy stench and a decisively animal nature, something which traps individuals in circumstances outside of their control.

However, the penile nature of busses (of modernisation) presents another layer of carnivalisation, one which partially overturns the negative view of modernity presented at the surface. Using Freudian psychology as a compliment to Bakhtin's theories outlined above, this penile nature of the busses can be dissected to further understand the narrator's (and thus, the author's) point of view. The phallus is an object of fixation which can represent the penis or, in girls, the clitoris and a source of pleasure for them. Ultimately, it is something which is desired. By the time a male has reached full sexual maturity, he focuses on the phallic penis as a source of pleasure: the phallus becomes something which is necessary for his happiness and continuation (Felluga, 2011a).

Freud identifies the penis as more perfect than the clitoris, and thus writes that young girls undergo a period of penis envy, where they feel lacking a penis which they should have. This penis envy never ends, ensuring that a woman will always feel herself lacking and wanting a penis (Carroll, 2010: 31). This impulse – ultimately sexual in nature – is ultimately consciously subjugated as the girl represses her sexual drives in face of society's (including religion's) refusal to accept them. They are diverted towards activities which are more socially acceptable, but ultimately surface in the subconscious, in parapraxes (slips) and dreams (Felluga, 2011b); these parapraxes and dreams are, in Freud's understanding, present a way to understand humanity's true psychology (Endraswara, 2008: 48).

The phallic, or rather penile, busses in "Bus Kota" bring the narrator face-to-face with the penis envy which she has repressed. Previously she has been conditioned by her society, expressing a fear and hatred of the "those dratted busses" and trying to hide herself from them. In her conscious, waking life she behaves as any Muslim (Quran 33:35) or traditional Indonesian woman should, remaining chaste and not seeking the touch of men; to aid her in her quest she has taken up the jilbab, further putting a wall between herself and the unclean men. When she is unable to fulfil these societal expectations – as her dreams and subconscious are overwhelmed by the masculine power of the busses – she feels depressed and increasingly desperate. She

“couldn’t take it anymore” and wants to go home, only to find that the hated busses are in her own hometown.

As mentioned above, the busses have reached the narrator’s subconscious, in her dreams and her parapraxes while at home. Although she does not want them in her mind, she is unable to refuse: they come as “shadows of fear and trembling” from which the narrator cannot escape, making her remember the men she “saw [her] own breasts”, she was reminded of “the rubbing and wiggling”, the physical contact with men presented by the busses. Even in her dreams, she her body surrenders itself to the phallic busses despite the narrator’s conscious aversion to them: she falls with “legs asunder”, opening the tract to her womb and to stimulation which presents “. Her subconscious has yearned for a penis, and as the narrator cannot physically have one, her subconscious presents a way to obtain “millions of megawatts of electricity” through stimulation. Although she consciously rejects the busses, her body has a need for them, and she subconsciously feels they are necessary to complete her.

Remembering that the phallic busses are grotesque bodies representing modernisation, readers are thus able to understand the ideology behind “Bus Kota”. At this second level it is understood not as an ideology which rejects modernity entirely. Although the narrator tries to reject the busses, she cannot escape them and, indeed, subconsciously needs them; it follows that modernisation, although it has its own negative aspects, is likewise needed. In other words, although modernity has its own drawbacks – anonymity, the loss of tradition – Faruk recognises that it is necessary to avoid a return to the chaotic economic and social situation which was present before Suharto’s New Order came to power.

CONCLUSION

Faruk’s “Bus Kota” was written in the mid-to-late 1980s, during a time of increased development, which overwrote the existing traditional order with a generic modern one. Read at the surface, the story’s carnival of voices – though the story is without dialogue – presents a condemnation of modernisation. The young woman is brought to the city by the positive illusion of modernisation, the need to continue schooling, only to be faced by the “dreaded” busses which later haunt her conscious mind. Modernisation is seen as a force which ravishes the traditional, forcing it to redefine and strengthen itself, before ultimately conquering it.

However, by recognising the “modern” busses as phallic symbols, the main character’s ideological view becomes more complex. She does not simply fear the busses, and thus modernity; she also subconsciously finds them intriguing, interesting, and recognises that they are a necessary evil. Hers is the writer’s point of view, as emphasised by the constant focus on her thoughts and feelings, the definition of everything in relation to her. The carnival serves only as a foil for her worldview, offering a contrasting paradigm which ultimately leads to a greater understanding of the writer’s own understanding. It can thus be understood that Faruk may, on a conscious level, have lamented the loss of tradition brought by increased modernisation. However, he realised that this was something which the human mind and body subconsciously craved: modernisation, for Faruk, was a necessary evil.

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Appendix I: Source (Indonesian)

Bus Kota

Faruk

KALAU boleh menentukan sendiri, yang pertama kali harus kulakukan adalah menghapuskan seluruh bus kota yang ada di kota ini. Aku amat benci pada besi lonjong besar yang berseliweran di jalan-jalan itu. Sebagai perempuan aku selalu saja merasa terganggu olehnya.

Perasaan terganggu itu telah menyusup dalam hatiku sejak perkenalan dengannya. Waktu itu aku baru datang dari udik, pedalaman Kalimantan sana. Untuk mengurus ujian masuk perguruan tinggi aku harus terus-menerus pulang pergi dari rumah pondokan ke kampus universitas yang ingin kumasuki. Karena jarak antara rumah dengan tempat itu cukup jauh, aku harus menempuhnya dengan bus kota.

Ketika memasuki pintu kendaraan umum perasaanku segera tersentak. Aku sungguh merasa risi dan malu sekaligus ditatap oleh sekian pasang mata lelaki yang telah duduk di bangku-bangku bus itu. Tatapan mereka seperti merayapi sekujur tubuhku. Rambutku, mataku, hidungku, bibirku, dadaku, lipatan-lipatan rok yang ada di antara kedua buah pahaku, lutut, dan bahkan kakiku. Aku bergidik. Ingin aku menarik kembali langkahku, turun, dan berjalan kaki saja. Tapi hasrat mengajar waktu, keinginan mendapatkan formulir pendaftaran, membuatku memaksakan diri untuk menerobos juga ke dalamnya, mencari tempat duduk yang kosong.

Setelah beberapa kali naik kendaraan itu, perasaan risi dan bergidik itu berangsur-angsur sirna dalam diriku. Tapi sebelum perasaan itu sungguh-sungguh lenyap, tiba-tiba aku seperti disodok oleh perasaan lain yang lebih mengerikan. Saat itu aku harus mengikuti tes masuk. Pagi-pagi sekali aku sudah berdiri di pinggir jalan di depan rumahku, menanti kendaraan. Bus yang kutunggu lewat. Tetapi penumpangnya berjubel. Sekali lagi, karena takut terlambat, kupaksakan diriku masuk ke dalamnya. Aku berdiri, berhimpitan dengan banyak orang yang semuanya tak kukenal.

Aku mencoba mencari tempat yang sedikit lapang, namun gagal. Dengan tak terhindarkan aku terjepit di antara dua lelaki. Buah dadaku tergesek oleh punggung lelaki yang ada di depan, sedang pantatku tak mampu lepas dari lelaki yang menghimpit di belakang. Sungguh aku jadi merinding dibuatnya. Ingin aku melindungi bagian dadaku dengan tangan. Tapi, karena takut jatuh, aku tak melakukannya. Keringat dingin mulai terasa di sekujur tubuhku

ketika kurasakan ada sesuatu yang menggeliat dari celana pria yang ada di belakangku. Aku mencoba beringsut, namun geliat itu justru semakin mengeras.

Aku mengetuk-ngutuk dalam hati. Sejak itu aku bersumpah tak mau lagi masuk bus kota. Sambil menunggu kendaraan sepeda motor dikirim dari kampung, segala jarak kutempuh dengan berjalan kaki. Tapi aneh, setiap melihat bus kota berseliweran aku selalu terkenang pada mata-mata yang menatap seperti ingin menelanjangi itu, seperti merasakan kembali geliat sesuatu yang bergerak-gerak di pantatku dulu itu. Dan aku tak mungkin menghapuskannya. Hampir setiap menit, setiap detik selalu saja kulihat bus-bus kota berkeliaran di jalan-jalan.

Sungguh. Kalau boleh menentukan sendiri, yang pertama kali kulakukan pastilah seluruh menghapuskan bus kota yang ada di kota ini. Tapi aku tak mungkin melaksanakan keinginan itu. Yang bisa kukerjakan hanyalah melenyapkan diri darinya. Membuat diriku seolah-olah lepas dari sekian pandangan mata yang menatap dan menelanjangi itu, membuat diriku tak tersentuh oleh geliat itu. Lalu kututup seluruh bagian tubuhku. Sekarang aku memakai jilbab, berjalan menempuh jarak antara rumah dan kampus menahan perasaan sumuk.

Sesaat aku merasa aman. Jilbab yang panjang dan menutupi seluruh aurat seakan menjadi sebuah dinding beton tebal yang memberikan perlindungan bagiku. Namun, perasaan aman itu hanya kurasakan ketika berada di jalan, di luar rumah. Ketika aku berada di rumah melepaskan jilbab bayang-bayang yang mengerikan dan membuat merinding itu kembali muncul. Setiap berkaca, memandang wajah sendiri aku ingat pada mata-mata yang menatap jalang, yang seakan ingin melumat semuanya. Setiap mandi dan terpandang buah dada sendiri aku kembali teringat pada gesekan-gesekan dan geliat yang ada di bus kota dulu.

Sekarang aku tak tahu lagi apa yang harus kulakukan. Aku toh tak mungkin terus-menerus memakai jilbab. Tidur dengan jilbab, mandi dengan jilbab. Apalagi bayang-bayang itu telah pula memasuki mimpi-mimpiku. Hampir setiap malam aku diganggu mimpi buruk yang bahkan lebih mengerikan dari kenyataan yang pernah kualami itu. Satu malam aku tersentak bangun dengan keringat dingin di sekujur tubuh. Aku baru saja mendapat mimpi buruk, amat mengerikan. Berpuluh bus kota mengajar-ngejarku. Aku lari tanpa arah hingga kemudian terperangkap di sebuah lorong buntu yang amat sunyi. Tiba-tiba kurasakan pakaianku lenyap dari badan. Tubuhku telanjang bulat. Aku terjatuh dalam posisi mengangkang. Sementara bus-bus kota terus menerjang. Lalu satu-persatu melindasku. Semua menerobos dengan paksa ke gua garbaku yang sempit. Selaput daraku pecah, dinding paginaku koyak, selangkanganku seakan

ditarik-tarik kedua arah yang berlawanan. “Toloong!” Aku berteriak. Tapi suara itu seperti tersekat di tenggorokan. Sementara bus-bus itu terus menerobos. Sekujur tubuhku gemetar, seluruh jaringan pembuluh darahku seakan terserum oleh arus listrik berjuta megawatt.

Besoknya bulat keputusanku untuk pulang. Aku sudah tak tahan. Biarlah kuliah kutinggalkan. Biarlah harapan masa depan gemilang yang semula jadi impianku tak terwujud jadi kenyataan. Aku harus kembali ke kampung. Titik.

Segera kukirim surat pada kedua orang tuaku. Kuceritakan semuanya sebagai alasan keputusanku itu. Tapi seminggu kemudian surat balasan mereka datang. Isinya, di kampung kami pun sudah berkeliaran bus-bus kota. Persis yang ada di kota ini.

Aku terpana.

Appendix II: Source (English)

City Busses

Faruk

IF I made the rules, the first thing I would do would be get rid of all those city busses. I hate those huge iron tubes, wandering unhampered throughout the streets. As a woman, I always feel bothered by them.

This hatred stirred in my heart from our first meeting. I had just come from the boonies, the depths of Kalimantan.³ To prepare for my entrance exam, I had to go back and forth from the hostel where I was staying to the university. It was pretty far, so I had to go by bus.

As soon as I stepped in the door of that dreaded machine I was shocked. My skin crawled with shame and discomfort as I felt the eyes of dozens of men staring at me, drilling into me with their eyes from the benches. Their gazes crept over every inch of my body. My hair, my eyes, my nose, my lips, my chest, the folds of the skirt between my thighs, my knees, and even my feet. I shuddered. I wanted to pull my feet back, abandon this monstrosity, and go home. But I was pressed for time; I needed that registration form. So I forced myself to penetrate the belly of the beast and find an empty seat.

After a few times riding those contraptions, the shudder and accompanying discomfort began to fade. But before it could disappear completely, something else poked through, a feeling far more terrifying. I was getting ready for my exam. Bright and early I was already standing at

³ The Indonesian portion of Borneo.

the side of the road, waiting for a ride. The bus came. But it was packed. Once again, for fear that I'd be late I got aboard. I stood, pressed against the nameless masses.

I tried to find a seat with some more breathing room, but failed. I found myself squished between two men. My breasts brushed against the back of the one in front of me, while my bottom was pushed tight against the one behind me. My skin began to crawl. I wanted to cover my breasts with my hand. But, I was afraid of falling... I couldn't do it. A cold sweat pushed its way out of my pores as I felt something stirring behind the one man's pants. I tried to escape, but the *thing* poking me just grew harder.

My heart let out a soft curse. Since then I swore to never ride a city bus. While waiting for a motorcycle to be sent from my hometown, I went everywhere by foot. But the strange thing is that every time I saw a bus I saw dominating the streets reminded me of those horrid eyes, undressing me wordlessly, made me feel some long, hard *thing* wiggling against my bottom like before. And I could not get rid of it. Every minute, every second I always saw busses ravishing the streets.

Honest. If I made the rules, the first thing I would do would be get rid of all those city busses. But I could never make that dream a reality. The only thing I could do was hide myself from their omnipresence. Free myself from the eyes which stared at and undressed me, render myself untouchable by the wiggling *thing*. I covered my body. I began wearing the jilbab, walking to campus and back while trying to keep myself from vomiting.

I felt safe for a while. The long cloth covering my body felt like a thick iron wall which offered me its protection. But I could only feel that safety in the streets, outside. When I was at home and took off the jilbab, the shadows of fear and trembling reared their ugly heads. Every time I looked at myself in the mirror and saw my own face, I was reminded of the wild eyes boring their way through my clothes, trying to devour everything beneath them. Every time I bathed and saw my own breasts, I was reminded of the rubbing and wiggling on those dratted busses.

I knew no longer what I had to do. I couldn't wear the jilbab everywhere. Sleep in it, bathe in it. Especially since the shadows of those busses had reached my dreams. Almost every night I was terrorized by them, dreams even more frightening than what I had experienced firsthand. One night I jolted awake with a cold sweat flooding over my body. I had just had a nightmare, a terrifying one. Dozens of busses were chasing me. I was running, aimlessly, until I

found myself caught in a cavernous silence with no escape. My clothes disappeared. I was stark naked. I fell, legs asunder. And the busses, they attacked. One by one they overpowered me. They forced their way through the narrow entrance into my womb. My hymen broke, my vagina's walls were ripped to shreds, my crotch yanked every which way. "Heeelp!" I screamed. But my voice was caught in my throat. And those busses kept pushing. My body shook, my veins throbbed with millions of megawatts of electricity.

The following day I decided to make my stand. I couldn't take it anymore. So what if my studies had to be abandoned? So what if my once shining hope could no longer be realized, eclipsed by those damned busses? I was going home. Period.

I immediately posted that letter to my parents. I explained my reasoning in terrifying detail. Not a week had passed before I received their reply. In short, it said that our poor village had already become plagued with the feral busses. Just like those over here.

I'm stunned.