



# Cities within the City: Dissident Poets Unveil Jakarta the Metropolis City

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**Abstract** In this paper I am interested in discharging the cognitive energies of Indonesian dissident poetry, in order to destabilize the myth of Jakarta the Metropolitan City fostered by the city apologists. In place of that myth, I will argue that the poetry of Indonesia's most significant and most vocal poets posits a counter-image of urban decline, racist intolerance, and enduring traditional solidarities, which no amount of whitewashing can gainsay.

Their grim urban chronotopes refuse any model of happy coexistence, so steeped are they in the harder lessons of Indonesian history: of systematic discrimination, segregation, abuse, class partition, immigration and cheap, disposable labour. To represent Indonesia, and specifically, as a microcosm, its capital city of Jakarta, as a 'prison for the damned', a 'cancer-ridden pulse of a Third World nation', or more simply as "worse than hell" (as the poets investigated in this paper variously do) is not merely to work against the grain of local representations, it is rather to construct a new kind of 'representational space', inflected by ethnicity but above all by class. Their poetry is a lesson not only in the persistence of the aesthetic in the least likely and least auspicious zones of capitalist underdevelopment, but also in the unconquered spirit of resistance and defiance alive in Jakarta's underprivileged spaces, the shacks (*gubuk*), gutters (*selokan*) and alleyways (*gang*).

To read it, I contend, is to participate in the dissemination of an indomitable counterculture, at times curt, crude, and cynical, at times capable of the most delicate redemption, which builds on the banalities of everyday life in the slums (*kampung kumuh*), and rises to contest the very abstraction of 'Indonesia' itself, by disclosing the real multiplicity of cities within the city.

**Keywords** dissident poetry; representational space; counter culture

## Introduction

What space is there in a city dominated by spectacle for the necessary privacy and inward reflection of poetic production? The answer to this question, I believe, might well have something to do with the ethnic and economic divisions of urban space, its parcelization into racialized and economic zones somehow beyond the hypnotic

reach of what is portrayed in popular Indonesian *sinetron*, or titillating tourist brochures.

Throughout the 1970s the magazines *Siasat*, *Kisah*, *Seni*, *Basis*, *Konfrontasi*, *Siasat Baru* and *Horison* served as springboards for the poetic careers of not a few of Indonesia's important dissident poets<sup>1</sup>, figures also often regarded as iconoclasts. W.S. (Willibrordus Surendra) Rendra, Goenawan Mohamad, Taufiq Ismail, Eka Budianta, Emha Ainun Najib and later poets in the 1980s and 1990s such as Afrizal Malna and Joko Pinurbo all began publishing in these pages. And the progressive International Writing Program in Iowa University, which sees an Indonesian writer participating almost every year without fail since 1967, was another basis for the dissemination and exposure of this poetry at the international stage. It was not, however, until the publication of Rendra's *Potret Pembangunan dalam Puisi* (Portrait of Development in Poetry), *Bersatulah Pelacur-Pelacur Kota Jakarta* (Jakarta's Prostitutes Unite!) and *Blues untuk Bonnie* (Blues for Bonnie), that the streets of shanty towns like Kebun Kacang at the heart of sprawling modern Jakarta, the plight of slum dwellers in Kalipasir, the prostitutes that ply their trade in Jalan Jaksa, and the grim realities of Indonesia's urban underbelly were finally emblazoned in the nation's imaginary. With these excellent collections, a minor canon was created which dislodged the notion that poetry in Indonesia—unlike the panegyric court poetry of Malay feudal times—was a privilege of a literati concerned only with the elitist interests of the aristocratic, powerful, the rich or those in establishment, and fostered an appreciation of Indonesia's dynamic, disparate economic and class constitutions. The poems in these anthologies focused on the ways in which the concept of Development or *Pembangunan* adopted by Soeharto's New Order regime (1966-1998) was nothing but "an epic illusion" (Goenawan Mohamad, 2005, p. xvi) that reflected from a distance, multi-million-dollar construction projects and towering skyscrapers that lend its capital city, Jakarta, the appearance of a prospering metropolis, but upon closer inspection, however, reveals thousands of inhabitants living below the poverty line, lured by hope for a better life in the city, squatting in squalor on unused government properties, or along banks of rivers and on land adjacent to railroad tracks, in homes built of scrap wood and zinc sheeting crammed between massive structures of glass, concrete and steel. And it is no accident that in the 1970s this grave disparity in the distribution of the fruits of development should have begun to be mapped out in earnest across the greater Jakarta region. The reasons for this burgeoning interest in the widening gulf between the haves and have-nots as it is being played out in urban cities nationwide, especially in Jakarta, are not hard to discern.

### **Jakarta the Masterplan: Evacuation, Erasure, (A)Voiding**

By the end of the 1970s, it was apparent that Jakarta was experiencing the effects of one of the most significant about-turns in Indonesian urban history. This was the realization that Jakarta, despite its 'Metropolis' façade—the moniker, always in English and spelled with a capital M, and a buzzword to describe the capital city in the 70s—had become the most overpopulated multiracial and multiethnic metropolis in the Indonesian archipelago where the gulf between the rich and poor is at its most extreme (Abeyasekere, 1990). According to the 2010 population census, DKI (Indone-

sian abbreviation for *Daerah Khusus Ibukota* or Special Capital Territory of) Jakarta's population density stands at 14,469 people per square kilometre (Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia, 2011). In 2000, Jakarta's demographics include Javanese (35.16%), Betawinese (27.65%), Sundanese (15.27%), others (6.48%), Chinese (5.53%), Bataks (3.61%), Minangkabaus (3.18%), Malays (1.62%), Buginese (0.59%), Madurese (0.57%), Bantenese (0.25%), and Banjarese (0.10%) (Suryadinata, Evi Nurvidya & Ananta, 2003). Increasingly, Ali Sadikin's—the first Governor of Jakarta's—Master Plan for this Metropolitan City (1965-1985), began to marginalize and 'minoritize' the urban poor. The sense of 'minoritization' that I proffer here, i.e. to make smaller in number and consequently less apparent, or less visible; or to be suppressed, even eliminated, is substantiated by Lea Jellinek's contention that the official rationale for the demolition of Kebun Kacang (the slum area targeted for the pilot 'urban renewal' project in central Jakarta) was more than met the eye:

The official justification for the program was that an unhealthy and fire-prone slum would be replaced by much better housing and amenities. The program would raise the inhabitants' standard of living and reduce inequality in line with the President's Instructions for Repelita 111 (1979-1984). Perhaps the most compelling reason for the choice of Kebun Kacang, however, was that it was such a highly visible eyesore...Planners were embarrassed by the discrepancy in height and appearance between the ramshackle *kampung* houses and the multi-storey buildings all around (1991, p. 129).

*Transmigrasi* (transmigration)<sup>2</sup> was explored as a means to manage Jakarta's exponential population growth; this however was never rigorously pursued, due partly to its expense. In 1970, Ali Sadikin declared Jakarta a 'closed city' for immigrants and decreed that all citizens must carry an identity card and only those who could thus prove that they were permanent residents would be permitted to live in Jakarta. The Master Plan also specified areas which were to be cleared for development projects. Housing built by slum-dwellers in these areas was demolished under the guise of 'peremajaan' (urban renewal) by the Jakarta City government. Land clearances were conducted like military operations. People in these areas were ordered to leave, sometimes even to demolish their own huts and leave the land, on the pain of forcible removal. If they were lucky, they would be offered removal expenses, but they were given no compensation. To remove other 'eyesores', Sadikin began a campaign against vagrants (*gelandangan*), *becak*-drivers, prostitutes and street-vendors (*asongan*). In the 1970s, the Jakarta governor forbade the further manufacture of *becak*, restricted and eventually phased out the areas in which they were permitted to operate, replacing them with the motorised *bajaj*, effectively depriving hundreds of thousands of the urban poor both a source of livelihood and a cheap mode of transportation in the city. Draconian measures were also taken against street peddlers: frequent raids were launched against them, and they had to face fines or had their goods confiscated. *Gelandangan* (those without a fixed abode plying the streets of Jakarta scavenging or begged for a living) were also persecuted, hauled out of their makeshift shelters and underground drains where they made their homes and carted away to the outskirts of town. Similar policies were pursued against prostitutes. The authorities tried to

reduce their numbers and concentrated them in special areas in the centre and north of town, away from the well-off residential suburbs like Menteng, Kebayoran, Pondok Indah and Kemang. Ironically, 'high-class' prostitution was condoned and call-girls and massage parlours flourished (Abeyasekere, 1990, pp. 229-232).

The recognition that Jakarta had been irreversibly minoritized—both in the real sense, that is, where culturally, no one ethnic group, neither Betawinese nor Javanese, is predominant; and in the purported sense, where economically, official figures have often been criticized for "undercounting" the proportion of urban poor in the city—could not subsequently be denied. According to the *Biro Pusat Statistik* (Central Agency of Statistics or BPS) figures, for example, the urban poor make up only 4.9 per cent of all city dwellers in Jakarta in 2001—"a figure that strikes many observers as absurdly low" (McCarthy, 2003, p. 7), when in contrast a research conducted by an NGO estimated that at the height of the *krismon* (a term commonly used by Indonesians, derived from *krisis moneter* or "monetary crisis") in 1998, there were 2.8 million poor people (or 25.5 per cent of the total population of Jakarta) living in poverty throughout Jakarta (McCarthy, pp. 7-8).

The overriding cultural task for Rendra and other dissident poets alike would henceforth be to map the city according to this newer logic of minoritization, rather than simply ignore or efface it. The poetry we are about to examine yields a more authoritative social knowledge of the faultlines underlying the urban mosaic than the glib platitudes of the then New Order would have us believe. What I want to do in the rest of my paper is to discharge the cognitive energies of Indonesian dissident poetry, in order to destabilize the myth of multicultural utopia fostered by the city apologists. Speaking, simultaneously trenchantly and tongue-in-cheek, of this 'multicultural utopia', Daniel Ziv (2002) remarks:

The politically correct way to refer to Jakarta's chaos, petty crime, turf wars, mob rule and inter-ethnic hatred is to call the city a 'big cultural melting pot'. The melting pot approach views the city's populace as a smiling happy bunch of people, all grateful for the opportunity to celebrate their colourful diversity through a collective urban experience" (p. 95).

In place of that myth, the poetry of Indonesia's most significant and most vocal poets posits a counter-image of urban decline, racist intolerance, and enduring traditional solidarities, which no amount of whitewashing can gainsay. Their grim urban chronotopes refuse any model of happy coexistence, so steeped are they in the harder lessons of Indonesian history: of systematic discrimination, segregation, abuse, class partition, immigration and cheap, disposable labour. To represent Indonesia, and specifically, as a microcosm, its capital city of Jakarta, as a "prison for the damned" (Alkatiri, 2001, p. 67), a "cancer-ridden pulse of a Third World nation" (Rendra, 1996, p. 50), or more simply as "worse than hell" (Eka Budianta, 1993, p. 116) (as the poets investigated below variously do) is not merely to work against the grain of local representations, it is rather to construct a new kind of 'representational space', inflected by ethnicity but above all by class. The poetry is a lesson not only in the persistence of the aesthetic in the least likely and least auspicious zones of capitalist underdevelopment, but also in the unconquered spirit of resistance and defi-

ance alive in Jakarta's underprivileged spaces, the shacks (*gubuk*), gutters (*selokan*) and alleyways (*gang*). To read it is to participate in the dissemination of an indomitable counterculture, at times curt, crude and, cynical, at times capable of the most delicate redemption, which builds on the banalities of everyday life in the slums, known locally as *kampung*<sup>3</sup> (or more formally, *pemukiman*) *kumuh*, and rises to contest the very abstraction of 'Indonesia' itself, by disclosing the real multiplicity of cities within the city.

### Defamiliarizing the *Kampung-Kota* Dichotomy

Of the many critics who have examined modern Indonesian literature's conflicting and contradictory attitudes to *desa/kampung* (country/village) and *kota* (city), (cf. Abidin Kusno, 2000; Melani Budianta, 2002; Manneke Budiman, 2008; Katrin Bandel, 2010) two usefully supplement my own reformulation of it. Afrizal Malna (2000) describes the growth of modern Indonesian poetry as "a history of its urbanization, and the relationship between *kampung* and *kota* as dualistic. The city is a world away from the country; it is the domain where literary struggles take place, whereas the country is left far behind in the past, unable to participate in those struggles. In the country, there is only a longing for a return home" (pp. 336-337; my translation). Many of the contradictory attitudes to the city in fact portray it, on the one hand, as a place of progress, peace, profit, pleasure and as a cradle of civilization, while at the same time maligned as an inhumane site of alienation, crime, disease, squalor, vice, oppression and social iniquity. The same urban conditions that have produced increased industrialization and wealth also resulted in exploitation and a growing divide between a few wealthy capitalists and the weak many, the poor. The city that is so inclusive, so all-embracing, is paradoxically also an unaccommodating city in which vast numbers are marginalized, destitute and alone. But the city as an alienating, oppressive place full of uncaring strangers, is also inevitably a place of social commingling and encounter, which makes it a site of possibility: of spontaneity and surprise, of renewal and resistance. Cities may concentrate and exemplify forces to be resisted—authoritarianism, corruption, discrimination, exploitation, social inequity—but by gathering people and prompting spontaneous interaction, they also provide the space to resist those forces. As Iain Chambers, valorizing the cultural complexity of the modern metropolis, says: "The city suggests a creative disorder, an instructive confusion, an interpolating space in which the imagination carries you in every direction, even towards the previously unthought" (1994, p. 189). These multiple and contradictory associations, representational traditions, images and tropes about the city make frequent appearances in the poetry examined in this paper, and though this makes dissident Indonesian poetry a case in point, it does not however make it an exceptional one. Similar conflicting and equally time-honoured literary images of the city can also be found in English, Indian, Malay, Latin American or African literatures. What is exceptional about the case of Indonesian literature is its treatment of and attitudes towards the *kampung/desa*. According to A. Teeuw, *kampung* life is often problematized, vehemently repudiated, and even vilified in modern Indonesian literature (1987, p. 331; my translation). Although his reference is to modern Indonesian novels, a parallel can be drawn with the reiterability of similar attitudes to the *kampung* in modern Indonesian literature *per se*:

Kerinduan penuh nostalgia ke desa sebagai pengongsian yang selamat jarang ada dalam roman Indonesia. Biasanya terdapat ambivalensi terhadap nilai-nilai tradisi yang masih hidup dalam suasana pendesaan. Manusia kampung jarang diidealis. Dalam roman Indonesia pelaksanaan keperibadian dan penciptaan kemanusiaan tidak terikat atau tergabung pada atau lebih mudah tercapai dalam suasana kampung; bahkan hampir dikatakan sebaliknya. (pp. 329-330)

There isn't the traditionally stereotype image of the countryside in its natural simplicity or—to take as a point of comparison—of dreams of halcyon days, or of the pastoral idyll, or the essence of timeless pure England, say in English literature. There is no nostalgic longing for a rustic, rural golden age that never actually existed which is idealized in reaction to the fact of change associated with the city. Indonesian modern fiction, according to Teeuw (1987), is filled with characters who root themselves in ideas rather than places, compared to Malaysian literature where the dichotomy between *kampung* and *kota* is more black and white. In the dissident poetry of Indonesia in particular, we will find that as people find themselves in the cultural crucible which is the city, and negotiate their identities and affiliations, old ideas of home (*desa*, *mukim*), nation (*bangsa*) and homeland (*kampung halaman*)—with the relatively homogeneous racial, cultural, ethnic and/or linguistic group historically identified with these—are perpetually revisited. We should not be too overzealous to assume however that there is no rootedness or fierce attachments to *desa* or *kampung halaman*. Linus Suryadi A.G. (as cited in Afrizal, 2000, p. 337) speaks of a strong communal attachment among writers to a remembered or longed-for homeland (“*dusun kelahiran*”) and solidarity with others who originated from it:

Banyak penyair menganggap bahwa dusun kelahirannya sebagai masa silamnya, kenangan masa kanak dan masa remaja. Mungkin sebagian menganggap bahwa dusun kelahirannya sebagai salah satu sumber ilham kreativitasnya. Tetapi mungkin sebagian beranggapan sebaliknya, daerah asalnya sebagai masa silam yang harus dilupakan dan dibuang. Lembaran hidup baru menolak lembaran hidup lama.

But identities premised on sameness in contrast to the fluid cosmopolitan space of the city, becomes an exclusionary space that cannot accommodate difference. The world of the *kampung* is regarded to be contiguous with a fossilized past that was always only an illusory object of desire—a longing for an impossible return to origins: “sesungguhnya dunia kampung yang dirindukan itu...tidak bisa dikembalikan sebagai wilayah genetis tempat seorang penyair pulang ke asalnya” (Afrizal, 2000, p. 343). In fact, so strong is the repulsion to the deadening, unchanging backwaters of *dunia desa* that the poet, Subagio Sastrowardoyo, in his poem “Berilah Aku Kota” (as cited in Afrizal, 2000, p. 342), expressed his longing to return to the city with all its din and dirt: “Pemandangan berulang selalu. Kabut tipis mengambang di atas dusun. Air gemericik terbentur di batu. Tanpa berubah. Aku tak tahan menyaksikan gerak mati. Aku ingin lari dan berteriak: ‘Berilah aku kota dengan bising dan kotornya.’” What Teeuw regards as Indonesian literature’s ambivalent responses of attraction and repulsion to the *kampung* or *desa* have turned it into a metaphor rather than place—a

version of Rendra's *fatamorgana* (see below), or the illusory world of appearances and perceptions. In the language of Western postmodernism, the *kampung* in modern Indonesian literature is a version of Jean Baudrillard's (1998) *simulacrum*—the proliferating replicas that substitute for a vanishing 'real'—while Jakarta the Metropolis is Fredric Jameson's (1984) 'depthless' late-capitalist city of surfaces and artifice.

### Mayhem in the Metropolis

The metropolis is the centre of accumulation and prestige but within it—beneath Jakarta's veneer of artifice—lie pockets of underdeveloped areas of shanty towns (*kampung kumuh*) exploited by and for the benefit of the city. At the core of the political map of Jakarta's 'mosaic' of poverty is the *kampung* of Karet Tensin, in the heart of Jakarta's central business district, hemmed in on three sides by office towers, apartment complexes and five-star hotels including the Shangri-La. In Karet Tensin, as throughout much of Jakarta, the Betawi ethnic group—those people who claim themselves as the indigenous population of Jakarta who can trace their lineage back to the city's origins in the mid-16th century (McCarthy, 2003)—are being gradually squeezed out and marginalized. Following unprecedented economic growth in the 1970s, thousands of landless farm labourers from other parts of Java immigrated to Jakarta to seek daily-wage construction work in the capital. This led quickly to severe conditions of over-crowding, underfunding and constant harassment by municipal authorities in the inner city slums, a legacy we have seen memorialized by Rendra, Goenawan Mohamad and Taufiq Ismail in their works. Blocked from settling in other areas of the city by restrictive policies that were destroying their *kampung* without providing alternative accommodation and general discrimination, poor Jakartans were obliged to inhabit roadside shacks, makeshift huts and dilapidated housing in shanty towns often in the very heart of the city, and, when the *krismon* hit Indonesia in 1997, faced spiralling unemployment. In May 1998, Jakarta became the scene of the most costly socio-political conflict in domestic Indonesian history—to that point—since the mass killings of hundreds of thousands during the tumultuous years between 1965-1966 that presaged the fall of Sukarno and the birth of the New Order. The riots of that year vividly demonstrated the degree to which the class and racial configurations of the great Indonesian cities had polarized along the very wide economic divide. As ultra-rich Indonesians retreated to secure communities in affluent urban areas like Menteng, Kebayoran, Pondok Indah and Kemang, the poor underclass reached intolerable limits of degradation and neglect in ramshackle ghettos. The costs of the resulting public unrest in Jakarta (sparked by the financial bankruptcy and economic hardship of the *krismon* of 1997 and the resentment against the obscene wealth Suharto, his family, his military, business and political cronies had accumulated during the three decades he was in power) were extremely high. The rioting continued for three days, leaving 1,500 dead, thousands more badly injured, and 4000 buildings damaged or destroyed (Dadan Umar Daihani, 2001).

The rising political and economic polarisation that started in the early 1960s coincided with a new militancy born of the crushed aspirations of the urban poor that had been festering for decades, whose spatial springboard was precisely the slums in question. If, as Dadan Umar Daihani points out, the slums were the economic and

spatial basis of the May 1998 riots,<sup>4</sup> then I would argue they were also their social basis: the urban poor community emerged as a collective actor on the basis of the 'space of freedom' provided by the slum. The slum became a city within the city, where alternative rules of an alternative society were to emerge. Most importantly, mounting frustration among intellectuals and politically committed cultural activists with the New Order's authoritarian development policies and corruption inspired unity and élan among the dispossessed and disenfranchised, giving birth to literary and artistic works containing, at first oblique, and later, increasingly direct, criticism of the New Order across a full spectrum of practices from the plays of Putu Wijaya, Arifin C. Noer and Rendra to the caustic poetry of Emha Ainun Nadjib. Goenawan Mohamad founded the Komunitas Utan Kayu in 1997, a collaborative network of several Jakarta-based organisations set up to champion the freedoms of thought and expression, which grew into a flourishing theatre centre with its own art gallery and cultural journal. Taufiq Ismail, Ahmad Tohari, Remy Sylado, Ajip Rosidi, Nano Riantarno, Pramodya Ananta Toer and Wiji Thukul established a distinctive populist idiom in fiction, drama and poetry.<sup>5</sup> The 'distinctive' idiom (and chronotope) of these dissident artists and intellectuals might well be tracked in the poetry of the indefatigable Rendra.

### Cynical Urban Realism in the *Kampung-City*

Much of Rendra's published poetry, which spans the years 1956 to 2005, is an embittered reflection on the fate of the downtrodden 'little people' (*wong cilik*): "Orang-orang miskin di jalan. / Yang tinggal di dalam selokan. / Yang kalah di dalam pergulatan. Yang diledak oleh impian" (Rendra, 1993) brought into being by massive government mismanagement and corruption which had left multitudes in dire poverty while a select few (cronies of the Suharto regime) continued to live in luxury. Riven by political (and ideological) in-fighting,<sup>6</sup> writers, intellectuals, artists and cultural activists had become distracted and poetry had become a glib "exorbitation of language"—to coin a phrase from Perry Anderson—of the urbanites, so much so that Goenawan Mohamad laments: "Kepenyairan hanyalah posisi dari orang-orang kota yang tak jelas" (quoted in Afrizal, 2000, p. 343).

In place of political 'Faith', theatre and verse have been the arenas for Rendra's scathing critique of the New Order government's tyranny in the name of *pembangunan* (development; read: modernization). As he says, "I feel most effective as an ordinary citizen. As a poet, I am more free to talk. I am not motivated by political ideology, but by humane concerns" (Rendra's interview in Cohen, 1999). Yet his poetic practice has been as fractured and occasionally desperate as the straightforward politics from which it departs. His aesthetic can perhaps be best described as a cynical urban realism, consequent upon the marginalized social situation of many of the dispossessed and destitute that his poetry champions. The subjects of Rendra's poetry are state oppression in the name of 'development', persecution of the poor, and the inequitable class structure of contemporary Indonesia. Pared of romantic illusions and academic pretensions, his poems are honest and uncompromising commentaries about those who have been excluded from the Indonesian Dream. Bob Hawkins, commenting on the growing dissatisfaction with the then Suharto gov-

ernment, remarked that there was a “growing conviction in many areas of Indonesian society that all the high-flown talk of development through [Suharto’s] years of rule cannot hide the fact that the private dreams of the elite who surround him are not those of the Indonesian people en masse” (1982). More consciously than perhaps any other Indonesian writer, Rendra’s works, combined with his “politico-literary praxis, acted together as not just the vanguard of socio-politically committed art, but as the vanguard of public opposition to the New Order dictatorship itself” (Lane, 2006). What we shall be interested in determining is what this victimized and emphatically ‘minor’ subject-position—both enforced upon Rendra and adopted by him—has produced in the way of literary chronotopes.

His poetry’s consistent ground note has been the presentation of the Jakartan urban poor’s everyday life as *reality*, as the poem below starkly portrays:

Kini kita saling berpandangan, saudara.  
Ragu-ragu apa pula,  
kita memang pernah berjumpa.  
Sambil berdiri di ambang pintu kereta api,  
Tergencet oleh penumpang berjubel,  
dari Jogja ke Jakarta,  
Aku melihat kamu tidur di kolong bangku,  
dengan alas kertas koran,  
sambil memeluk satu anakmu,  
sementara isterimu meneteki bayinya,  
terbaring di sebelahmu.  
pernah pula kita satu trak,  
duduk di atas kobis-kobis berbau sampah,  
sambil meremasi tetek tengkulak sayur,  
dan lalu sama-sama kaget,  
ketika trak tiba-tiba terhenti,  
karena *distop* oleh polisi,  
yang menarik pungutan tidak resmi.  
Ya, saudara, kita sudah sering berjumpa,  
Karena sama-sama anak jalan raya.  
.....  
Hidup macam apa hidup ini!  
Orang-orang dipindah ke sana ke mari.  
Bukan dari tujuan ke tujuan.  
Tapi dari keadaan ke keadaan  
yang tanpa perubahan...  
.....  
Kita memang pernah bertemu.  
Waktu itu hujan rinai.

Aku menarik sehelai plastik dari tong sampah,  
Tepat pada waktu kamu juga menariknya.  
Kita saling berpandangan...  
aku melihat kamu membawa helaian plastik itu  
ke satu gubug karton.  
Kamu lapiskan ke atap gubugmu,  
dan lalu kamu masuk dengan anakmu.  
Sebungkus nasi yang dicuri,  
Itulah santapan.  
Kolong kios buku di terminal,  
Itulah peraduan.  
Ya, saudara-saudara, kita sama-sama kenal ini,  
karena kita anak jadah bangsa yang mulia...  
.....

Hidup macam apa hidup ini.  
Di taman yang gelap orang menjual badan,  
agar mulutnya tersumpal makan.  
Di hotel yang mewah isteri guru menjual badan,  
agar pantatnya diganjil sedan.  
.....  
Hidup dalam khayalan,  
hidup dalam kenyataan ....  
tak ada bezanya.  
Karena khayalan dinyatakan,  
dan kenyataan dikhayalkan,  
di dalam peradaban fatamorgana.

(“Sajak Kenalan Lamamu” in Rendra, 1993, p.88)

In the stanza that begins “Hidup macam apa hidup ini”, which is echoed but inflected later in the poem, there is a sense of entrapment in poverty’s vicious circle which the poetic persona, a denizen of the city, finds himself meeting at every turn. Poverty, arrested in the metaphor of an Old Acquaintance (“Kenalan Lama”) of the poem’s title, that the persona keeps seeing (“berpandangan”), meeting (“bertemu”), and knows (“kenal”) so well it seems, is impossible to part ways with. This cycle of poverty resembles a looping circle (*lingkaran*), each iteration of the cycle only reinforces it further with nowhere to go but back to its beginning, circling around its own

premise with a desperation provoked by the powers of local hyperreality. Similarly, “fatamorgana”<sup>7</sup> a familiar trope of literary and pictorial Naturalism, receives a blankly nominal incarnation, since to deck it out in images would be to fall back into the logic of the simulacrum. As if this blunt verbal insistence were not enough, the preceding lines address us with the casual obscenity of “meremasi tetek tengkulak sayur” and “agar pantatnya diganjil sedan,” a linguistic slice of the ‘reality’ already performatively adduced; we are requested to look upon and ‘see’ these streets, the poem posing as the transparent screen to a world that is presumably otherwise kept from our view. Yet the addressee is then unmistakably interpellated as a fellow slumdweller addressed as “saudara”,<sup>8</sup> who takes us on a whistle-stop tour of the streets of the city. We feel vicariously through his peregrination the fleeting feeling of power and pleasure, derived abjectly from the anathema the cycle of poverty inevitably leads to: drug addiction, vice and crime. He desires flight (escape) from this vicious circle, but the poetic voice irresistibly calls him back to ‘reality’, away from Culture Industry<sup>9</sup>-induced fantasies of “Warna-warna nilon dan plastic” and flight (“Hidup melayang-layang, / selangit, / melayang-layang. / Kekuasaan mendukung kita serupa ganja... / meninggi...ke awan). Unsurprisingly, the “we” (kita)—of the speaker and his “saudara” (reduced now from the ‘saudara’ of equality and unity in ‘saudara seperjuangan’ [brothers-in-arms] to what is now ‘saudara dalam kemiskinan’ [brothers-in-poverty] of collective misery—reverts in the last stanza to an uncapitalized ‘k’, telescoping speaker and addressee into the same lower-case, minoritized subject.

The ephemeral and dismissive reference to “bianglala” as a kind of light-at-the-end-of-the-tunnel optimism nevertheless opens an alternative space to the two-dimensional reality of the ghetto, one which we will come to see as symptomatic. There is a struggle, throughout Rendra’s work, between the repetitive, dominated spatial practices of everyday life in the ghetto, and evanescent strands of utopia which occasionally take root and wither in the narrow interstices of that life. These glimpses constitute one aspect of what we will call Rendra’s characteristic ‘representational space’, his ability to uphold some degree of sensuous optimism even in the face of the bleak everyday of postmodern urbanism. In the following poem, a picaresque tale about love among the poor, between a ‘road jockey’<sup>10</sup> and his waif girlfriend, against the backdrop of Jakarta’s pollution and gridlock of human and traffic congestion, note how Rendra’s redemptive eye endows the pair of young lovers with a lyrical consciousness otherwise denied them:

Debu mengepul mengolah wajah tukang-tukang parkir.  
Kemarahan mengendon di dalam kalbu purba.  
Orang-orang miskin menentang kemelaratan.  
Wahai, Joki Tobing, kuseru kamu,  
kerna wajahmu muncul dalam mimpiku.  
Wahai, Joki Tobing, kuseru kamu  
karena terlibat aku di dalam napasmu.  
Dari bis kota ke bis kota  
kamu memburuku.  
Kita duduk bersandingan,  
menyaksikan hidup yang kumal.

Dan perlahan tersirap darah kita,  
melihat sekuntum bunga telah mekar,  
dari puingan masa yang putus asa.

(“Sajak Widuri untuk Joki Tobing” in Rendra, 1993)

Joki Tobing our roguish hero in the poem, one among the legions of unemployed youth in the city of Jakarta, represents the characteristic resilience and enterprise of the poor in the face of adversity, living by his wits in the dog-eat-dog world of the city. “Debu mengepul” and “hidup yang kumal” of life in the city are utilized in a very particular way by the yearning lyrical subject. Against the imperatives of intractable space and the solace she finds in her invocation of her lover, the subject appropriates her everyday transfixion for a progressive hope. The obfuscated “wajah tukang-tukang parkir” and atomized indigent multitudes (“Orang-orang miskin”) fuse under her gaze into a larger organism, a soup of bodies whose ethnic and vocational differences speak no longer of social divisions, but of ultimate unity in their defiance of, and opposition to, hardship and misery (“menentang kemela-ratan”). It is the romantic literary mediation of the ‘flower’ (“bunga”), that perdurable symbol of love, and the metonymic “duduk bersandingan”(associated as it is with being seated on the wedding dais, i.e. matrimony)—the stuff of adolescent Romance and every young girl’s dream of nuptial bliss—which foments the final transition from banal reality to the subject’s ‘stirred feelings’ (“tersirap darah”). Finally, “melihat sekuntum bunga telah mekar, / dari puingan masa yang putus asa” defies despondency through a fortitude and faith that come with “being in love”, proving that the rich may have a monopoly over a lot of things but love happens to be not one of them.

The transient swerve of the everyday through a poetic space of sensuous redemption is characteristic of Rendra’s technique, which seems incapable of inscribing the numbing routine of quotidian slum-dwelling without also notching up signs of its transcendence. The everyday flattens out into an abstract grid of determination and unfreedom (“hidup yang bosan, / terpenjara, tanpa jendela”) (“Doa di Jakarta” in Rendra, 1996, p. 46; see also the stanza on Jakarta in “Antara Tiga Kota” in Emha Ainun Nadjib, 1993, p. 74); yet the sensitivity of the poet is impressed with odd, delicate moments of natural excess and of the body’s pleasure within the sterile expanses of urbanism.

### **The Ghetto as Imprisoning Real**

The verse of Indonesia’s dissident poets is an attempt, then, to improvise a chronotope bridging two interpenetrating but contradictory spaces. On the one hand, it is a sober preparation for the shocks of a calculated and exploitative social space without room for individuality (“himpitan-himpitan yang mengekangku”) (“Hai, Kamu!” in Rendra, 1993, p. 77). On the other, it is an instruction-manual in the tactics of spatial appropriation for the body, even in extremes of impoverishment and closure.

dari jendela kamar berbaringmu  
aku merenungi atap kota Jakarta  
desah nafas yang sedang bergumul dengan maut

sebuah kehadiran di perbatasan.

terbentang di balik kaca  
langit merangkum lukisan awan jejak kaki  
sayup menjauh ...

terasa angin mati tidak melintasi mulut jendela  
terasa kebekuan  
pucuk pohon  
tiang-tiang listrik  
tiang-tiang antena  
ujung serabut saraf yang paling halus  
puncak keharuan  
kebisuan  
tubuh yang berbaring  
masih menyimpan sinar hangat matahari

dalam wajah di balur kabut maut  
sesungguhnya tidak ada yang akan hilang  
sesungguhnya selalu hadir  
sesungguhnya sudah dipakukan  
dalam waktu dan ruang terbatas  
milik kita

(“Kisah Manusia” in Putu Oka Sukanta, 2000, pp. 77-78)

In this poem by another of Indonesia’s dissident poet, Putu Oka Sukanta, for example, the ghetto still functions as the imprisoning *real* (the persona feels the deadening, stultifying breeze dies before it crosses the open window: “terasa angin mati tidak melintasi mulut jendela / terasa kebekuan”), and the vast city a phantasmatic, deathly virtuality. Meanwhile, a repetition of the lowercase “aku” demands attention as the residue of subjectivity itself in this monstrous urban space. It is a graphic insigne of the belittlement of the subject wrought by the process of marginalization described in the foregoing discussion. Early in the poem, Nature enters the representational fray as a ‘sublime’ exterior (framed by the panorama behind the glass, “terbentang di balik kaca”), through which the subject detours from his meditation to attain some degree of organic integrity, so as not to succumb to the city as fate. The eye’s capture of the sky enfolding a painting of clouds, of ‘footprints’ stretching hazily into the distance (“langit merangkum lukisan awan jejak kaki / sayup menjauh”) counterpoints the body’s agonized capitulation to a savage and ruthless city, metaphorized here into the cadaverous embrace of death.

Nor is Nature the only representational space through which the subject is diverted in these dissident verses to reclaim it from a two-dimensional determinism. Afrizal Malna, for example, seeks to reappropriate urban space through the figure of female sexuality. In his distinctive prose-like, unembellished, almost Hemingwayesque style, Afrizal confronts the reader, immediately, with a figuration of Jakarta as a maiden, corrupted by the big, bad, vile ways of urbanization.

O gadisku ke mana gadisku. Kau telah pergi ke kota lipstik gadisku. Kau pergi ke kota parfum gadisku. Aku silau tubuhmu kemilau neon gadisku. Tubuhmu keramaian pasar gadisku. Jangan buat pantai sepanjang bibirmu merah gadisku. Nanti engkau dibawa laut, nanti engkau dibawa sabun. Jangan tempel tanda-tanda jalan pada lalulintas dadamu gadisku. Nanti polisi marah. Nanti polisi marah. Nanti kucing menggigit kuning pita rambutmu. Jangan mau tubuhmu adalah plastik warna-warni gadisku. Tubuhmu madu, tubuhmu candu. Nanti kita semua tidak punya tuhan, nanti kita semua dibawa hantu gadisku. Kita semua cinta padamu. Kita semua cinta padamu. Jangan terbang terlalu jauh ke pita-pita rambutmu gadisku, ke renda-renda bajumu, ke nyaring bunyi sepatumu. Nanti ibu kita mati. Nanti ibu kita mati. Nanti ibu kita mati.

(“Gadis Kita” in Afrizal Malna, 1999, p. 34)

In the first place, the rhetoric of this presentation is noticeably more restrained than Rendra’s, relying less on exorbitant metaphor than a consistent image — the conflation of the city-as-whore that enters into opposition with the familiar trope of the poems earlier analysed: namely, the city-as-prison. As with Rendra, the city is corporalised, only in Afrizal’s verse the analogy is sustained as a meditative litany, rather than invoked as a provocative gesture. The image of the girl’s body as a busy marketplace (“Tubuhmu keramaian pasar”), as the glitter of neon lights (“tubuhmu kemilau neon”), as opium and honey (“Tubuhmu madu, tubuhmu candu”) transgresses the border between metaphor and metonymy; the city is not simply referred to or connoted by the girl’s lost innocence but, incarnated and personified in her. Her body is the acquiescent object of an inhuman exploitation at the hands of a hitherto unmentioned agent, ‘the city’. The strength of the poem consists in its lyrical evocation and allegorical mechanism of an urban space defiled by exploitative economics, which is also the imaginary space of the subject’s own being, that is left ‘godless’ and haunted by the ghosts of a lost traditional pastoral prehistory of the *desa* (“Nanti kita semua tidak punya tuhan, nanti kita semua dibawa hantu gadisku”). The lure of a better life in the city attracts young women from the rural areas; and for their trouble, it devastates their land and culture, enslaved them and finally all but prostitutes them. This ‘representational space’ coheres into a distinctive chronotope that becomes the minoritised urban subject (“gadisku”)’s own body, her own affective substructure. What this reacts against is the seamless monstrosity of late capitalist life for the disadvantaged, where nothing prospers that is gentle and good. In the poem’s final lines, however, the analogy is reprised and recast to present a somewhat different personification, that of the city-as-Mother or Mother-city (*ibu kota*, i.e. Jakarta) in the litany of “Nanti ibu kita mati”. There is a note of ambivalence here that modulates into mourning, indicating perhaps that Afrizal is uncertain whether to celebrate the city as mother or repudiate her for collusion with the powers that raped and pimped her.

The sheer multiplicity of metropolitan Jakarta has muddled the representational order of things. While the authorities demand stable and readily recognizable badges of identity, the urban reality has obviated any such possibility. The clichés of official versions and stereotypes of progress and modernity (those convenient representations of urban space) are revealed for the simulacrum that they are when put under scrutiny, in particular, under the critical optic of Putu Oka Sukanta. Against the lyricism of Jakarta's representational space in one of his later poems, "Catatan Harian" (2000, p. 67), abuts a crude, malignant urban vision seen through the distorting and confining structures of spatial practice in the city—hardship, hypertension, frenetic pace, pollution, poverty, hunger—to a critique of late capitalism itself, its determinate production of 'underdevelopment' within and around the spaces of inordinate wealth:

1. telah kuukur aspal Jakarta  
dengan lintasan langkah, dini hari  
lari-lari kecil, siang hari  
bersimbah keringat, malam hari  
dalam hujan di bawah lampu jalanan  
(catatanku: ia tidak pernah ngantuk  
jangankah tidur, tapi hipertensi)
2. telah kucium bau keringat  
laki perempuan, kondektur dan  
tukang copet, sambil bergayut bagai monyet  
diserempet sedan, sopir dan majikannya  
doang tanpa gerah dilabur ase  
(catatanku: Jakarta sudah kurang angin  
Aku sudah cape miskin)
3. leherku sakit menengadah  
menghitung jendela gedung bertingkat  
kagumku tak henti menggugah  
sambil menahan lapar menyengat  
(catatanku: jangan lupa sepeda dikayuh  
rezeki kakinya dua puluh tujuh)

The lived antithesis between the image of the prospering metropolis, with its gleaming skyscrapers and rich executives negotiating the Jakarta rush-hour traffic in the cool air-conditioned comfort of their chauffeur-driven cars alongside the frantic hoi polloi drenched in their stinking sweat in sputtering *bajajs* and crammed, exhaust-spewing metro-minis, is aesthetically realized in this verse as a formal asymmetry. Separated by virtue of his reflexivity from the mill of the everyday, the poetic voice observes in his diary entries the reified struggle and toil of the lumpenproletarian, and the vacuum of late capitalism's economy and culture for the dispossessed. Seeking neither to justify the unjustifiable, nor ennoble the human beings degraded by it, Putu instead finds a way of constructing a vivid chronotope of interminable toil

and drudgery in a city that denies and deprives its citizens a source of livelihood (“rezeki”). Striving for a better standard of living, having to moonlight simply to make ends meet, the workers have futility and perpetual toil branded upon their body: “lari-lari kecil, siang hari / bersimbah keringat, malam hari”, “bergayut bagai monyet”, “diserempet”, “cape miskin”, “menahan lapar menyengat”, and the elusiveness of the ‘fleet-footed’ good fortune that escapes them and is always beyond their reach (“rezeki kakinya dua puluh tujuh”). Much like Rendra’s earlier atomized subject, Putu figures the commuters on board the bus (which only the poor use) as an effacement within the urban grid, as a faceless *mélange* of odour. Here the cram, choking, crowded city space assumes an olfactory rather than visual character. The absence of work and of shelter results in a withering away of the principal organ of postmodern culture, the eye, and a recuperation of the other, and all, senses—Jakarta, the city of contradictions, of hope and despair, crisis and opportunity, of chaotic maze of low-lying slums, gleaming skyscrapers and imposing toll roads, enveloped in a gigantic cloud of pollution and trapped in hopeless gridlock, is, after all, a constant assault on *all* the senses. The frenzied drama of survival played out on the asphalt streets can not only be seen kinesthetically via the hurried steps of “lari-lari kecil”, but felt through the onomatopoeic sound of being grazed (“diserempet”) by traffic, the tactile image of people drenched in sweat (“bersimbah keringat”), and the stress-induced hypertension that is constricting and impinging on the coronary muscles of a destitute city. Similarly, destitution, toil and the humdrum of dire routine and the exigencies of city life manifest themselves synecdochally through the stench of sweat, and not only through the dehumanizing spectacle of the shambling commuters squashed sardine-like in the bus, ‘swinging like a monkey’ (“bergayut bagai monyet”). Strangely, this lateral shift of the poem’s sensual imagery alters the quality of time in this city space; time assumes the dignity of a human duration, an abiding and a dwelling, rather than the flashy and instantaneous temporality of postmodern vision. ‘Seeing’ the city amounts for Putu to this bifurcated mode of spatial apprehension: at once quotidian, banal and oppressive; and fantastic, epic and transgressive.

If Jakarta at times is seen as a city in crisis, it is also one of great opportunity. In affluent enclaves in Jakarta’s southern suburbs like Menteng, Kebayoran, Pondok Indah and Kemang, wealthy residents—“landowners from pre-independence days, cronies from the New Order regime boom years, or folks well-connected enough to have had a stake in some of Indonesia’s leading conglomerates” (Ziv, 2002, p. 115)—live sequestered in their own cocoon of comfort away from the rest of the populace. Afrizal Malna’s poem, “Rumah Orang Indonesia” (1999, p. 31), envisages the decadent opulence of Jakarta’s ultra-rich class, whose “grandiose mansions are sometimes big enough to house the entire population of a medium-size slum” (Ziv, p. 101), in grave contrast to the preceding portraits of Jakarta’s ghetto-world:

Pagar besi beton batu bercampur palem-palem raja.  
 Penjaga pintu gerbang belum tidur. Selamat pagi. Seekor  
 kuda logam menonton TV katanya. Acaranya senam pagi  
 dan menelepon penjual gas. Daun-daun kering jatuh di  
 kolam renang, sedan mercy sedang dimandikan. Mana

handuknya? Aduh jendela-jendela kaca itu. Di sebelahmu patung perempuan pualam belum pernah pecah, ukiran pohon kelapa dari Bali, bunga-bunga kering, dan asbak-asbak besar...Tangga melingkar. Bangunan tiga lantai sedang dicat lagi...Lukisan Diponegoro menunggang kuda dari bulu ayam, aduh beterbangan menutupi matamu. Aku belum bisa tidur katanya. Lampu-lampu kristal, 30 kamar tidur seperti mengambang di atas laut. Bangku karet busa di setiap sudut. Telepon-telepon, relief-relief tembok... Piano itu. Meja makan kaca mengenang isi perut kambing. Lantai keramik memuja kakimu katanya, matahari di balik plastik hijau. Ada sirkus monyet anjing ular di ruang tamu. Sebuah dendam pada benda-benda, jadi arsitektur tak pernah selesai disusun. AC telah memecahkan kaca jendela. Kenapa belum dingin juga rumah ini katanya. Gading dan kaki-kaki gajah telah membeku, jadi meja tamu. Penjaga pintu gerbang belum tidur. Leher istrinya radang panas. Mari tersenyum, mari salaman, seperti kebudayaan Timur dalam kipas angin. Makan telur mentah dari lemari es katanya. Aku pergi dulu. Besok kita jumpa lagi. Besok kita jumpa lagi.

Here, the decadent object-world of the rich is preponderantly arrayed: the iron horse sculpture, swimming pool, marble statue, wooden carving from Bali, crystal chandellier, wall relief, grand piano, Diponegoro painting, and the living room table made of ivory and elephant legs. What unites them as a single vision is the prevailing disquietude, which emanates from all of these objects, or stains them with the rankling feeling of guilt and insecurity of their insomniac owner. Interspersed throughout this constellation of opulent domestic paraphernalia is an understated subterranean feeling of class resentment and envy intensifying towards such a crass flaunting of wealth, causing the house occupant to 'feel the heat' despite his airconditioned inner sanctum, and his wife's neck to break out in rashes. Despite the poem's concluding, rhapsodic gesture of conciliation that the addressee is enjoined to partake ("Mari tersenyum, mari salaman, seperti kebudayaan Timur dalam kipas angin") to attenuate the repeated sinister portent of "Penjaga pintu gerbang belum tidur" intimated earlier in the poem, there remains a continuing threat of future danger: "Besok kita jumpa lagi. Besok kita jumpa lagi". The growing dissatisfaction felt by Jakarta's marginalized and oppressed has yet to be entirely dissipated, despite the best efforts of the city's government to redress the socio-economic imbalance that divide its populace. Jakarta's incendiary past of rebellion is carried over into the future in what turns out to be a veritable prophecy of the events of May 1998. What is perhaps predictable when this prediction came true—if recent Indonesian history is anything to go by—is its outcome, of course, since no dim trace of the phoenix myth subsists from the 'ashes' of the Jakarta riots of 1998; instead the 'dust' that settled after the revolution only served to smother any new attempts at civic rebirth. Memories of urban renewal projects, like the M.H. Thamrin kampung improvement project

carried out in the early 1970s, sour in the memory, and the prospect of amelioration looks dim alongside Afrizal's searing pessimism.

The snapshot impressionism of Afrizal's portrayal of Jakarta's privileged class in the poem above, as with his satirical surveys of the city's netherside, in the context of his anthology, *Kalung Dari Teman*, is testimony to an inimitable poetic technique that most clearly distinguishes him from his contemporaries. He has developed a form which, uniquely, sidesteps all appearance of lyricism. If the dictum: 'form is determined by its content' is true, then, an urban space so riven by difference, injustice and inequality is not only inadequate to lyricism, but baffles all existing representational strategies. Disjointed vignettes and prose-like, impacted lines, shot through with surreal moments of metaphoric play, constitute a working solution to the problems posed by this unrepresentable space. If this is the new dissident poetry, it is one devoid of any trace of romanticism or heroism, and derives its cognitive excitement from a tactical refusal of the whole Metropolitan-City-as-Utopia hypothesis. Jakarta inverts the notion of 'Third-World-in-the-First' into a new abstraction of something like a '(Simulated) First-World-in-the-Third', a place that Michel Foucault (1986) would have called a 'heterotopia':

There are...probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places—places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of a society—which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias.

It is in this sense that the structural politics of class and representational space are figured by the poets discussed here, revealing an idealized Jakarta as the 'not-real' against whose backdrop are the very *real* issues they confront in their work: the belligerence of power, the destruction of traditional habitat and way of life, the sickening pathos of men, women and children (the 'silenced' minor-majority) who have had their being and identity 'erased' by tyranny and corruption in the Metropolitan City.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The term "dissident poet" is, admittedly, hardly a felicitous one and perhaps problematic at best, especially in the Indonesian context where the course of modern Indonesian poetry has been described as nothing if not a struggle to achieve freedom in various senses. This dissident tradition is exemplified by the poetry of the *Pujangga Baru* generation (1933-1942) whose stalwarts such as Amir Hamzah and Chairil Anwar, radicalizes poetry by breaking free from the rigid manacles of traditional *pantun* and *syair* versification. This is followed by the "*puisi perlawanan*" (oppositional poetry) or "*puisi perjuangan*" (resistance poetry) of the post-revolutionary poets of the *Angkatan '66* (the year of Sukarno's overthrow) in the 1960s that sought to "free poetry from political subordination" and continued on in the 1970s at the dawn of Suharto's New Order, when poets such as W.S. Rendra and Goenawan Mo-

hammad wrote their "*puisi protes sosial*" (social protest poetry) to emancipate the "*akar*" (root or tradition) of Indonesian poetry from the constraints of that tradition itself, and voicing their protests over moral injustices against the downtrodden and the silenced underclass of society (Sapardi Djoko Damono, 1999; Sutardji Calzoum Bachri, 2001). It is this adversarial spirit redolent in the works of subsequent generations of Indonesian poets in the 1980s, 1990s and well into the new millennium that encapsulates the work of the "dissident poet". It is a spirit that despises orthodoxy, and exposes the often blatant falsehood and/or illogical, if not absurd, statements made, amongst others, by politicians, academics, state historians, artists, writers, literary editors, publishers, and journalists, or any intellectual autocracy.

- <sup>2</sup> The pain and upheaval of deracination brought about by transmigration are poignantly captured by Afrizal Malna in his poem, "Bis Membawa Mereka Pergi" (1999, p. 44). For a satirical take on an urban vision gone malignant and awry, see Zeffry J. Alkatiri's poem, "Bang Ali dan Jakarta Tahun 70-an" (2001, pp. 66-67).
- <sup>3</sup> "In its original rural version, the word *kampung* literally means "village"—usually the home village or birthplace of an individual...In an era of unbridled urbanisation, however, it has also come to mean a poorer neighbourhood contained within a city" (McCarthy, 2003, p. 1). It is also interesting to note that in answering whether Jakarta is a Metropolis or *kampung besar* (big *kampung*), Marco Kusumawijaya (2004) came to the conclusion that it is both, and that the term "*kampung-kota*" (*kampung-city*) was not far from the minds of Indonesian city planners when they planned for Jakarta's rapid expansion (p. 3).
- <sup>4</sup> "...there is a connection between the riot and ethnicity, especially toward ethnic Chinese and economic issues. There appeared to be a greater degree of destruction in those commercial areas with businesses operated by ethnic Chinese residents. The implication of this is that the riot was ethnically motivated due to negative sentiment of the indigenous people to the relatively more prosperous ethnic Chinese" (Dadan, 2001).
- <sup>5</sup> Spanning *angkatan* (generation) and ideological affiliations—from the doyen of the *Angkatan '45* (Generation of 1945) Pramoedya Ananta Toer, to the post-revolutionary writers of the *Angkatan '66* (Generation of 1966), to those born after 1950 who rose to prominence between the late 1970s and the early 1990s—these writers exhibit similar populist aversion to the New Order state; the same proclivity in portraying poor urban *kampung* dwellers, factory workers, street hawkers and scavengers wrestling with the grisly daily realities of poverty; exposing discrimination and violence; and professing the same commitment and conviction "to advocate on behalf of the entire nation" (Bodden, 2007, p.80) as the vanguard of public opposition to blatant New Order corruption, collusion and nepotism (known by the acronym KKN) in Indonesia.
- <sup>6</sup> On the polemical nature of Indonesian cultural politics about the legitimate ideology of art that dominated the literary scene since 1949 with the split-up of the *Angkatan 45* into *Gelgang* Group and *Lekra*, and the ensuing conflict between the *Lekra* and the Manikebu advocates respectively, see Keith Foulcher (1986).
- <sup>7</sup> "Fatamorgana", with its etymological roots in Italian, literally, Morgan le Fay (sorceress of Arthurian legend), means a mirage, an illusion, or illusory prospect, and the term appears throughout the arts in poetry, literature, music and film. Other quotidian naturalistic tropes intimated at, take on caustic and perverse transmogrifications, like these later lines in the poem: "Kita telah sama-sama berdiri di sini,/ melihat bianglala berubah menjadi lidah-lidah api,/ gunung yang kelabu membara,/ kapal terbang pribadi di antara mega-mega menitiskan air/ mani .../ diputar blue film di dalamnya."
- <sup>8</sup> The term—made popular by Sukarno during the Revolution in his many speeches/orations to the masses before and during his presidency—was used to "indicate membership in the

new nation with the connotation of a truly Indonesian national brotherhood...as a symbol of national integration and, at the same time, emphasiz[ing] the ideal of status equality, epitomizing both the horizontal and the vertical processes toward unity and equality (Wittermans, 1967, p.50). There is a sardonic connotation to its use here in Rendra's poem, a wry nod of the head to a reality in which such high-falutin ideals have obviously been betrayed or compromised.

<sup>9</sup> Rendra speaks passionately about an 'accumulative' culture ("*kebudayaan penumpukan akumulatif*") which the metropolitan cities epitomize as a result of industry. The metropolitan city, he contends, grow out of the need by foreign industrial and developed nations for markets and sources of natural resources, reducing it to become mere infrastructure for accumulation: "Di negeri kita kota tumbuh sebagai penyalur hasil produksi asing" ("Kota 'Kasur Tua,'" in Dwi Klik Santosa, 2005, p. 109). This, according to him, spawns a culture typified by ossification, stasis, and insalubrious bloat. See also his poems, "Sajak Sebotol Bir" (Rendra, 1993, p. 68), "Sajak Tahun Baru 1990" and "Kesaksian Tentang Mastodon-Mastodon" (Rendra, 1996, pp. 50 and 40 respectively).

<sup>10</sup> The job of road jockey, a "viable new profession for unemployed youth" according to Ziv, is an unforeseen and unintended by-product of the city's municipal traffic regulation:

"To discourage excessive volumes of traffic, private vehicles using Jakarta's main roads during morning and evening rush hour must carry a minimum of three passengers. The regulation did little to solve the city's traffic problem. Instead, entrepreneurial 'road jockeys'—mostly young boys—improvised by offering to hop on as 'passenger's in cars that don't meet the 3-in-1 criteria" (p. 123).

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