

Markus Gunadi Final Portfolio

Creative Writing: Fall 2022

Setting Exercise:

As I exited the confines of a Delta 747 airplane, the only thing on my mind was food and there was only one destination that would satisfy my desire: the streets of Bandung. There, the air is filled with fat roasting over a streetside-charcoal grill. On top of small plastic table tops, locals eat turmeric spiced soto ayam when sick, sate skewers doused in Kecap Manis after fasting, and spicy sambal sauce on everything. After driving over from the airport, I sat in one of the many Warungs, a home/restaurant amalgamation, and ordered the classics. Soon my table was full of nasi and mie goreng: Indonesian fried rice and noodles which tasted like a dance of contradiction. It was a waltz of salty and sweet, crispy and soft, cheap but rich.

The air was smokey from the air pollution and barbecue, a mix of ash and deliciousness. Motorcycles roared by in a chaotic stream of traffic. It provided a small form of entertainment while I ate my food. There were no traffic lights, DMVs, or rules when it came to driving in this part of the world. Tourists hailed bikes using their Gojek app, Indonesia's national ride-share uber equivalent. Drivers were easily identifiable by their neon green helmets and corporate silicon-valley-esk black jackets. Customers would trustingly wrap their arms around their driver's waist and would speed off to their unknown destination.

I instead used my Aunt's private driver. He would chauffeur me from a militaristic BMW van, a billboard to display my extended family's wealth. Gojeks and other bikes would swarm around the slow moving car, coming centimeters away from crashing yet accidents in the city were unheard of. We were a snail surrounded by ants in the bustling ecosystem of one of the biggest cities in Indonesia.

After advancing through the swarm, we came to our final destination: Cilaki Street. Here, my grandparents, a decorated doctor and pharmacist, live with their four poodles in an unassuming one-story house. The building would seem small and dilapidated to most but was a magnificent palace for me. Lime green paint covering the walls of the house was complimented with a small garden. Inside, small pooch figurines filled the dusty shelves alongside photos of children and weddings. A rickety steel staircase led to the roof where graphic tees hung to dry and in the bathroom: two white-tiled sinks were full of ice cold and lukewarm water. My grandparents and I would use the water for our twice-a-day bucket showers to combat the sticky humidity of the tropics.

Despite my profuse pleas that I had already eaten, my grandparents prepared a feast to welcome their grand-son home. The dining-room table was covered with plates of beef rendang, rice steamed with saffron, and my favorite ayam goreng: fried chicken covered in a turmeric spice blend. The buffet was hidden under plastic coverings meant to keep out insects but now prevented me from stealing small bites with my fingers while my grandparents prayed. They thanked the lord for the grandson's safe journey and the blessing of food. After a quick "amen", the coverings were lifted and I indulged myself once more.

Robert Frost Imitation

The house lies dead, on top the hill.
Modern windows shine but do stay still;
No playful children will soon appear
as families flee the immense bill.

My conscience does warn me volunteer
while covered by an eggshell veneer.
The open skylights keep me awake
for my fantasy to persevere.

I adore the marble walls colored white-opaque
and the plain patio near a manmade lake.
A master bedroom to be asleep
or to watch tv while eating cake.

I would be alone in my mansion keep
before flowing into buried sleep.
But still I wonder about the leap.
But still I wonder about the leap.

***Midwest October* (Replacement for week 6 Haiku)**

Like the temperature of my fingers
From thin bone branches
Their auburn leaves fall off

Briefly
twirling
to hums of the wind

Golden paper
they kiss

my hair

I breeze past
them

alone

Before my bike treads
crush the thin folded pieces
mother nature's origami
Into fragments

3am homework

My stringy black hair does not dry tonight
because of a somber four page essay;
Hidden behind small flakes of white graphite,
the words live near facts about DNA;

It shrieks and cries in a dulcet cadence;
Why must the brain see constant scrutiny
as the only way to find some patience;
Procrastination are neurons' mutiny;

Still, I live for academic pressure;
For a multiple choice named SAT,
to the oil of my golden leisure;
Yet not even word or thought can agree;

So I sleep on a wet pillow instead;
Tomorrow I awaken with bedhead;

Dictionary of My Dog**Momo** *noun*

pronounced with domestication | dog·gy
the wet button nose
a crescendo of fur and coyote

Lazy *adjective*

pronounced with fondness | stu·pid
a curled donut shaped body
the firm head shape undisputed

Eat *verb*

pronounced with Indonesian | ma·kan
crunchy-delicious-stale kibble
dressed up with scraps of chicken breast

The Toothbrush

I am brushing my teeth
with an electric Philips toothbrush
and Crest Clean-Mint toothpaste.
I stroke my walls of pearly whites
in circular motions,
and massage my pink fleshy gums
like a comb caressing the hair
of a bald man's head.

My tongue squirms
in anticipation of the spicy freshness
of stannous fluoride
and the smooth white taste
of hydrogen peroxide.
Then the pink muscle writhes
as my Philips toothbrush
stabs its flesh accidentally,
and gags as the frothy white
substance fills my mouth.

My swollen gums bleed
from the sharp bristles
and briefly stain my opaque teeth.
So I rinse my mouth,
expelling the foamy red-white from my body.
And clean my Philips toothbrush
of my spit,
my blood,
and Crest Clean-Mint
toothpaste.

On The Mental State of My Phone

I think my phone has ADHD

Every few seconds he fidgets and buzzes

Tweeks and rings

especially in quiet classrooms

He lied on his neuropsych questionnaire

Always interrupting conversations

Explicitly about his levels of euphoria

only a three on a scale of zero to ten

He pings the RGB screen with flashes of white and gray

Unable to wait for his turn

To speak up through speakers

with interruptions and serious rumors

I'm beginning to hate him

The way his blue eyes bore into

My dopamine receptors

a bottomless library of binary books

But still his magnanimous manner

Lures me in like a moth to a pixel

Encapsulating the human spirit on a six inch screen

so my tired thumb

swipes upward

thoughtlessly

to a different screen

Polar Bears Tend to Get Curious When They See Cameras

I'm looking
at photos of polar
bears whose brown button eyes stare
confusedly at the camera lens

which is held
by a photographer
who was hired by NatGeo
to invade their stainless arctic homeland

that is melt
-ing into the largest
puddle in the world because
I can't stop consuming the products of

companies
who sometimes pretend to
care about important things
like basic morals if they can produce

a profit
like the apps that harvest
statistics from addicted
teenagers who appear optimistic

but at least
they can enjoy novelties
like laughing at cute pictures
of polar bears who stare into my eyes.

Cooking

/ i told you / i sometimes slept
/ only five hours / you looked worried
/ then asked if / i was studying
/ for chemistry test / was coming up
/ at 2 pm tomorrow / i already had
/ gotten a c-minus/ the test before
/ i need to / at least a-minus
/ or else the / grade point average
/ will drop more / and i won't
/ to great college / and good future

/ you cooked / for hours
/ my favorite / ox-tail soup
/ fried shallots / tomato paste
/ cubed potatoes / green beans
/ even though / just fought
/ had leftovers / school tomorrow
/ still hot / in thermos