



## CONTENTS

繪製吉隆坡文學空間	5
感知都市文學	13
切·格瓦拉的啟示： 與街頭書坊創辦人茲克里拉曼的對話	23
Mapping Kuala Lumpur Literature	31
Perceiving Urban Literature	39
A Conversation with Zikri Rahman, Co-founder of Buku Jalanan	49

# 繪製吉隆坡文學空間

/ 茲克里拉曼

許詠榕、吳曉敏、劉欣楠、洪靜儀和楊曼玉翻譯，曾劍鳴校訂

城市是社會關係的形式和象徵，那是寺廟、市場、法院、學院的座落地，在這裡人類的經驗轉換為可操作的標誌、象徵、行為模式、秩序體系。

— 路易士·芒福德 (Lewis Mumford) <sup>1</sup>

「文學之城」(LiteraCity)繪圖計劃不是要勾勒地球的輪廓和地點的坐標，也不是要知道已經存在的實體事物。更重要的是要揭示它的多重意義—文學就是這樣運作的。這圍繞著三個方面，那就是空間、建築，以及文學作品對空間和建築營造過程的詮釋。文化空間和文學繪圖是為了發展和深化替代和對抗性的論述，以便在檢視城市群體生活中提供非傳統和抽象的知識。

在此基礎上，「文學之城」這個計劃所呈現的地圖並不完整，而是涉及描繪自我的主觀過程，而這和認知繪圖有密切的關係。所謂的認知地圖意即作者的精神地圖影響其寫作方法，這包含性格、情節、敘事，這就構構想像的空間。就如詹明信 (Frederic Jameson) 所言：

…開始掌握我們作為個人和集體的主體位置，恢復能力去採取行動，並對抗那些眼前被我們的空間和社會紊亂所稀釋了的事物。<sup>2</sup>

「異化」(alienation)和疏離感是新自由主義制度所導致

1 Mumford, L.(1986) "What Is A City?" *The Lewis Mumford Reader*, ed. Donald L. Miller (New York: Pantheon Books).

2 Jameson, F. (1991) *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. (London: Verso).

的，特別是在像吉隆坡這樣的城市。這就解釋了空間的產生和社會紊亂的出現。社會紊亂的情況在人們從鄉區往城市遷移時特別顯著。Lat的漫畫《馬松》(Mat Som)，其主角馬松就經歷了以上的狀況。在這個例子中，我們可以看到馬松在吉隆坡的早期生活是如何從一開始笨拙地違反規則，直至最後遵循這個社區所定下的規則，以便讓自己融入為社區的一份子。

### 空間如何被賦予意義

正如詹明信前面所揭示的，空間如果要被定義，那就得視它的生產過程以及它的意義是如何被賦予的。在評估文學如何賦予空間意義時，只要有互動就會有意義的存在及其想像。它可以從文學作品的人物反映出來，他們可能主動或被動地形塑城市的空間意義。

詹明信接著討論空間和社會紊亂，以及我們可以怎樣從個人和社會群體爭奪詮釋都市空間的意義上理解之。在評估文學怎樣賦予空間意義時，可以吉隆坡的文學空間為例，比方說，在賦予國家紀念碑意義時，國家和作家之間有何不同（這可能是造成紊亂的緣由），為何如此？

國家要鞏固其權力敘事，必然會通過國家紀念碑來提高和培養愛國主義和民族主義。然而，從置身在國家權力敘事之外的作家來看，國家紀念碑這個空間也可能有完全不同的意義。從這可以看出空間的意義是可以一再變動以及形塑出來的。例如，雖然國家可以從國家遺產的角度來想像半山芭監

獄 (Pudu Jail) 的意義，但是結果卻是完全拆毀它來建造購物廣場。

第二個例子是祖麗娜哈山 (Zurinah Hassan) 幾首詩內的文學空間，所挑選的是城市邊緣的地方，如貧民窟、河岸、小巷及垃圾桶。那是國家景觀及地理規劃所遺忘的地方。

另一個例子則是 Charlene Rajendran 的劇本《祖母的咖哩雞肉》(My Grandmother's Chicken Curry & ...)。這個劇本敘述三個人吃飯時的談話。他們談及理想中的身份，而這反映了馬來西亞的國族打造。所選定的餐廳有孟沙的咖啡館、華人咖啡店、安邦道 (Leboh Ampang) 的印度餐廳和劇院餐廳 (Coliseum Restaurant)，這些都是城市內具有大都會精神的空間，可以潛在地破壞國家的城市空間敘事。

在文學裡，國家在賦予社會空間意義方面，不一定完全具有宰制的權力，而文學空間具有自主性，作品的人物擁有不同的策略，可以通過所謂的潛在文本，挑戰掌權者的敘事。這可以從廖培珍 (Leow Puay Tin) 所寫的戲劇劇本《一個叫紅豆妹的現代女性》(A Modern Woman Called Ang Tau Mui) 看出。主角是一位在 Batu Complex 工作的廁所清潔工，她不單只是面臨種族歧視，也面對階級和性別的歧視，而這是英殖民所遺留下來的歷史負擔。紅豆妹 (Ang Tau Mui) 對於這件事抨擊說：「我知道我是誰，我並不需要一個身份證來證明我是誰。」

如果文學作品選擇探討國家敘事以外的邊緣身份，那是饒有趣味且值得研究的。例如，夜總會和妓院都成為都市文學的

重要場景。費沙德拉尼 (Faisal Tehrani) 在1998年間的短篇小說〈枕頭上的吉隆坡〉(KL di Atas Bantal) 清楚提及一些重要地標，如蘇丹阿督沙末 (Sultan Abdul Samad) 建築，那時曾是法院，正是權力的象徵 (即便現在也是)，特別是他處理有關性取向和對立的政治態度。有趣的是，這部短篇小說的空間涉及的私人空間和公共空間想像，與當時的政治風氣和事件有密切的關係。

### 誰掌握都市化話語權？

此外，文學作品的背景也觸及都市化的權力問題。佐漢嘉化 (Johan Jaafar) 的劇本《我的城市啊！我的城市》(Kotaku Oh Kotaku) 中，被邊緣化和壓迫的群體居住在這個美麗花園。劇中人物的勇敢提出疑問：誰確實掌握這個瘋狂都市化過程的話語權？

這個討論也涉及了詹明信談的個人和團體作為主體的立場。當然，我們也必須探討一個城市空間如何打開其主體空間，即味覺、感受和思想，讓人物角色在一個集體想像的空間中緊密連接。就這個問題而言，我們必須理解國家成立和形構的邏輯，以及從社會的邏輯到文學如何被消費，這就如班納迪克·安德森 (Benedict Anderson) 所強調的：

(民族國家) 是想像的，因為就連最小國土裡的人民，亦從未認識其中大部份的成員，或與其相會，甚至聽過他們，但

在每個生命的思想中，都有一個共同體的形象。<sup>3</sup>

然而，角色與情節究竟是如何被作者所想像的呢？那些原本存在或不存在的地點和情況，在作品中可以被作者想像並表現為現實、陰影或烏托邦。根據東差維尼察古（Thongchai Winichakul）的說法：「地圖僅僅呈現某些早已客觀性存在於『那裡』的事物。我所形容的歷史敘述中，這個關係反而是倒轉的。地圖真正預想了空間現實，而非反之。」<sup>4</sup>

在「文學之城」與一名德國學者卡塔琳·班鐸（Katrin Bandol）的談話中，她以班納迪克·安德森的著作來分析這個現象。除此之外，她也研究里旺薩伊迪（Ridhwan Saidi）的作品《美國》（*Amerika*），當中質疑不存在的現實，以及社會中缺乏敘述的問題。這是通過主角Murshid Merican和Dahlia Sanni之間的超現實主義對話帶出。該部小說因此想像了「空間需要什麼」的問題，以及「什麼正在被想像」。

要繼續推展這個論述，我們必須尋找空間的象徵意義，如何進一步推展論述，以及誰能夠創建論述？這就是我們看到創建論述時，其意識形態、政治博物館化（political museumising）和符號化的問題如何對抗主流敘述。範俊登（Fan Yew Teng）的詩歌〈吉隆坡、吉隆坡〉（Kuala Lumpur, Kuala Lumpur）就是一例，即象徵主義如何違反傳統地質疑空間的意義和用途。他的詩歌追溯了吉隆坡街道上

3 Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso).

4 Winichakul, T. (1994). *Siam Mapped*. (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press).

的味蕾認同，提供了一個很不一樣的個人觀察，甚至是這個社區的集體記憶。

而在這樣的情形裡，通過這個計畫踏遍文學作品中提到的吉隆坡真實空間，它會開啟對文學問題更開放和寬廣的詮釋和定義，例如呈現（representation，或譯「再現」）的問題—語言、規範、性別、階級和其他。通過研究文學的空間形成，即是都市的也是空間的，這能讓我們更了解作家在質疑權力關係和主流敘述時提出的問題，進而，挑戰我們在一個認知架構中對空間的刻板理解—這是一個無止盡的連續過程。

# 感知都市文學

/ 茲克里拉曼

陳啟耀、卓慧妮、張雪兒、張瑞婷、陳巧建、蕭璋琪翻譯，蘇穎欣校訂

作家和作品中的人物角色想象和追尋一個真正的、覆雜的社會空間，吉隆坡也將因此繼續活出文學生命，直到永遠。因為，至少有超過110個文學作品提到吉隆坡及其中的人物。

然而，我們通過作品看吉隆坡，並不像別的大城市一樣簡單。在其他大城市如都柏林和開羅，有詹姆斯·喬伊斯（James Joyce）的《都柏林人》（*Dubliners*）和納圭布·馬哈福茲（Naguib Mahfouz）的《開羅三部曲》（*Cairo Trilogy*），通過文學展現各自城市的「高峰」。他們的作品完整地描繪了城市的每一個角落，從建築的曲線到城市居民的精神，可以說是權威性著作，也被認為是文學經典。<sup>1</sup>如此一來，以吉隆坡為背景的文學作品，還是有一定的空間讓我們不受負擔和內疚之感，因為吉隆坡這個城市在絕對的意義上，並沒有什麼經典或權威。那我們能夠更開放地，從文學作品欣賞吉隆坡。

「文學之城」（LiteraCity）計劃涵蓋有限的文學種類，即以馬來語和英語為媒介發表的長篇小說、短篇小說、劇本、戲劇和詩歌，作品也只是從1970年代到2015年。這些因素雖限制了我們對於吉隆坡文學的理解，但這個計劃是個記錄文學作品的重要嘗試。特別是「文學之城」通過文化製圖（*cultural mapping*）的方法來進行，實屬少數。這篇文章中，我們將討論都市文學作品的元素，特別是以吉隆坡為背景的。

<sup>1</sup> *"If I become the Prime Minister, rather than furnishing the city with flowery gardens such as this, I'd rather open have a Garden of Love, where only those with a partner can enter. Everyone entering there has to surrender all their weapons to the police at its entrance"*, trans., page 79, Kuala Lumpur Kita Punya, Abdullah Hussein.

## 什麼是都市文學？

都市文學是什麼？什麼時候文學從鄉區轉向城市？為什麼只涵蓋1970年代的文學作品，而不是更早之前？最後，都市文學的美學價值是如何表現的？這可能是我們需要一起來解決的一些問題，我們會以一些文學文本作為討論對象。

文學回應特定城市，因此吉隆坡只要仍有都市化的過程就會繼續有都市文學。一些外在因素，特別是政府的政策，如新經濟政策（NEP）的存在，這被視為都市化進程的表現，也對文學發展產生直接影響。這樣的經濟政策也以發展之名影響社會構架，使國家在數十年內從農業國到發展成工業國家。

儘管如此，文學也有自己的獨立空間，不一定要碰觸現有環境影響的問題。反之，文學在某些層次上走得更前，特別是在想象都市空間的抽象可能性和生活條件等。我們以阿杜拉胡辛（Abdullah Hussain）的小說《我們有吉隆坡》（*Kuala Lumpur Kita Punya*）為例，裡頭的主角阿德南（Adnan）提出建設一個「愛之花園」（*Taman Asmara*），讓城市公民表達自己。此外，像佐漢嘉化（Johan Jaafar）的劇本如〈我的城市啊！我的城市〉（*Kotaku Oh Kotaku*）也直接涉入城市所有權的問題，例如通過建造一個「花卉園」（*Taman Bunga*），討論都市發展過程鑷除貧民窟的問題。

都市文學也書寫社會結構的問題，尤其是製造業和服務業急需人力，使得人口集中於城市，導致從鄉區至城市的劇烈和大型遷移。因此，人口遷移成為吉隆坡文學的主要背景之



一。裡頭談及了「異化」的主題，也有階級分化、經濟不公和文化融合等問題。一些空間的存在，如貧民窟和城市貧困群體，是經濟政策無法有效處理這個移民狀況的表現，而都市文學也都記錄下來了。

### 從鄉間到城市的緩慢過程

所以，文學何時從鄉區文學過渡到我們認為的都市文學？當然，這不會像經濟政策一樣劇烈地發生。反之，如果我們仔細對比幾個作品，會發現過渡的時刻正漸漸地發生。在之前的都市文學，作品中的角色還沒能完全掌握和呼吸城市的元素，因此就發生了異化的感覺，缺乏歸屬感和社群聯繫感，面對生活在城市的權力問題。

接著，我們漸能夠看到文學作品如何緊緊著對城市的情感，更加扎根於此。這些人物已經不以異化的眼光看城市空間，而是將其融入在自己的生活裡了。如果我們能用作品中的敘述者來區分傳統文學與現代文學的話，比如「我」這個敘述者就將自己當作是主體而不單只是個對象，那城市文學就能和鄉區文學區分開來。作品中的人物將城市當作被渴望的對象，借此打開空間，讓不同文化相互接觸、融合和交流。

對於這一點，如果將Lat的漫畫《馬松》（*Mat Som*）中的角色，和里旺薩伊迪（*Ridhwan Saidi*）的小說《美國》（*Amerika*）中的Murshid Merican相比，會更加清楚。馬松和Murshid Merican擁有共同點，這兩個角色可被歸類為無業遊民，沒有固定的工作與收入。但在這種異化過程中，我們可以看到馬松與

鄉下來的朋友以及家人都親密融洽，藉此得到慰藉。而對Murshid Merican來說，他經歷的異化對他來說是種有意識的享受，這可能是因為他從小就是在城市長大的。無論如何，其實對於一個想要融入社會的人來說，異化還是存在的，就像是在普瑞妲·莎瑪薩蘭（*Preeta Samarasan*）的短篇小說〈鄰里〉（*Rukan Tetangga*）中的Guna大叔所經歷的一樣，最後被一些城市人當成奇怪的人。

### 都市文學定義非絕對

若從作品描述的以上主觀感受來看，才能看到鄉村文學和都市文學的轉變脈絡。能夠肯定的是，對都市文學的定義並不是絕對的，也不是永恆的。這是因為除了鄉間和城市的情況以外，還有另一問題也扮演矛盾和重要的角色—即全球化與後現代主義，這讓城鄉之間更親近或者差距更大。如果我們用資本的流動速度來測量都市化的速度，便可以看出以上所說。今天，鄉下和城市不只存在具體的空間感，還有網絡及新文化的誕生與發展。固然地，這會牽涉到現實中的行為、語言和文化如何在城市的日常互動中被形塑，這觸及了性別、階級和城市所有權的問題。

我們緊握著文學，不只是想要記錄它的時代而已，而是看到在這之間的縫隙，文學也創造了屬於自己的時代。就此而言，「文學之城」關注1970年至今的文學作品，其在國家每個重要時刻，都扮演著打開想象空間的角色，尤其是對吉隆坡這樣的大城市而言。而1970年代實施的國家文化政策，正是要想辦法建議一個單一的國家文化。

在這個時候，馬來西亞的文學競相敘述這些事，而都市文學中，由於吉隆坡肥沃土地上多元而混雜的居民，成了各種敘事的競技場。如洛伊德·斐南多（Lloyd Fernando）的小說《*Green is the Colour*》和伊莉娜阿布杜瑪吉（Ellina Abdul Majid）的小說《*Perhaps in Paradise*》，都以書中的主角如何面對1969年513種族衝突為主。事實上，我們也可以通過烏斯曼阿旺（Usman Awang）的詩歌，找到閱讀513事件的有趣角度。文學於此成為非正式歷史紀錄。<sup>2</sup>

### 都市文學中的美學價值

除了提及從鄉村文學過渡至都市文學，我們也須從幾本都市文學著作看到裏面的美學價值。其中包括了城市生活的節奏如何影響作者的寫作風格。如烏斯曼阿旺的短篇小說〈交集〉（*Pertemuan*）就對時間有不同的理解，人物角色的會面和事件都沒有開頭和結尾。這篇短篇小說反映了這城市裏每天都在上演相遇的可能，以及馬路上千人曾經對上眼，但這些事的發生並不會影響我們的生活。這樣的事情也被沙末伊斯曼（A. Samad Ismail）寫進他的長篇小說《蘇迪納》（*Sutinah*），當中寫道生活在這來來往往的城市中，短暫而表面的關係和交流。

都市文學的美學價值，便是建立在角色之間對話的語言風格，及其中的即時性（*immediateness*）。除此之外，由幾

2 在「文學之城」與沙末塞益（A. Samad Said）的訪談裡強調著。

種方言摻雜而出的城市俚語，也常在都市文學中被使用，尤其是在談及社會問題的時候。此外，這不固定的城市俚語現象會根據未來的移民狀況而改變。這樣下來，優勢語言的用處、使用空間以及其權力關係，其地位正逐漸被削弱。

除此之外，都市文學的美學價值也觸及了建築美學。從祖麗娜哈山（Zurinah Hassan）、T. Alias Taib和範俊登（Fan Yew Teng）的詩歌中，可透過其美學表現看出這座城市的景觀。通過城市空間的描寫，我們看到象徵和隱喻如何形成，而當城市本身成為背景則更明顯。這是因為城市建築本身就是國家權力位置的反映，當中涉及支配和被支配的權力關係。這在里旺薩伊迪小說《美國》中更清楚地被刻畫，當中吉隆坡塔被形容為「好色塔」（*menara gatal*），偷窺這城市的每個角落和其居民。

### 四處漫遊的角色

在都市文學中，往往故事中都有人物四處漫遊的場景。而作家也和人物角色一樣，一直在城市中走動，例如沙末賽益（A. Samad Said），我們常會在城市的一隅碰到他，如國家回教堂和吉隆坡內的購物中心。這就如羅蘭·巴特（Roland Barthes）說：「我們述說我們的城市、我們處在的城市，只是通過生活在其中，徘徊在其中，觀看其中。」<sup>3</sup>在這種情況下，這種漫遊的形象也影響了文學的美學部份，往往留給讀

3 Barthes, R. *Urban Semiology*, ed. Neil Leach (New York: Routledge).

者找出故事中的謎語和零碎情節。

在都市文學中出現的真正市內空間，不僅僅如在歷史或地理書中存在般。反之，那是讓我們如何閱讀和觀看它反映出來的事物。對於一個作家而言，選擇持續書寫一個地方，而且在作品中重覆幾次，這不是一種巧合，而是想要進一步闡釋和呈現。例如，Charlene Rajendran的劇本〈祖母的咖哩雞肉〉（My Grandmother's Chicken Curry），當中出現的五個餐廳是一個大都會精神的想像。此外，費沙德拉尼（Faisal Tehrani）的小說〈枕頭上的吉隆坡〉（KL di Atas Bantal）<sup>4</sup>也投射出相同的事。當然，如果我們要看到這些作品中的現實層面，這不意味著它比非現實主義文學更真實。然而，那是說明社會在特定時空和地方下，如何觀看和回應某事物。

### 書寫作為去殖民過程

在這件事上，我們必須強調吉隆坡是個後殖民城市。文學作品描繪一些地標和地點不只是輕易地描述，而是因為它們可成為批評和討論的媒介，並打開一個終極疑問：我們到底為了什麼理由而加入這場發展競賽？這對今天的第三世界來說並非稀奇景觀，它們擁有各類豐富天然資源來構建大型商場和摩天樓。我們可以了解，這是為了形塑城市的身份認同，尤其是從發展中國家過渡到發達國家的過程。儘管如此，如此沈醉於競爭和打敗其他發達國家，只會讓發展成為幻覺與

<sup>4</sup> 這些也在一篇專文〈繪製吉隆坡文學空間〉，關於空間如何被感知的方式裡進一步地討論。

膚淺的概念，問題仍然是一「發展」到底意味著什麼？

因此，都市文學中的美學價值，遠遠超過身份認同的問題而已。這是一個展現在日常平庸生活，透過城市中的多元行為和社會形態建立的去殖民過程。這裏的去殖民過程，是指公民如何在現代和傳統生活中掙扎求存，也指面對城市日常生活時，如何處理迷信和理性之間的衝突。

總結而言，為了理解這個城市，我們需要持續評估鄉村文學到都市文學的演變過程，以及文學的美學價值如何描述城市生活。要通過城市思考文學的演變，我們或許可以引述《美國》的一句嘲諷：

馬來西亞民族還未能行走，也未有足夠文明來開一輛車。

切·格瓦拉的啟示：  
與街頭書坊創辦人茲克里拉曼的對話

/ 蘇穎欣

要時時刻刻提倡讀書，努力選擇好書籍，使大家不至於把時間浪費在毫無意義的事情上，要逐漸協助新兵接觸文化，關心國家大事。學員內心逐步產生的求知欲望或令人不安的周圍客觀形勢的逼迫，都能推動學員們由淺入深地去閱讀書刊。

一切·格瓦拉（Ernesto Che Guevara），《游擊戰》  
（*Guerrilla Warfare*）第三章

「影響我們的書？那就是切·格瓦拉的《游擊戰》。」綁起一頭長捲髮的茲克里拉曼（Zikri Rahman），身穿黑色上衣，毫不掩飾地流露出左翼青年的理想和魄力。

茲克里是「街頭書坊」（Buku Jalanan）的創辦人之一，當時還是瑪拉工藝大學（UiTM）的學生。2011年至今，從莎亞南（Shah Alam）起家的街頭書坊已遍布全球80餘個據點。茲克里不僅活躍於街頭書坊，他也是「文學之城」的創辦人，以文學作品重新挖掘吉隆坡故事；同時，他也加入了大馬左翼聯盟，目前他們在積極草擬大選宣言。

### 切·格瓦拉的啟示

茲克里參與的活動當然不止這些，他彷彿對任何議題都有興趣，常在街頭示威、聲援活動、文藝活動或講座上碰見他。他有時身穿搶眼的藍色夏威夷襯衫，背著一個印有已故馬來作家沙古伯（Pak Sako，原名Ishak Muhammad）頭像的袋子。再過兩個月，他要到台灣交通大學文化研究碩士班就讀。想像新竹街頭多了一個頗為嬉皮的馬來青年，那畫面也滿有趣的。

「我想要更了解東亞。老實說，是台灣的公民社會運動吸引我去的，我什麼都不懂，就只是想要跳進一個全新的環境，在裡面暢游。我也聽說，那裡有蠻多學者社運人（scholar-activist），這在馬來西亞是看不到的。」齋戒月（Ramadan）的一天，和茲克里約了一起開齋，我才知道街頭書坊除了是2011年全球佔領運動浪潮下的產物，原來行動策略也和古巴革命有些關係。

街頭書坊的策略大多來自於切·格瓦拉的《游擊戰》，茲克里說。他的戰鬥手冊強調書籍的重要，各個士兵戰鬥時需帶上一本書，讀完了再互相交換。這有點像流動圖書館的概念，他在思考，如何以沒有良好組織架構的方式贏得戰爭？他們雖然很小，但其實可以戰勝國家，可在學生之中留下一些另類想像。

「切·格瓦拉非常激進，他讓我們看到如何將理論付諸行動，閱讀之後如何從書中吸取東西。」他聲稱，理論和實踐並非二元對立，而是相互並行。於是茲克里和友人們在保守的瑪拉工藝大學外，建立起了「街頭書坊」，以書籍交換和閱讀為策略，作為介入「政治」的管道。

他們奉行「BACA」信念（馬來語「閱讀」），也是書籍、藝術、文化和Activism的英文縮寫。這就讓街頭書坊和一般讀書會或書友會不同，也讓它不僅是學生活動而已。

「一些喜歡文學的人來參加，談著談著，就扯到人權議題。我們是文學組織嗎？還是社運組織呢？我們也不知道如何定位自己。（…）我們是一個混合體…像一個開放的平台。」

茲克里在1990年出生於吉隆坡，也在此長大，父母來自吉蘭丹（Kelantan）。三個哥哥都是理工科出身，他也在瑪拉就讀工料測量系，畢業後當了兩年工程師，才決定於2015年離職，全心投入社運和文化工作。茲克里在吉蘭丹的祖父是一名退休教師，也是詩人畫家，對他的成長造成一定的影響。

「祖父的家有很多書，他什麼都讀，也刻版畫。他是最早一批由英殖民者送到倫敦接受教育的教師。」若要說他的「政治啟蒙」，反而是2006年隻身到吉打古邦巴素（Kubang Pasu）就讀寄宿學校時。那是他第一次為自己的人生做決定。當時，有不少來自華玲和錫縣（Sik）的同學向他談起1970年代的華玲農民抗爭。而學校也鼓勵學生閱報，如《新海峽時報》和《前鋒報》，同學之間則私下傳閱家長提供的《哈拉卡》或《公正報》這些在野黨報紙。

為何要讀禁書？茲克里說，一次莎亞南街頭書坊活動，有人帶了前馬共女戰士珊西婭法姬（Shamsiah Fakeh）的回憶錄，就有出席者質疑為何要讀馬共的書，難道不是禁書嗎？事實上，珊西婭的這本回憶錄最初是由國民大學（UKM）出版的，且已是研究馬共歷史不可或缺的重要資料。

茲克里說，政府的確禁止了不少馬克思主義和馬共相關書籍。而街頭書坊曾經辦過一次「禁書展」，把內政部的禁書封面列印出來展覽，以表抗議。這包括重要的黎巴嫩詩人紀伯倫（Kahlil Gibran）的《先知》。

從內政部網頁上查詢，政府自1960年代以來，查禁的書籍共有逾1600本，其中可看出禁書題材的趨勢：1960年代以左翼

文學為多，其中包括許多中文書刊；1970、80年代則以宗教題材居多；1990年代至今仍有許多宗教相關書籍被禁，而有關「性」內容的書籍也被禁不少。

目前，內政部的禁書尤以馬來語（Bahasa Melayu）書籍最多。茲克里認為，這是因為馬來語是被政治化的語言，而他們要重奪公民對馬來語的話語權，因此街頭書坊的媒介語皆是馬來語。

### 作為抗爭語言的馬來語

街頭書坊策略性地使用馬來語作為媒介語言，原因有二：第一，讓馬來語成為抗爭語言，直接和當權者對話；第二，讓馬來語成為知識語言，但這和「國家文化政策」的實踐方法和理念卻有所不同。茲克里指出，馬來媒體幾乎沒有「抵抗敘述」，大部份人閱讀《Kosmo!》或《前鋒報》等親政府報章；而一些批判性的媒體如《商業電台》（BFM）則以英語為媒介，一定程度上能避開政府的監視。

因此街頭書坊試圖打開空間，讓馬來語成為抗爭的語言，可以用來鼓勵談論被視為「敏感」的課題。他指出，雖然許多人認為莎亞南是較保守的區域，但莎亞南街頭書坊至今從未面對什麼阻礙。然而，森美蘭州（Negeri Sembilan）波德申（Port Dickson）的街頭書坊，曾因公開討論什葉派課題而遭宗教當局查禁。不同的地理空間，似乎也有不同的「言論自由」標準。

另一方面，馬來語要如何成為知識語言？街頭書坊在2011年成立之時，是少數使用馬來語進行知識討論的團體。

「自1971年國家文化政策<sup>1</sup>出台後，國家語文出版局（DBP）要規範我們說話用語的方式，而我們可否跨越這樣的界限？」茲克里說，「2008政治海嘯後，『後烈火莫熄』<sup>2</sup>世代崛起，我們要重奪語言的本質，讓它更具世界主義特質，邀請更多人使用它來傳播知識。」

因此，不少街頭書坊成員在2015年協力舉辦「Idearaya Festival」，標榜作為批判性的知識和文化平台，全場活動以馬來語進行，討論文化、政治、知識、歷史和哲學課題。他們目前也在籌備著第二屆的Idearaya，冀望將知識「下放」至民間，重奪民眾對知識、文化和語言的話語權。這些年來，茲克里和許多馬來青年試圖以文化運動介入政治，改變社會。而馬來獨立出版社的蓬勃發展，更掀起一場文化革新運動。這些反叛、不安份的小集團積極對抗國家霸權，也成功KO掉國家語文出版局。雖然國家語文出版局將這些馬來文學視為「低俗」，但如今人人手上都捧著獨立出版的書籍或雜誌，一定程度上撼動了國家機器。

茲克里認為，文學和文化是互動和介入社會的管道，而馬來

<sup>1</sup> Dasar Kebudayaan Kebangsaan; 是在1970年由當時的馬來西亞政府所倡導的一個公共政策，這個政策的主要訴求是希望將馬來文化塑造為國家的主流文化，並將非馬來族溶入到馬來族的文化體系中。

<sup>2</sup> 烈火莫熄 (Reformasi) 為1998年馬來西亞前副首相Anwar Ibrahim被革職後不久，其支持者發動的一次社會運動。此社會運動有一系列的群眾示威和集會，參與者以此宣洩對國陣政府的不滿。

文學界內部在1980年代以後就沒有引領文化思辨的論戰，以致讓人認為保守無趣：「上一次在馬來文學圈的論戰，已是1980年代的事，是國家文學家沙農阿末（Shahnon Ahmad）和左翼作家卡欣阿末（Kassim Ahmad）針對文學如何符合伊斯蘭的爭論。沙農認為書寫是上蒼賦予的任務和責任，而卡欣則認為伊斯蘭價值能從任何世俗文本獲取。對我而言，這場論戰很無趣，而且只局限在馬來社群。這樣的論戰還有關係嗎？我們如何往前走，再創造新的論戰？事實上，無論在文化、文學或戲劇圈，目前並沒有任何論戰發生。」

### 沒有形體的文化運動

不過，茲克里對當代的馬來獨立出版文化也有所保留，並非一味吹捧。他懷疑一些出版社只在乎生意和利益而沒有論述，「像我們應如何破除枷鎖，干預出版機制的問題。我們應該挑起論戰，扣問事情，直接批評…以撼動體制。」

他也指出，一些獨立出版社行銷書籍的手法未必令人苟同，有些只是順應潮流，並沒有實質的內容，流於表面。在社交媒體崛起的時代，事情和運動的發展變得更加迅速。然而，卻有必要去反思和論述這些運動的形成意義，以捕捉當中的精髓。這樣才能將種子灑在各處，而街頭書坊就像種子，有些東西會從中生長。

街頭書坊沒有固定樣板，卻不知不覺開枝散葉。他也舉例印尼1998年改革時期以前，就有一些「無形」的文化組織（organisasi tanpa bentuk）。他們不如勞工或婦女組織般有

清楚的定位，因此「無形」卻更自在地和各領域合作串聯。

「或許那就是本地文化運動的未來。必須先有文化運動，而之後政治才會跟上。」也因此，他自認是個如此實踐的文化工作者。由於他在馬來社群長大，唸的是國立學校，因此在上大學以前，沒有一個華人朋友。我好奇地問，難道他在瑪拉唸書時認識了華裔學生？「當然不是，瑪拉是土著大學嘛。我的華裔朋友都是在街頭認識的。…通過社運場合，讓我認識華裔朋友。這或許就是我們的時代印記，淨選盟<sup>3</sup>和其他集會讓我們更了解彼此。」

談及1969年513事件<sup>4</sup>以後的新經濟政策，茲克里坦言，當然支持扶弱政策，但不該局限在單一種族，而是給有需要的人。他也支持瑪拉工藝大學向全民開放；「馬來人」並不和「馬來西亞人」的身份衝突。他並不喜歡強調自己的某些單一身份。「我們可否有不同的身份認同？可否超越國家強加（於個體之上）的身份？」而他相信，這些身份隨時可以置換、改變、更新。或許，這也是如街頭書坊這些「無形」文化運動的精髓，可自在穿梭於縫隙，最終也可填補裂縫。

3 全名為乾淨與公平選舉聯盟（Gabungan Pilihanraya Bersih dan Adil；簡稱Bersih），是由公民社會組織及政黨組成的聯盟，乃是從2005年7月成立的選舉改革聯合行動委員會蛻變而成。聯盟的首要宗旨是推動馬來西亞的選舉制度和程序改革，以促進自由與公平的選舉為己任。組成份子涵蓋不同種族與宗教。Bersih後來脫離政黨聯繫，成為非政府組織自組的聯盟，並成功舉辦多場大型集會。

4 513事件爆發於1969年5月13日的馬來西亞，官方解釋事件主要是馬來人與華人之間的種族衝突，原因是在當時各族間政治及經濟能力有很大的差異，不過也有學者認為那是執政黨內部政變。這次血腥的種族衝突導致了多人死亡和負傷。馬來西亞政府在1971年以「新經濟政策」執行土著議程，消除各種族在政治以及經濟能力的差異。

## Mapping Kuala Lumpur Literature

/ Zikri Rahman



*...form and symbol of an integrated social relationship: it is the seat of a temple, the market, the hall of justice, the academy of learning. Here is where human experience is transformed into viable signs, symbols, patterns of conducts, systems of order.*

– Lewis Mumford<sup>1</sup>

The LiteraCity mapping project maps neither the contours of the Earth, nor the coordinates of a place. It does not want to know what already physically exists. Most importantly, the LiteraCity mapping project aims to uncover the layers of meaning – for this is how literature operates – where the project revolves around three aspects – space, the building of space and the interpretation of Kuala Lumpur’s body of literature in its process. The mapping of literature and culture’s space is thus a means to delve deeper into an alternative and counter discourse, as well as to produce an unconventional and abstract knowledge by looking into the urban community’s order.

Based on this, the map produced in the LiteraCity project is not, in and of its self, complete, but is a subjective process involving mapping itself. What is meant as subjective process is closely related to cognitive mapping, where an author’s mental mapping influences his authorship – consisting of character, plot, narrative – which brings to the formation of spaces as he imagines it, as written by Frederic Jameson, who said;

---

<sup>1</sup> Mumford, L.(1986) “What Is A City?” *The Lewis Mumford Reader*, ed. Donald L. Miller (New York: Pantheon Books).

*...begin to grasp our position as individual and collective subjects and regain a capacity to act and struggle which is at present neutralized by our spatial as well as our social confusion.<sup>2</sup>*

The feeling of alienation and marginalisation, especially in a city such as Kuala Lumpur, driven by neoliberal systems as a familiar backdrop, explains the production of space and the birth of social confusion. This social confusion is even more apparent when it involves phenomenon such as migration into the city, as experienced by Mat Som, the main character of Lat’s comic, also titled *Mat Som*. In this example, we can see how in his early days in Kuala Lumpur, he awkwardly tries to understand the rules and behaviour of the city, and how should he act to be part of the urban community.

As quoted by Jameson above, “spatial” could meant as how the process of production and a space is given its meaning. In assessing how literature can give meaning to space, meaning can exist and be imagined when there is interaction. It can be done through characters in works of literature, where they can form and extract meaning in an urban space whether actively or passively.

Following from this, Jameson then continues about “spatial” and the social confusion, and how it is derived from an individual and parts of society, collectively negotiating to dominate the narrative; its content and social make-up in defining a space in the city. This essay will then take examples from the works of literature in Kuala

---

<sup>2</sup> Jameson, F. (1991) *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. (London: Verso).

Lumpur. For example, how different is the perception (which can be a source for confusion) of a space between a writer and his Nation (if any), for a place such as the National Monument (*Tugu Negara*)?

A nation having a strong narrative authority surely chooses the opportunity to lift and advocate patriotism and nationalism through the National Monument. However, as a space, a writer outside the narrative authority can interpret it differently in another context. The ambivalence of a space's meaning can also be seen, where it is always open for change and deconstructed like the Pudu Jail, abolished in order to construct a shopping mall, even though in the imagination of the nation, it can be perceived as a national heritage.

A second example is how the places within literature in several poems by Zurinah Hassan are in marginalized places and locations in the city, such as the slums, the riverbanks, the streets, the rubbish that shows a side of the city which shall always be ignored by the more dominant landscape of the city. In another example, in the play *My Grandmother's Chicken Curry & ...* by Charlene Rajendran, it took place in several eateries where the three characters discussed the utopian identity that reflects the nation building of Malaysia. The choice of eateries such as the cafe in Bangsar, the Chinese coffee house, the Indian restaurant in Leboh Ampang, and the Coliseum Restaurant, they are all cosmopolitan spaces in the city, which can potentially disrupt the Nation's narrative in imagining the production of space in the city.

In literature, the meaning of social space is not fully controlled by the Nation, where the oppressed characters in the texts often have

different strategies to contest the narrative authority, through what is defined as the hidden transcript.

This can be seen in *A Modern Woman Called Ang Tau Mui*, a play by Leow Puay Tin, where the main character works as toilet cleaner in Batu Complex. She faces not only racial discrimination, but the effects of class and gender division, a remnant of the colonial British's administration. Ang Tau Mui protests this situation by proclaiming, "... *I know who I am – I don't need an IC to prove who I am.*"

Therefore, the choice to write in a work literature is also interesting to be uncovered especially, if the work questions the marginal identity is outside the Nation's narrative authority. For example, how a few nightclubs and warehouses become important backdrops in urban literature. In Faisal Tehrani's short story circa 1998 called "KL di Atas Bantal", it clearly depicts key places such as The Sultan Abdul Samad Building as a court, which if looked closely, symbolises power at the time (and even now), especially in the question of sexual orientation and opposing political aspirations. Interestingly, the places mentioned in this short story goes in and out through the public space and imagined private space, but it was very fitting with the political climate at the time.

In addition, the characters occupying a space also paints an interesting impression especially on question of the rights of urbanization. This is clearly seen in the play by Johan Jaafar called *Kotaku Oh Kotaku* where the marginalized and oppressed community lived in the beautiful garden. The bravery of the characters in this script all opens the question of who actually

holds the narrative in this wild urbanization process.

The discussion also touches upon what is said by Jameson on the position of the individual and a group as a subject. We can see how a space in the city opens up a subjective space – the taste, the feelings and the way of thinking – for the characters which are closely related to a collectively imagined space. From this question, we must understand the logic on how should a country be shaped, from society's logic to the literature is consumed, such as written by Benedict Anderson, where;

*It is imagined because the member of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in minds of each lives the image of their communion.*<sup>3</sup>

In this case, what kind of characters and plot are imagined by the writers? Therefore, the existence or non-existence of a location or situation in a work of literature can be manifested into reality, shadow or utopia as imagined by the writer itself. To take directly from what Thongchai Winichakul, where he stated that “A map merely represents something which has already exist objective 'there'. In the history I have described, this relationship was reversed. A map anticipated spatial reality, not vice versa.”<sup>4</sup>

In a discussion of the project with Katrin Bandel, a German scholar, she brought forward ideas from the works of Benedict Anderson

---

<sup>3</sup> Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso).

<sup>4</sup> Winichakul, T. (1994). *Siam Mapped*. (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press).

to analyse this phenomenon. Apart from that, she also look into Ridhwan Saidi's novel, *Amerika*, which questions the reality of non-existence and the lack of discourse within society, portrayed through surreal dialogues between the main characters, Murshid Merican and Dahlia Sanni. The novel thus imagines the questions of what needs to be brought into space and what is imagined.

To further this discourse, we have to look into the symbolism of a space, how it can be further elevated, and who is capable to create it? This is where we can look into the question of ideography, political museumising and logoization in creating a discourse against the dominant narrative. Fan Yew Teng's poem titled “Kuala Lumpur, Kuala Lumpur”, is a good example of how symbolism questions the meaning and function of a space unconventionally. Her poem which traces the gastronomic identity in the streets of Kuala Lumpur, giving a very different interpretation of an individual's observation, not to mention by the collective memory of the community.

In this case, through this project in tracing physical spaces in the works of literature within Kuala Lumpur, it opens up a room for interpretation and a wider of definition in looking at the questions within literature, such as representation – of languages, norms, gender, class and others. By looking into the formation of a literature's space, both urban and spatial, it can also make us further understand the questions being raised by writers in tackling the power relations and the dominant narrative, challenging our understanding beyond the concrete walls of space – within the cognitive mapping framework – a never ending continuum.

# Perceiving Urban Literature

/ Zikri Rahman

*Originally published in LiteraCity: Fragmen Sastra Kuala Lumpur, 2016*

From the depths of imagination and actual places traced by writers and their characters in literature, the city of Kuala Lumpur becomes alive, and will forever be so, with more 110 works of literature speaking of the city and everything in between.

However, understanding Kuala Lumpur through its works of literature it is not as easy undertaking as other big cities worldwide. In James Joyce's *Dubliners* about the city Dublin and Naguib Mahfouz's *Cairo Trilogy* about Cairo, the manifestation of cities in both novels are considered to be the greatest in literature. Their novels are gracefully written, exploring every nook and corner of the city, from its architecture to every souls of its inhabitants. Both novels are now considered authoritative and part of the literary canon.

Fortunately for us, there is still room to freely and innocently explore Kuala Lumpur's literature without the weight of a literary canon or authoritative work, in order to grasp and discover what the city of Kuala Lumpur means. Thus we are able to openly and moderately appreciate the city through various works of literature.

As stated in previous essays, the LiteraCity project covers only limited genre, which are novels, short stories, scripts, drama and poetry published in the Malay and English language. The works highlighted are also those from 1970s until 2015. Combined, these factors might limit us to fully grasp Kuala Lumpur's literature. But nevertheless, the LiteraCity project is a rare and significant attempt to document the works of literature, especially through the method of cultural mapping. In this essay, we will discuss elements of

urban literature by highlighting the works with Kuala Lumpur as a backdrop.

What is urban literature and when did the transition from rural-based literature to urban literature occur? And why is it defined from the 1970s and not before? And finally, how are aesthetic values portrayed in urban literature? These are the main questions that are tackled in this essay, by referring to examples from literature to support our discussion.

In our opinion, urban literature in the city will continue to exist as long as there is a process of urbanization in Kuala Lumpur. External influences such as government policies, particularly the New Economic Policy (NEP) introduced in 1971, is seen in the city's development has directly influenced urban literature. As an economic policy, the NEP has also affected the very social fabric of society in the name of development, through the country's transition from an agriculturally- based country to an industrialized country in the coming decades.

However, literature also has its own autonomous space and is not necessarily written to address issues or certain impacts according to the country's narrative. In fact, it is more advanced in some respect, by imagining the abstract possibilities and circumstances in city's spaces. For example, in Abdullah Hussain novel, *Kuala Lumpur Kita Punya*, Adnan, one of the main characters suggested there should be built a Garden of Love (*Taman Asmara*) for the

city's inhabitants to express themselves.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, Johan Jaafar's play *Kotaku Oh Kotaku* also interacts directly with issues such as the right to the city by creating a place like a garden (*Taman Bunga*), to discuss the eviction in the slums (*Setinggalan Dukalara*).

Urban literature also depicts the society's structure, where there is high demand for human labor to be concentrated in the city, particularly in the manufacturing and services sector, demanding drastic and mass migration from rural to urban area. Thus, migration is one of the main backgrounds in Kuala Lumpur's literature, where themes of alienation, class and economic inequalities, and the merging of cultures became more apparent in literature. The appearance of slums, the homeless and urban poor, is a manifestation of the failure of economic policies to efficiently handle this transition, where they are all recorded in urban literature.

And so, when exactly did the transition from rural-based literature to urban literature happen? Surely, it is not as drastic the economic policies carried out. In fact, if we carefully observe and compare several works across time, it was a gradual transition. In earlier urban literature, the characters have not yet grasped or breathed the city's elements. This stems from feelings of alienation, lacking a sense of belonging or a community, and of one's rights when living in the city.

---

<sup>1</sup> "If I become the Prime Minister, rather than furnishing the city with flowery gardens such as this, I'd rather open have a Garden of Love, where only those with a partner can enter. Everyone entering there has to surrender all their weapons to the police at its entrance", trans., page 79, *Kuala Lumpur Kita Punya*, Abdullah Hussein.

It is only later in urban literature that we are able to see how the works feel closer and rooted in the city. The characters no longer see the city through the lens of alienation, but continue to live and breathe as part of the city. If traditional literature can be distinguished from modern literature through the first person pronoun, I, addressing himself as a subject instead of an object, thus this is how urban literature and rural-based literature can be separated, where the characters perceive the city as subject of desire, thus opening up room for cultures to interact, merge and exchange with each other.

This is evident if we compare the character Mat Som in Lat's graphic novel of the same title and Murshid Merican from the novel *Amerika* written by Ridhwan Saidi. There are similarities between both characters, where both can be categorized as part of the precariat, those who work but have no stable income. In this alienation, we can see how Mat Som found solace with his friend from the village and has a close relationship with his family. For Murshid Merican however, the alienation he experienced was something he enjoyed consciously; perhaps because he grew up right in the city. However, alienation is always felt when trying to integrate with society, as experienced by Guna Uncle in the short story "Rukun Tetangga" by Preeta Samarasan, who in the end, is perceived strange by the urban folk.

If we compare the subjectivity of experiences as above, only then we can observe the transition from the rural-based literature to urban literature. Of course, there is no absolute definition of urban literature, because aside from the cities and the rural areas, there also the influence of globalization and postmodernism, capable

of either bridging or widening the gap between the cities and rural areas. This is evidenced from the city's hunger for development. Today, with the rise of the internet, the birth and development of cultures in both rural areas and cities is allowed beyond physical space. Moreover, it follows from how behavior, language, and culture is shaped through daily interactions in the city – involving issues such as gender, class, and the rights to the city.

Apart from recording its own time, literature also inadvertently defines its own period. In this case, through researching literature from the 1970s until today, we can see how literature opens the room for imagination in the country's historic moments, especially in a city such as Kuala Lumpur. The 1970s was when the National Cultural Policy was introduced to look into the several possibilities to build a single national culture.

During this period, the literary scene in Malaysia painted many different narratives, and urban literature, with its diversity and complexity of its inhabitants, becomes a space to contest each narrative. This is evident in works like *Green is the Colour* by Lloyd Fernando (1993) and the novel *Perhaps in Paradise* by Ellina Abdul Majid, where the main characters confront the events of 13th May 1969. In fact, we can also see an interesting take of the event's aftermath in the poems of Usman Awang. Arts thus becomes informal recording of history.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> This is emphasized in the LiteraCity interview with A. Samad Said.

In addition to the transition from rural-based literature to urban literature, we also need to look the aesthetic values expressed in a number of literary works. Among them is city's fast-paced cycle, and how does it affect the writers and their writings. The different perceptions of time are also shown in "Pertemuan", a short story by Usman Awang, where the meeting of characters and the events in this short story has neither a beginning nor an ending. Altogether, it is a reflection of life in the city, where there might be hundreds of people chanced upon in the streets, but they will never directly impact our lives. This is clearly depicted in A. Samad Ismail's novel, *Sutinah*, about the ebbs and flow of the city especially with regards to the superficial relationships and interactions with its inhabitants.

Among the aesthetics values in urban literature, is the language used, for example in the immediateness of dialogues or conversations between the city's characters. There is also the urban slang used, a mixture of several dialects and borrowings from other languages, a representation of various communities and nationalities in the city. In fact, the urban slang is always subject to change by adapting more languages depending on the level of migration in the future. In this case, the dominance of a particular language and its words used the urban slang, captures the relationships between people, for example, in terms of power relations.

In addition, the aesthetics of literature can also include the aesthetics of architecture. This can be seen in the poems of Zurinah Hassan, T. Alias Taib and Fan Yew Teng, we can observe the city's landscape, giving each work its aesthetic value. Through the many places in the city described, we are able to see the

symbolism and metaphors formed, and this is more apparent if the city becomes a metaphor itself. This is because a city's architecture is itself a reflection of a Nation's position in relation to power, between the governor and the governed. This is clearly illustrated by the author Ridhwan Saidi in his novel *Amerika*, where the Kuala Lumpur Tower is depicted as "*menara gatal*", spying on every corner of the city and its inhabitants.

In urban literature, there is often a scene where the characters are shown wandering in and about the city. Like the characters, the writer himself can continue to be attached to the city, such as A. Samad Said, where we can often bump into him in places such as the National Mosque and shopping centers around Kuala Lumpur. This wandering is as Roland Barthes wrote, "... *we speak our city, the city where we are, simply by living in it, by wandering through it, by looking at it.*"<sup>3</sup> In this case, it affects how literature is written, leaving the readers perplexed in figuring out the story, written in fragments or as a riddle.

In urban literature, the places written about is not merely a regurgitation of facts and trivia as with history or geography. Instead, it is how we observe, analyze and see what it represents. For a writer to choose a place and repeat it several times in his work, is not a coincidence but rather a confirmation that the place is a representation for something else. For example, in Charlene Rajendran's play, *My Grandmother's Chicken Curry & ...*, through

---

3 Barthes, R. *Urban Semiology*, ed. Neil Leach (New York: Routledge).

the five restaurant visited is a metaphor for cosmopolitan ideas. In addition, the places written in Faisal Tehrani's short story titled "KL di Atas Bantal" affirms the same thing.<sup>4</sup> Surely, if we look realism portrayed in these works, it does not mean that they are any more realist than non-realist works. However, it is an indication of how society views and respond to something at a certain time and place.

With regards to this matter, it must be realized that Kuala Lumpur is a post- colonial city. The portrayal of landmarks and places in a literary work is not just written loosely, but because they can be medium for criticism and discussion, opening up the ultimate question – for what and whose purpose are we participating in this race for development? It is not strange sight for a for a third world country today, with its abundant earth resources, to build large shopping malls and tall skyscrapers. We can at once see that it is meant to shape the city's identity to transition from a developing country to a developed country. However, this infatuation to compete or to outdo more developed countries merely gives the illusion and superficiality of being developed, begging the question – what does being developed means?

Thus, the aesthetics in urban literature look far beyond the issues of identity. It is a decolonization process of a set of diverse behaviors and social formation in the city manifested in the banality of everyday routines. What is meant by the decolonization process

---

4 These are discussed further in the essay "Mapping Kuala Lumpur" Literature on the way a space is perceived.



is how its citizens struggle between the modern and the traditional way of life, as well as the clashing of superstitious and rational belief in facing life in the city.

To conclude this essay, in order to understand a city, we need to continually assess the transition from rural-based literature to urban literature and whether the city's aesthetic values depict life in the city. In order to contemplate the literature's transition through the city, it is apt to quote a semi-cynical statement from *Amerika*:

*Malaysian people have yet walked and become civilized enough to drive a car.*

## **A Conversation with Zikri Rahman, Co-founder of Buku Jalanan**

/ Show Ying Xin

As a young Malay activist on the street, Zikri Rahman consistently embarks on various interdisciplinary socio-political and cultural activism projects, including Buku Jalanan and Idearaya Festival. Currently, he is doing a cultural and literary mapping project of Kuala Lumpur through the lenses of literature with LiteraCity. This is an interview conducted by Show Ying Xin on *Malaysiakini* in 2017. He is visiting Taiwan for further exchange on more civil issues of both countries.

*Reading should be encouraged at all times, with an effort to promote books that are worthwhile and that enlarge the recruit's facility to encounter the world of letters and great national problems. Further reading will follow as a vocation; the surrounding circumstances will awaken new desires for understanding in the soldiers. This result will be produced when, little by little, the recruits observe in their routine tasks the enormous advantages of men who have passed through the school over the remainder of the troop, their capacity for analyzing problems, their superior discipline, which is another of the fundamental things that the school should teach.*

— Ernesto Che Guevara, Chapter Three in *Guerrilla Warfare*

“Which book influences us? That must be Che Guevara’s *Guerrilla Warfare*.” Zikri Rahman is in black with tied curly long hair. His words reveal the ideas and resolution of the left-wing youth.

Zikri is one of the founders of Buku Jalanan, upon whose establishment, Zikri was still a student of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). Buku Jalanan started from Shah Alam in 2011; until now, there have been 80 chapters globally. Buku Jalanan is not the

single project on which Zikri is working. He is also the organiser of LiteraCity, which dredges stories of Kuala Lumpur by means of literature. Meanwhile, he joins Malaysian Left Coalition that is drafting the manifesto for the general election actively.

### **Inspiration Coming from Che Guevara**

The activities Zikri is involved in are more than the abovementioned ones. It seems that he is interested in all sorts of issues. It is easy to meet him in the street protests, solidarity actions, art and cultural activities or seminars. He sometimes wears an eye-catching Aloha shirt, carrying a bag with the portrait of Pak Sako, whose real name is Ishak Muhammad, the late Malay writer. After two more months, he is going to study at the Graduate Institute for Social Research and Cultural Studies of NCTU in Taiwan. Imagine the scene. It will be rather amusing to see a hippy Malay young man appear on the street of Hsin-Chu.

*“I want to understand East Asia more. To be honest, it is the movement of the civic society in Taiwan that attracts me to study there. I know nothing, just wanting to be immersed in a whole new environment in which I can rove freely. I also heard that there are many scholar-activists, which does not exist in Malaysia.”* On a day of Ramadan when I met Zikri to celebrate Eid al-Fitr, it dawned on me that Buku Jalanan is not only the production under the wave of the global occupy movement in 2011 but also a byproduct whose strategy is related to the Cuban Revolution.

*“Most strategies of Buku Jalanan are from Che Guevara’s*

Guerilla Warfare,” Zikri said. Che Guevara’s book emphasises the importance of books, suggesting every soldier bring one book and exchange theirs with one another when they are on the battlefield. The concept is similar to mobile libraries, and he is thinking how to win a war without an adequate organisation. Though small in number, they can win over the nation and leave the alternative imagination among students.

“*Che Guevara is very radical. He lets us see how to practise theories and how to take in things from books after reading.*” He claims that theory and practice are not opposite but parallel. Thus, Zikri and his friends founded Buku Jalanan outside UiTM, which is a rather conservative institution, with the strategy of book exchange and reading as the way to intervene “politics.”

They adhere to the belief called “BACA,” which not only refers to “reading” in Malay but also is the abbreviation of Book, Art, Culture and Activism. This belief makes Buku Jalanan different from usual study groups and readers clubs, pushing it to something beyond a student activity.

“*Some literature lovers join us. When discussing literary works, we will talk about issues concerning human rights. Are we a literary organisation or organisation for social movement? We do not know how to position ourselves either... We are a mixed unity... like an open platform.*” In 1990, Zikri was born in Kuala Lumpur, which is also the place he grew up. His parents came from Kelantan. Three of his elder brothers are with the background of science and technology. He also studied at the Department of Quantity Surveying in UiTM and worked as a surveyor for two years after

graduation. In 2015, he decided to quit his job, devoting himself to the social movement and cultural work. His grandfather living in Kelantan is a retired teacher, a painter and a poet, more or less making an impact on Zikri’s growth.

“*There are a lot of books in my grandfather's home. He reads everything and creates woodcuts. He is the earliest group of teachers that were sent to London by British colonisers to receive the direct British education.*” His “political enlightenment” should be traced back to the time when he went to attend the boarding school in Kubang Pasu. It was the first life decision he made on his own. At the time, many students from Baling and Sik District would tell him the peasants’ revolt in Baling District in the 1970s. Students in the school were also encouraged to read newspapers, such as *The Straits Times* and *Utusan Melayu*, by the school. Some newspapers produced by political opposition such as *Harakah Daily* and *Suara Keadilan* would be provided by the parents of his classmates and secretly circulated among students.

Why should the banned books be read? Zikri said that once in an activity of Buku Jalanan in Shah Alam, a participant brought the memoir of Shamsiah Fakeh, a former woman warrior of Malayan Communist Party. Other participants doubted why they should read a book about Malayan Communist Party, because of the ban. In fact, the memoir of Shamsiah is published by National University of Malaysia (UKM) and also an indispensable document for studying the history of Malayan Communist Party.

According to Zikri, the government has banned many books related to Marxism and Malayan Communist Party. In response to the ban,

Buku Jalanan has ever made an exhibition on the topic, by printing out the book covers of the banned books listed by Ministry of Home Affairs to protest against the ban. Among the banned ones, *The Prophet* written by Kahlil Gibran, a crucial Lebanese poet, is also on the list.

The web page of Ministry of Home Affairs shows that since the 1960s, there have been over 1,600 books banned by the government. The trend of banning is as follows: in the 1960s, the majority of being banned was left-wing literary works, including many Chinese books; in the 1970s and 1980s, religion became the new target; in the 1990s, many religion-related topics were still forbidden. Moreover, sex(uality) related contents are also a taboo.

Nowadays, most banned books are written in Bahasa Melayu. In Zikri's opinion, Bahasa Melayu is a politicised language, and they have to reclaim the right of discourse for the citizens. Thus, the medium language of Buku Jalanan is Bahasa Melayu.

### **Bahasa Melayu as the Language of Protest**

There are two reasons for Buku Jalanan tactically using Bahasa Melayu as the medium language. First, they intend to make Bahasa Melayu a language of protest, with which people can directly converse with the authority. Second, they hope that Bahasa Melayu can be the language of knowledge, which is opposite to the practice and idea of the "national cultural policy." Zikri points that protesting narrative almost does not exist in Malay media. Most people read the pro-governmental newspapers such as *Kosmo!*

and *Utusan Melayu*. Some media with a critical view such as BFM use English as the operating language to some extent avoiding the governmental surveillance.

Thus, Buku Jalanan tries to open up space, making Bahasa Melayu the language of protesting and encouraging people to use it to discuss "sensitive" issues. Zikri points out that although many people deem Shah Alam a conservative area, Buku Jalanan so far has never encountered any obstacles. However, the Buku Jalanan at Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan has ever been banned by the religious authority because of the public discussion on Shia. It seems that different geographical space is granted with the different standard of "freedom of speech."

Apart from the language of protest, how could Bahasa Melayu become the language of knowledge? Founded in 2011, Buku Jalanan became one of the rare groups discussing knowledge in Bahasa Melayu.

*"When the national cultural policy was carried out in 1971,<sup>1</sup> DBP (the Malaysian Institute of Language and Literature) has restricted the way we speak and use languages. Is there any possibility for us to cross the boundary?"* Zikri said, *"After the political tsunami in 2008, the generation of the Post-Reformasi rose.<sup>2</sup> We would like*

---

<sup>1</sup> Dasar Kebudayaan Kebangsaan is a public policy advocated by the government at the time, hoping to make Malay culture the mainstream culture in the nation and to integrate other non-Malay ethnicities into Malay cultural system.

<sup>2</sup> Reformasi was a social movement triggered by the supporters of Anwar Ibrahim, the deputy prime minister, who was dismissed in 1998. A series of demonstrations and assemblies then were launched

*to re-grab the nature of language, endowing it with the feature of cosmopolitanism and inviting more people to use it to spread the knowledge.”*

Therefore, many members of Buku Jalanan worked together in 2015 to hold Idearaya Festival, which was a platform for critical knowledge and culture. In Idearaya Festival, all the activities were carried out by Bahasa Melayu to discuss issues related to cultures, politics, knowledge, history and philosophy. Currently, they are preparing the 2nd Idearaya Festival with the hope to “lower” the status of knowledge and to endow the general public with the right of discourse in terms of knowledge, cultures and languages.

Over the years, Zikri and many Malay young people attempt to intervene politics and further change the society by employing cultural movements. The flourishing Malay independent publishers, moreover, roll the wave of cultural innovation. These rebellious and restless cliques actively go against the hegemony of the nation and successfully KO DBP. Although DBP considers the Malay literary works published by those independent publishers “vulgar,” nowadays, everyone has a book or magazine published by these publishers, which more or less has shaken the state apparatus.

Zikri thinks literature and culture is the way to interact with and intervene the society. The reason Malay literature is deemed dull and conservative is that after the 1980s, the debates which can lead the cultural thinking has long been absent in the circle of

---

to vent the participants' discontent on the National Front government.

Malay literature:

*“The last debate on Malay literature in the circle took place in the 1980s. It was carried out by Shahnnon Ahmad, the recipient for the Malaysian National Laureate, and Kassim Ahmad, the left-wing writer, focusing on how literature can be Islamic... Shahnnon Ahmad regards writing the duty and task given by God. Kassim Ahmad, on the other hand, thinks the Islamic value can be gained in every secular text. To me, this debate is tedious and only limits its scale to the Malay community. What this even matters? How can we walk forward to create new debates again? In fact, no discussion happens in the cultural circle, the literary world, the theatre or whichever circle.”*

### **Amorphous Cultural Movement**

Nevertheless, Zikri also pulls his punches when it comes to the contemporary Malay independent publishers. He doubts that some publishers only care about business and profit without discourse. *“For example, they should be able to answer the questions such as how to break the fetters — the mechanism of interrupting publishers. We should incite debates, making inquiries and direct criticism... so as to shake the system.”*

He also points out that the marketing styles of some independent publishers hardly can be recognised, and some of them just follow the flow without real content. At the age witnessing the rise of social media, the development of things and movement gets more rapid. However, this fast pace makes it necessary to reflect on and

articulate the meaning of these movements to catch the essence and sow the seed everywhere. Buku Jalanan is like the seed with which something will grow.

Buku Jalanan has no fixed mode of operation, but it eventually thrives and blooms beautifully. Zikri takes the Indonesia case as an example. Before 1998 when the reform took place in Indonesia, there were some “amorphous” cultural organisations (organisasi tanpa bentuk). They did not have a clear definition for their organisations as those for labourers or women. Because of the “invisibility” in the social movements, they were freer to connect or cooperate with local organisations in different fields.

*“Maybe that is the future of the local cultural movements. First, there should be cultural movements, and then those associated with politics will be able to follow.”* He deems himself a cultural worker who practises his belief in this way. Growing up in Malay communities and studying in Malay-medium national schools, Zikri does not have any Chinese friends before attending college. I ask him out of curiosity if he got to know some Chinese students in UiTM. *“Of course not. UiTM is a university for bumiputera Malays. I meet all my Chinese friends on the street... The occasions on the street acquaint me with Chinese people. It may be the imprint of our time. It is Bersih<sup>3</sup> and other assemblies that give us a chance to*

---

<sup>3</sup> Bersih is the abbreviation of *Gabungan Pilihanraya Bersih dan Adil*, which refers to The Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections in English. It is a coalition of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and political parties established in July 2005. The primary purpose of this alliance is to push the reform of electoral system and procedure in Malaysia to promote free and fair elections. It consists of groups of different ethnicities and religions. Bersih then is disconnected with political parties, becoming an NGO and successfully holding many large assemblies.

*understand each other more.”*

Talking about the new economic policies after the 13 May 1969 incident,<sup>4</sup> Zikri admits frankly that he supports affirmative action but the policy itself should not be limited to the single ethnicity, but for whoever is in need.

He also supports the idea that UiTM can open to all citizens in Malaysia. “Malay” should not be conflicted with “Malaysian.” He does not favour emphasising his identities in singular form. *“Can we have different identities which can go beyond that given by the nation?”* He believes that some identities can be replaced, changed, renewed anytime. This may be the essence of the “intangible” cultural movements like Buku Jalanan. They can go across the gaps freely and eventually are capable of mending the rifts.

---

<sup>4</sup> The 13 May 1969 incident broke out on May 13th 1969 in Malaysia. According to the official explanation, it was caused by the racial conflict between Malay and Chinese for the enormous difference between their political and economic abilities. However, some scholars deem it a riot inside the ruling party. This violent racial conflict results in heavy casualties. Malaysian government in 1971 implemented Malaysian New Economic Policy to favor the indigenous people in order to eliminate the differences of political and economic abilities among various ethnicities.

## 群島資料庫02：茲克里拉曼

作者 | 茲克里拉曼、蘇穎欣  
訪談 | 蘇穎欣  
主編 | 鄭文琦  
翻譯 | 戚育瑄、蘇穎欣等  
設計 | 羅仕東、吳其育  
校稿 | 文學之城、謝鎮逸、曾劍鳴、蘇穎欣  
出版單位 | 數位荒原 / 財團法人數位藝術基金會  
出版日期 | 2018年3月  
電話 | +886-2-27789268  
網站 | [www.heath.tw](http://www.heath.tw)

《數位荒原》駐站暨群島資料庫計劃（第一年）

主辦單位 | 數位荒原 / 財團法人數位藝術基金會  
協辦單位 | 在地實驗、打開-當代藝術工作站  
觀察團成員 | 陳湘汶、侯昱寬、賴英泰  
《群島資料庫02》由國家文化藝術基金會贊助

## NUSANTARA ARCHIVE 02: ZIKRI RAHMAN

Contributor: Zikri Rahman, Show Ying Xin  
Interviewer: Show Ying Xin  
Editor: Rikey Tenn Bun-ki  
Translator: Kris Chi, Show Ying Xin, et al  
Designer: Lo Shih-Tung, Wu Chi-Yu  
Reviser: LiteraCity, Yizai Seah, Chan Kim Ming, Show Ying Xin  
Publisher: *No Man's Land* / Digital Art Foundation  
Printed in Taipei, 2018, Mar  
Tel: +886-2-27789268  
Website: [www.heath.tw](http://www.heath.tw)

*NML Residency & Nusantara Archive Project, The 1st Year*

Organizer: No Man's Land / Digital Art Foundation  
Co-organizer: ET@T, Open-Contemporary Art Center  
Observation Team: Chen Hsiang-Wen, Ho Yu-Kuan, Lai Ying-Tai  
*Nusantara Archive 02* is supported by National Culture and Arts Foundation



THIS WORK IS LICENSED UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION-NONCOMMERCIAL 4.0 INTERNATIONAL (CC BY-NC 4.0)



國家文化藝術基金會  
National Culture and Arts Foundation



NO MAN'S LAND  
數位荒原

群島  
nusantara  
ARCHIVE