



GADIS ARIVIA

I Clicked Delete

An email came in from a fellow teacher on campus
he wrote, “it is my fate to be polygamous...”

I did not reply

he continued, “better that than an extramarital affair...”

I did not reply

he stressed, “but I will care for my children and love my two
wives or three or four...”

I did not reply

he begged, “please understand my situation; no woman wants
to be divorced...”

I did not reply

he added, “I’m not alone in this: members of parliament,
ministers, religious leaders, professors, why even former fellow
activists share this view...”

I did not reply

he vowed, “the fact is men who engage in polygamy are only
following the orders of the Quran; it’s not against religious law;
women must accept it...”

I did not reply

he wrote with apparent frustration, “Marriage laws permit it;
CEDAW*) is not legally binding; human rights is a Western
creation and sexual equality a liberal myth...!”

Norton Virus issued a strong warning, my computer had been
infected by a virus: Delete all viruses?

I clicked “delete.”

*) CEDAW: *the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.*



miniskirt

oh, oh, miniskirt in my bureau
remember the feel of the passing wind
on the bare knees and ankles

oh, oh, miniskirt in my bureau
remember how you made me dance
the movement of my hips, chest, and hands

oh, oh, miniskirt in my bureau
remember the boyfriend who wanted to touch
whose passionate kiss filled eyes with jealousy

oh, oh, miniskirt in my bureau
remember the giggles and laughter
and kisses on the left, right, then the left cheek again

oh, oh, miniskirt in my bureau
remember how I was sworn at
told to cover myself, from my head down to my ankles

oh, oh, miniskirt in my bureau
the past is now gone and the present
a bitter painful hurt in the heart

oh, oh, miniskirt in my bureau...



poverty is

an independence-day poem

poverty is becoming a politician only for the sake of power
poverty is hawking God to gain more seats in parliament
poverty is one family controlling a political party one
 generation after the other
poverty is the backing from a muddled minister who refuses to resign
poverty is voting for a general pretending to be the voice of the people's
 consciousness
poverty is forgetting oppressors of the past who continue to
 hold the reins of power
poverty is spouting local jargon in a show of mental deficiency poverty is
rejecting the spirit of capital in a false show of social
 consciousness
poverty is a narrow-minded nationalism wrapped up in
 international acumen
poverty is the shackles of religion that dampens the beat of
 humanism
poverty is the mental corruption that has spread to every
 corner of the archipelago
poverty is selling a woman to Saudi Arabia for a spoon of rice
poverty is a child choosing to kill himself rather than to seek a
 life in his own land



Three Government Ministers and One Joint Ministerial Decree

Three ministers scratch their heads
looking through a holy book not the constitution
thinking hard about what Indonesia is
Aha! says the minister of justice
Indonesian law fell from the sky
and being not man-made, cannot be opposed
just the same as syariah law
now that is Indonesia!

Three ministers scratch their heads
looking through a holy book not the constitution
thinking hard about what Indonesia is
Aha! says the minister for internal affairs
This country is not like foreign nations
the people here are moral, those outside are not
let's salute the Islamic Defenders Front
now that is Indonesia!

Three ministers scratch their heads
looking through a holy book not the constitution
thinking hard about what Indonesia is
Aha! says the minister for religious affairs
religion has only one interpretation, which is my own!
backwards forwards, no difference
imprison those who do not comply
now that is Indonesia!

Three ministers scratch their heads
looking through a holy book not the constitution
thinking hard about what Indonesia is
Aha! the three ministers announce in unison:
A Joint Ministerial Decree
together we will put a stop to tolerance
together we will undermine this nation's principles
together we will encourage violence
yes, together, we can!



They Say I'm Not Muslim

for not memorizing scripture
but speaking from my soul

for not repeating words from the Quran
but singing the words of my heart

for not praying in Arabic
but praying in my native tongue

for not saying peace be with you
but saying good morning to all

for not rejecting a different interpretation of the Book
but embracing the love of tolerance

for not adhering to fatwa about what is good or bad
but accepting difference of opinion

for not forcing my child to follow my religion
but letting her choose her own

for not wearing a *jilbab*
but wearing a bikini instead

for not believing in polygamy
but arguing with religious men

for not making the trip to Mecca
but vacationing on a Balinese beach

for not condemning gays and lesbians
but calling them my friends

for not agreeing with the Pornography Law
but accepting diversity of expression

for not defending syariah law in the regions
but defending a democratic state

for not being adept at Quranic verses
but being more given to constitutional verses



they say I'm not Muslim!

they say I should be silenced!

they say I should be stoned!

they say I should be bombed!

but let them say whatever they want

my free spirit will forever live



My Soldier of Chastity

*for the Batu city government and the Jakarta Tourist Bureau that would
have masseuses wear chastity belts.*

come here my soldier of chastity
put a clamp on my vagina
come here my soldier of chastity
conduct your interrogation in my crotch
come here my soldier of chastity
reprimand my underwear
come here my soldier of chastity
thrash my pubic hair
come here my soldier of chastity
put a bullet in my clitoris
come here my soldier of chastity
and lap up my wetness
come here my soldier of chastity
doll, what more do you want?
come here my soldier of chastity
what more does your penis want?
come here my soldier of chastity
are you not satisfied?

oh, of course, take my money too
here, I give it all to you



Jilbabe

People call me a jilbabe because my *jilbab* is colorful
With a flower on the left side and a gemstone on the right
Don't dare to think of me in a burqa or a gunny sack of a gown
One must be neat, slender-looking, and always enticing, you know

People call me a jilbabe because my headwear is brand-name
Behind the dress are tight jeans and a thong that covers me
My bra is Victoria Secret decorated with transparent lace
And I have a heart-shaped tattoo encircling my naval

People call me a jilbabe because I freely go where I please No one is
suspicious, my costume is their assurance
I meet my johns—Ade, Balkon, or Zaenal—wherever they want to meet
What's important, they whisper, is that I look just like the girl in "Holy
Verses of Love"

People call me a jilbabe because of the red lipstick I wear
And yes my lips are sexy, able to rouse the desire to kiss
Don't get me wrong, I've memorized verses from the holy book
Whatever it is I say, the important thing is that it's heard in heaven

People call me a jilbabe
and that's all right for I'm a friend of the *jilbab* too...