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Sexual Narratives in Motinggo Busye's Novels (1967-1969): An Aesthetic Political Study

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Abstract

This study explores the ideological interventions present in Motinggo Busye's sexual narratives from the 1960s, examining how these works serve as forms of resistance to the political, social, and moral ideologies of the New Order regime in Indonesia. Using Walter Benjamin's concept of aesthetic politics, the research demonstrates that Busye's works, particularly in the realm of erotic literature, engage in a subversive critique of the regime's control over gender, sexuality, and class. Busye's sexual narratives offer a politically charged counterpoint to the regime's promotion of patriarchal family structures and capitalist moralities. By presenting women as active sexual agents and critiquing the commodification of sexuality within a capitalist framework, Busye's novels provide a space for ideological reflection and resistance, maintaining their aura as politically and emotionally engaged works. Through this lens, Busye's works emerge as both a critique of the New Order's authoritarianism and a nuanced reflection on the intersections of desire, power, and resistance in a rapidly modernizing society.

1. Introduction

The exploration of sexual narratives in Indonesian literature spans a rich history that is intricately connected with cultural shifts, political dynamics, and social transformations. These

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narratives, which began as part of the sacred and spiritual realms in early 19th-century texts, gradually transformed in response to the country's evolving societal landscape. One of the first notable instances of sexual themes in Indonesian literature appears in Serat Centhini (circa 1815), a comprehensive Javanese text that subtly weaves sexual content within its spiritual and ritualistic teachings (Budianta et al., 2002). Sex, in this context, was not merely physical, but a cosmic and spiritual occurrence that contributed to the harmony of the universe. Similarly, in Serat Martapengrawit (1897), a Javanese text that explored eroticism, sexual relationships were framed as essential for maintaining spiritual and societal order, aligned with Hindu-Buddhist traditions (Koesnoe, 2012).

However, as Indonesia transitioned into the 20th century under Dutch colonial rule, literature took on new political and cultural dimensions. The colonial government, fearing the rise of nationalist sentiment, began to impose strict censorship policies to regulate the content of publications. The Nota Rinkes of 1910, which prohibited "immoral" content, primarily focused on suppressing narratives that promoted political dissent or questioned the colonial status quo, including depictions of sexuality (Sulistyo, 2020). Under these constraints, the exploration of sexual narratives, though still present in folklore and private texts, remained largely subdued within the public literary sphere.

The political climate post-independence, especially following the rise of President Soeharto's New Order regime in 1966, created a fertile ground for the re-emergence of sexual narratives in Indonesian literature. The Soeharto government, while promoting the rhetoric of national stability and development, sought to maintain control over the cultural and moral production of the Indonesian populace. During this period, Indonesia witnessed a sharp division between the state-sanctioned cultural output and the underground, alternative literature that often used subversive themes to critique the ruling order (Heryanto, 2013). As the government pursued rapid industrialization and capitalist modernization, a growing tension emerged in the representation of sexuality, with the state attempting to suppress any expression that could challenge its ideological monopoly.

Motinggo Busye emerged as a prominent figure in this era, particularly during the late 1960s, a time when the political and social climate in Indonesia was marked by significant transformation. Busye's novels, written between 1967 and 1969, notably employed sexual narratives not only as a form of popular entertainment but also as a powerful mechanism for ideological resistance. While his works followed the trend of erotic literature that was widespread in Indonesian popular culture at the time, they simultaneously subverted the status quo by embedding social and political critiques into their seemingly simple erotic plots (Santosa & Danardana, 2007). Busye's novels, including Hari Ini Tak Ada Cinta (1968), Tante Maryati (1967), Sri Ayati (1967), Retno Lestari (1968), and Dik Narti (1968), stood apart from their contemporaries by blending sensuality with critical commentary on the emerging capitalist order and the authoritarian structures of the New Order regime (Karsono, 2016).

Sexuality in Busye's works cannot be reduced to mere titillation or escapism; it serves as a narrative tool to critique the socio-political fabric of the time. The New Order regime's strict control over media and literature ensured that any form of subversive discourse would be subject to censorship or outright banning. However, Busye, who operated within the constraints of a highly regulated literary field, found a unique way to navigate these limitations. His use of sexual narratives created an implicit yet potent form of resistance, drawing attention to the contradictions within the New Order's promises of stability and prosperity. His works often portrayed middle-class anxieties surrounding the commodification of sexuality, the rise of consumerism, and the growing militarization of Indonesian society.

As an artist working under an authoritarian regime, Busye's sexual narratives reflect not only a critique of individual and collective desires but also of the ways in which the state sought to regulate

those desires. By presenting sex as both a personal and political act, Busye's works disrupted the simplistic representations of sexuality promoted by the state, offering instead a nuanced view that questioned the prevailing norms. Through his complex portrayal of sexual relationships, Busye was able to create space for critical reflection on Indonesia's economic and political transformations during the 1960s, providing a counterpoint to the official state narrative that sought to present an image of unity and moral purity.

Busye's works thus contribute to the broader cultural and political landscape of Indonesia during the New Order period, serving as both a form of personal expression and a collective commentary on the ideological battles playing out within the country. By integrating eroticism with social critique, Busye's sexual narratives became a site for contestation against the hegemonic ideologies of the New Order, offering an alternative form of literary resistance that operated outside of the direct political opposition (Feith, 2007). The blending of popular eroticism with social critique in his novels was not merely a literary technique; it was a deliberate attempt to engage with the ideological climate of the time and offer a critique of the New Order's moral and political order.

The significance of sexual narratives in Busye's work lies not only in their portrayal of desire and sexuality but also in their ability to generate critical engagement with the societal structures that govern these desires. By framing sexuality as both a personal and collective struggle, Busye's works challenge the notion that sexual narratives can be understood solely as private acts. Instead, they reveal how sexuality, as represented in literature, is shaped by broader social, cultural, and political forces.

Through the use of Walter Benjamin's theory of aesthetic politics and his concept of aura, we can examine how Busye's works resist the mechanical reproduction of dominant ideologies. Benjamin's notion of aura suggests that art retains its uniqueness and authenticity through its connection to history and context. In the case of Busye's works, his sexual narratives become a site of ideological intervention, creating an auratic experience that allows readers to engage with the text on a deeper, more critical level. By embedding these narratives within a broader historical and socio-political context, Busye's works transcend their surface-level eroticism and offer a space for the reader to question the dominant ideologies of the time.

2. Materials and Methods

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive research design, rooted in post-positivism, which emphasizes understanding complex phenomena through in-depth, contextual analysis. The research aims to examine the sexual narratives in Motinggo Busye's novels from the 1960s as a form of counter-political aesthetic resistance to the hegemonic ideologies of Indonesia's New Order regime. A qualitative approach is appropriate as it allows for an exploration of the underlying ideological dimensions of these sexual narratives, rather than quantifying content.

The primary texts for this study are eight novels by Motinggo Busye, including *Hari Ini Tak Ada Cinta* (1968), *Tante Maryati* (1967), *Sri Ayati* (1967), *Retno Lestari* (1968), *Dik Narti* (1968), *Perempuan Paris* (1967), *Affair di Kapal Minami Maru* (1969), and *Cross Mama* (1967). These novels were selected because of their explicit engagement with sexual narratives that simultaneously reflect and critique the socio-political climate of the 1960s in Indonesia. A purposive sampling strategy was used to select these novels, ensuring they represent Busye's thematic and narrative concerns during this critical period.

Data collection involves textual analysis of the novels to identify and interpret the sexual narratives, with a particular focus on how these narratives critique class, gender, and political ideologies. Additionally, secondary sources will provide the historical and social context of the 1960s in Indonesia, especially the rise of the New Order regime, the growth of capitalism, and the ideological shifts that occurred in the aftermath of Indonesia's independence.

Data analysis will follow a combination of Walter Benjamin's theory of aesthetic politics and Mieke Bal's narratological methods. The analysis will focus on the ideological interventions within the sexual narratives, examining how these interventions function as forms of resistance to dominant political ideologies. It will also explore the auratic effect of Busye's works, applying Benjamin's concept of aura to assess how the novels create a critical, politically charged experience for the reader. Furthermore, the study will apply Benjamin's idea of de-automation to examine how Busye's works resist the mechanical reproduction of dominant ideologies through the repetition of sexual tropes in mass-market literature.

The study is framed ethically to respect the authorship and context of Busye's works, focusing on the ideological implications rather than sensationalizing the sexual content. Secondary sources will be properly cited, ensuring academic integrity throughout the research process. This research is limited to the selected novels from the 1960s, and does not attempt to cover Busye's entire body of work or explore the broader cultural impact of erotic literature in Indonesia.

3. Results and Discussions

Motinggo Busye's sexual narratives function as deeply political interventions within the ideological structure of the New Order regime in Indonesia, which consolidated power in 1966 under President Soeharto. These works engage critically with the moral, political, and economic ideologies of the state, using sexuality as a means to reflect the contradictions inherent in the New Order's social, economic, and gender policies. The New Order regime, characterized by authoritarianism and militarism, emphasized national unity, political stability, and economic modernization, often at the expense of individual freedoms, especially in areas concerning personal desires and sexual autonomy (Feith, 2007; Heryanto, 2013). Busye's novels, particularly those from the late 1960s, offer an alternative vision by integrating sexual narratives into a broader critique of these hegemonic forces.

Under the New Order regime, the state not only controlled the political sphere but also sought to regulate private lives through the imposition of strict gender roles. The state prescribed a vision of the family as the foundation of social order, where women were confined to roles as mothers and wives, subordinate to their husbands and loyal to the state. The family unit was promoted as the bedrock of national stability, and women were expected to uphold moral values, especially sexual purity, within this structure (Sutrisno, 2016). Sexuality, therefore, was highly regulated, with the state propagating a moral framework that restricted sexual autonomy and promoted heteronormative, monogamous relationships, primarily between men and women within the bounds of marriage. The regime's promotion of this gendered moral framework was not just cultural but political, as it served to suppress dissent and maintain societal control.

Busye, however, resists these prescribed roles by presenting women as sexual agents who exercise autonomy and make independent choices based on desire. This subversion of the passive, domestic, and morally pure woman represented by the New Order regime's ideal is a form of ideological intervention. In novels such as *Tante Maryati* (1967) and *Sri Ayati* (1967), the female protagonists are not defined solely by their relationships to men or their roles as mothers. Instead, they actively engage in sexual relationships that are driven by personal desires, defying the expectations placed upon them by societal norms (Siregar, 2016; Sutrisno, 2014). These representations challenge the state's vision of gender and sexuality, offering a counter-narrative that allows for women's sexual agency and resistance to patriarchal authority.

Moreover, the gender dynamics in Busye's works also challenge the regime's broader social policies, which were deeply intertwined with militaristic and capitalist goals. The New Order promoted a militarized society, where the military was not only a political force but also a moral authority, responsible for enforcing both political loyalty and societal conformity. Under this regime,

sexual behavior was not merely a private matter but a matter of national concern. The military was tasked with regulating personal conduct, including sexual morality, through its pervasive influence over various state institutions, including schools, media, and public life (Heryanto, 2013; Wieringa, 1998).

In works like *Retno Lestari* (1968) and *Cross Mama* (1967), Busye critiques this militarization of morality. He portrays sexual autonomy as a form of rebellion against the military's rigid control over personal and public life. The central characters in these novels, particularly women, resist the militaristic control of their sexual lives. For instance, the protagonist of *Retno Lestari* asserts her sexual desires and engages in relationships that do not conform to the regimented norms enforced by the regime. This representation of sexual rebellion becomes a symbol of broader resistance against the New Order's authoritarian control. By presenting sexual agency as an act of defiance against militaristic control, Busye underscores the intersection of personal freedom and political struggle (Taufik, 2007; Wieringa, 1998).

Another critical ideological intervention Busye makes through his sexual narratives is the critique of the growing capitalist economy under the New Order. The regime's economic policies prioritized modernization and development, which included the rapid expansion of a consumer-driven middle class. This class became a key supporter of the regime's capitalist policies, but also experienced growing tensions between personal desires and the economic demands placed upon them. Busye's novels engage with this tension by portraying the sexual lives of middle-class characters who navigate their desires within the economic context of consumerism and social stratification.

In *Cross Mama* and *Dik Narti* (1968), for instance, Busye presents sexual relationships that are deeply entangled with the characters' economic aspirations. These novels portray sexual encounters that are transactional, where sex is not only a personal act but also a means of securing social and economic mobility. In these works, sexuality is commodified, with characters using sexual relationships as a means of achieving material success. This critique of the commodification of sex exposes the moral contradictions of the capitalist system, where personal and emotional relationships are increasingly shaped by economic motivations (Pramono et al., 2023; Sutrisno, 2016).

The commodification of sexuality in Busye's works mirrors the regime's own economic policies, which promoted the idea of a "modern" and "prosperous" society, but at the cost of social inequalities and alienation. By portraying sexual relationships as transactional, Busye critiques the regime's capitalist economic policies, revealing how these policies lead to the exploitation of both human labor and human desire. His works expose the alienation and moral decay that accompany rapid economic growth, especially for the middle class, who find themselves caught between the desires for personal fulfillment and the pressures of economic success. Busye's novels, therefore, do not simply critique the New Order's political repression but also provide a deep critique of the economic structures that sustain it (Siregar, 2016; Hermawan, 2016).

In Busye's sexual narratives, sex becomes a tool for questioning the moral and economic foundations of the New Order regime. Sexual acts in these works are not portrayed as isolated events, but as deeply interconnected with political, economic, and social struggles. Busye's characters do not simply act on sexual desires but are also shaped by the broader forces of capitalist commodification and military repression. These sexual narratives thus function as ideological interventions, challenging the regime's vision of gender roles, family structures, and economic success. They create a space for reflection on the contradictions and moral failings of the New Order regime, revealing how personal desires are shaped by—and in turn, shape—the political and economic systems of the time (Feith, 2007; Sutrisno, 2014).

Walter Benjamin's concept of *aesthetic politics* offers a critical framework for understanding how Busye's sexual narratives function as ideological interventions. According to Benjamin, under

totalitarian regimes, art becomes a tool of mass distraction, used to anesthetize the populace and legitimize the regime's control. Art, in this sense, loses its revolutionary potential and becomes a commodity, produced and consumed in a way that reinforces the status quo (Benjamin, 1968). However, for Benjamin, art's true power lies in its ability to disrupt this commodification and to awaken the critical consciousness of the masses. Art must resist being merely a spectacle and instead serve as a site of ideological critique, offering alternative visions of society (Benjamin, 1968; Bissell, 2023).

In Busye's works, sexuality functions as the vehicle for this kind of resistance. His novels do not present sex as a spectacle to be consumed passively but as a politically charged act that forces readers to engage with the contradictions of the New Order regime. By presenting sexual narratives that intertwine with critiques of capitalism, patriarchy, and militarism, Busye's works expose the moral and political contradictions of the New Order's ideological framework. These interventions are not just symbolic but are actively engaged with the social realities of the time, offering readers a chance to critically reflect on the forces that shape their personal and sexual identities (Taufik, 2007; Sutrisno, 2016).

Motinggo Busye's sexual narratives function as ideological interventions that challenge the hegemonic political, economic, and gender norms of the New Order regime. By portraying women as sexual agents, critiquing the commodification of sexuality under capitalism, and resisting the militarization of personal and sexual life, Busye's works offer an alternative vision of gender, sexuality, and politics. His novels resist the ideological control imposed by the state by embedding sexuality within a broader critique of the regime's power structures. Busye's sexual narratives, therefore, become a site for ideological resistance, providing a powerful counterpoint to the New Order's vision of a morally and politically regulated society (Benjamin, 1968; Wieringa, 1998).

The Auratic Effect in Busye's Works

Walter Benjamin's concept of *aura* offers an essential theoretical framework for understanding how Motinggo Busye's sexual narratives maintain their ideological potency and historical significance. In his 1936 essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Benjamin (1936) explains that the *aura* of a work of art is tied to its unique presence in time and space. The *aura* is shaped by its authenticity, its historical context, and the specific circumstances surrounding its creation. With mass production and mechanical reproduction, however, Benjamin argues that the *aura* is diminished, and art becomes commodified—produced in bulk and consumed passively without engaging the viewer critically (Benjamin, 1936).

In contrast to the mass commercialization of literature and art, Motinggo Busye's novels retain their *aura* by situating sexual narratives within a broader socio-political context, specifically addressing the New Order regime's ideologies. In a time when erotic literature became commodified and widely consumed, Busye's works resisted this trend by embedding sexual narratives with political meaning and social critique. The *aura* in Busye's works, then, is not just derived from eroticism itself, but from how these narratives challenge and resist the political, social, and moral structures of the New Order, allowing his works to retain their historical and ideological significance.

The Intersection of Desire and Politics: Retention of Aura in Busye's Sexual Narratives

Benjamin's (1936) argument about *aura* being connected to the historical and political context in which an artwork is created holds particular significance in the analysis of Busye's works. The *aura* of Busye's sexual narratives is maintained because they are not merely private expressions of physical desire but are deeply embedded within the socio-political struggles of 1960s Indonesia, a

time when the country was experiencing significant political upheaval and the rise of authoritarianism under President Soeharto's New Order. During this time, the Indonesian state imposed strict gender roles and family structures, which were designed to promote stability and control over the population (Feith, 2007; Sutrisno, 2014). The New Order government, with its military backing, sought to regulate both public and private life, including sexual and moral behavior.

Busye's novels, particularly *Tante Maryati* (1967) and *Sri Ayati* (1967), present sexual narratives that directly challenge the gendered and moral codes enforced by the regime. The female characters in these novels are portrayed not as passive objects of male desire but as active agents of their own sexual and emotional lives. In doing so, they subvert the gender roles prescribed by the New Order, which sought to enforce the ideal of women as subservient, family-oriented figures (Siregar, 2016; Wieringa, 1998). Through these subversions, Busye's works expose the contradictions within the regime's moral framework and create an *auratic* experience that encourages readers to reflect on the ideological constraints imposed by the stat.

In addition, Benjamin's notion of *aesthetic politics* offers insight into how Busye's sexual narratives critique the New Order's ideological dominance. Art, according to Benjamin, must resist becoming a tool of ideological manipulation under totalitarian regimes. Instead, it should engage with the political realities of the time and offer a space for resistance (Benjamin, 1936; Bissell, 2023). Busye's works, by embedding sexual narratives within the broader political and economic contexts, offer a critique of the New Order's attempts to regulate and control sexuality. In *Tante Maryati*, for example, sexual autonomy becomes an act of political resistance, where the protagonist's rejection of the state's prescribed morality challenges the ideological control exerted by the regime (Hermawan, 2016; Sutrisno, 2014).

The Role of Historical Context in the Aura of Busye's Sexual Narratives

The historical and political context in which an artwork is created plays a critical role in shaping its *aura*. For Benjamin (1936), the *aura* of an artwork is rooted in its connection to the specific time and place of its creation. In the case of Busye's works, the *aura* is intricately linked to the historical moment of the 1960s in Indonesia, a period marked by the consolidation of the New Order regime. The regime sought to impose order through the regulation of personal and sexual conduct, with a focus on maintaining traditional family structures and moral codes. Women's sexual behavior, in particular, was under the scrutiny of state-sanctioned moral authorities (Heryanto, 2013).

Busye's works retain their *aura* by critiquing this repressive moral framework. In *Sri Ayati* and *Retno Lestari* (1968), the sexual autonomy of the female characters is presented as a form of resistance against the authoritarian control exerted by the New Order. These characters' actions—asserting their sexual desires and rejecting the confines of traditional gender roles—become acts of ideological defiance. The historical specificity of the 1960s, in which personal and sexual freedom was restricted by state control, is integral to understanding why these works retain their *aura*. The *aura* arises from the way Busye's novels connect personal desire to the political realities of Indonesia under the New Order, creating a unique, politically charged reading experience for the audience (Pramono et al., 2023; Wieringa, 1998).

Moreover, the tension between modernization and tradition during the New Order period adds another layer to the *aura* of Busye's works. The New Order regime, while promoting capitalist economic policies and modernizing the nation, did so within the framework of traditional values. The state's promotion of economic development was accompanied by the imposition of moral values that upheld the traditional family model. This dichotomy—between modern economic practices and traditional moral structures—created social tensions that Busye's works explored through the sexual narratives of his characters. By placing sexuality within this historical context,

Busye's novels provide a critique of the contradictions of modernity and the regime's attempts to reconcile modern economic growth with traditional values (Sutrisno, 2014; Bissell, 2023)

The Mechanization of Sexuality and Resistance to Commodification

A critical aspect of the *aura* in Busye's works is his resistance to the commodification of sexuality, which was widespread in the erotic literature of the 1960s. The rise of consumerism under the New Order regime resulted in the commodification of many aspects of life, including sexuality. Mass-produced erotic literature often reduced sexuality to a commodity to be consumed without ideological reflection or political engagement (Hermawan, 2016; Sutrisno, 2016). This commodification of sexual desire reflects the broader capitalist logic of the New Order, which subordinated personal desires to economic motives.

Busye resists this commodification by embedding sexual acts within the broader social and political contexts of the time. In *Cross Mama* (1967) and *Dik Narti* (1968), sexuality is presented not as a private, isolated experience but as part of a larger ideological struggle. In these novels, characters' sexual relationships are intertwined with their social and economic aspirations, reflecting the capitalist commodification of human desires. However, Busye goes beyond merely depicting the commodification of sexuality; he critiques it. By presenting sex as transactional and connected to social mobility, Busye critiques the ways in which capitalism exploits human emotions and relationships, particularly for women who are often forced to navigate their desires within the confines of a capitalist system (Pramono et al., 2023; Siregar, 2016).

Through this resistance to commodification, Busye's works retain their *aura*. His novels are not merely products for consumption but texts that demand engagement and critical reflection. The characters' sexual acts, embedded within a critique of the capitalist economic system, become a means for readers to reflect on the ways in which their desires and relationships are shaped by broader social forces. The *aura* of Busye's works is, therefore, not only a product of their erotic content but also a result of their ideological engagement with the commodification of sex and the critique of capitalist structures (Hermawan, 2016; Sutrisno, 2014).

The Political and Emotional Charge of Sexual Narratives

Finally, the emotional complexity of Busye's sexual narratives further enhances their *aura*. Benjamin (1936) contends that *aura* is linked to the emotional and intellectual charge that a work of art evokes. In Busye's novels, sexual acts are not presented as isolated moments of physical pleasure; they are fraught with emotional and ideological weight. These sexual relationships are embedded within the characters' broader struggles with the political and social structures that define their lives. The tension between personal desire and political constraints creates an emotional depth that adds to the *aura* of these works.

For example, in *Tante Maryati*, the protagonist's sexual relationships are laden with emotional turmoil, as they reflect not only personal longing but also the social and political conflicts of the time. The sexual acts become symbolic of the broader ideological struggles occurring within Indonesian society. Busye's portrayal of emotional and sexual complexity offers a unique *auratic* experience, one that goes beyond the mere depiction of physical desire and engages the reader in a deeper reflection on the political and moral conflicts at play (Sutrisno, 2016; Wieringa, 1998).

Benjamin's Aesthetic Politics and Busye's Sexual Narratives

Walter Benjamin's theory of *aesthetic politics*, particularly his concept of art's capacity for ideological resistance, provides a robust framework for understanding how Motinggo Busye's sexual narratives operate as political interventions within the context of Indonesia's New Order regime. Benjamin's concept of *aesthetic politics* suggests that art when connected to its historical and socio-political context can serve as a form of resistance to totalitarian control. Art in totalitarian regimes, according to Benjamin (1936), often becomes a tool of mass distraction, serving to pacify and legitimize the ideological control of the state. However, art can also resist this pacification by critically engaging with the ideological structures it seeks to critique.

Benjamin's distinction between *aestheticization of politics* and *politicization of aesthetics* is crucial for understanding how Busye's sexual narratives function as a form of resistance. The *aestheticization of politics*, as seen in totalitarian regimes, transforms political issues into mere spectacles, reducing them to entertainment and aligning them with state propaganda (Benjamin, 1936). In contrast, the *politicization of aesthetics* is a process by which art retains its revolutionary potential by engaging with social and political struggles. Busye's works, particularly those from the 1960s, serve as examples of the *politicization of aesthetics* as they embed sexual narratives within a broader critique of the socio-political conditions under the New Order regime. By doing so, Busye's novels resist the state's use of culture for ideological control, providing readers with a space to critically reflect on the regime's repressive forces (Sutrisno, 2014; Heryanto, 2013).

Art and Political Resistance: Busye's Subversion of Sexuality

Benjamin's theory of *aesthetic politics* is grounded in the idea that art can have a transformative, revolutionary potential when it challenges dominant political ideologies. In the case of Busye's sexual narratives, this potential is realized through the subversion of normative sexual representations promoted by the New Order regime. The regime, backed by military power, sought to regulate not only the political behavior of citizens but also their sexual conduct. State policies promoted a traditional family structure, where the roles of women were strictly confined to that of mother and wife, while men were positioned as breadwinners and patriarchal figures (Feith, 2007). Women's sexuality, in particular, was heavily regulated, with state propaganda encouraging women to uphold sexual purity and moral values within the family unit.

Busye's sexual narratives intervene in this regime-imposed moral order by presenting women as sexually autonomous and active participants in their desires. In *Tante Maryati* (1967) and *Sri Ayati* (1967), Busye's female protagonists are portrayed not as passive, morally pure women but as complex characters whose sexual relationships and desires are central to their emotional and political identities. In doing so, Busye's works challenge the regime's normative gender and sexual roles, offering alternative representations of women's sexual autonomy that resist the state's moral and political control.

Through these sexual narratives, Busye politicizes the depiction of sex, transforming it from a private, apolitical act into a public form of resistance. The act of asserting sexual autonomy becomes an ideological intervention against the authoritarian control exercised by the New Order. By using sexuality as a medium for resistance, Busye's novels engage with Benjamin's *aesthetic politics*, as they refuse to treat sexuality as a passive or apolitical spectacle. Instead, Busye's works encourage readers to critically engage with the political realities of sexual oppression and to reflect on the ways in which state power shapes personal lives (Sutrisno, 2014; Hermawan, 2016).

The Role of Aestheticization in Busye's Works

Benjamin's concept of the *aestheticization of politics* describes the process by which art becomes aligned with the political objectives of totalitarian regimes, where art is reduced to a spectacle that serves to legitimize and reinforce state control. Under the New Order, the regime heavily regulated cultural production, particularly literature, to ensure that it conformed to state ideologies. Art and literature were used as tools to foster nationalist sentiments, suppress dissent, and promote a unified vision of society that aligned with the regime's values of stability, control, and economic growth (Feith, 2007; Wieringa, 1998).

Busye's works, however, do not comply with the regime's aestheticization of politics. Rather than aligning with state-sponsored ideologies, Busye's sexual narratives present sex as a site of resistance and critique. In novels such as *Retno Lestari* (1968) and *Dik Narti* (1968), sexual autonomy is presented as a form of defiance against the state's moral framework. These sexual relationships are not depicted as passive acts of gratification; instead, they are imbued with political significance. By framing sexual autonomy within a political and social critique, Busye's novels resist the aestheticization of politics that was promoted by the New Order regime. Instead of being a spectacle that reinforces state power, Busye's sexual narratives become a space for ideological reflection, allowing the reader to question the moral and political frameworks that define sexual relationships (Hermawan, 2016; Sutrisno, 2014).

By politicizing the representation of sex, Busye's works align with Benjamin's call for the *politicization of aesthetics*. Benjamin (1936) argued that art must resist becoming a tool of ideological control by totalitarian regimes. Instead, art should engage with the social and political struggles of the time and offer a critique of dominant ideologies. Busye's novels, by presenting sexual narratives as both personal and political, fulfill this mandate by using sexuality as a form of resistance. Through this process, Busye's works retain their revolutionary potential, serving as a counterpoint to the regime's attempt to control both public and private spheres (Taufik, 2007; Sutrisno, 2014).

The Auratic Power of Sexual Narratives in Busye's Works

For Benjamin, the *aura* of an artwork is closely tied to its authenticity and its connection to a specific historical moment. In the context of Busye's works, the *aura* is maintained through the integration of sexual narratives into a broader political critique of the New Order. The authenticity of Busye's works comes from their rootedness in the historical, political, and social context of 1960s Indonesia, a time when the New Order regime sought to regulate not only political expression but also personal desires. The regime's control over sexuality, particularly women's sexuality, was part of a broader effort to assert national stability and moral order (Feith, 2007; Heryanto, 2013).

In *Tante Maryati*, *Sri Ayati*, and *Cross Mama* (1967), the *aura* of the sexual narratives is derived from the way in which these works reflect and critique the broader social and political conditions of the time. The sexual acts in these novels are not simply private encounters; they are imbued with ideological meaning that challenges the regime's moral framework. The sexual autonomy presented in these works critiques the regime's authoritarian control over personal lives, offering an alternative vision of sexual freedom and agency. This ideological resistance is what gives these works their *aura* the emotional and political depth that resonates with readers and encourages them to engage critically with the text (Hermawan, 2016; Sutrisno, 2014).

The *aura* of Busye's works also emerges from their ability to challenge the commodified representations of sex in mainstream literature. During the 1960s, much of the erotic literature available in Indonesia was mass-produced and consumed passively by the public. These works presented sexuality as a spectacle, devoid of political or ideological significance. Busye's sexual narratives, however, resist this commodification by embedding sex within a broader critique of capitalism, patriarchy, and militarism. By presenting sexual acts as acts of ideological resistance,

Busye's works retain their *aura*, offering a space for critical engagement that challenges the dominant political and social ideologies of the time (Bissell, 2023; Sutrisno, 2014).

Sexuality as Ideological Resistance: A Revolutionary Potential

Benjamin's idea of art as a form of ideological resistance is particularly relevant in understanding how Busye's sexual narratives function as acts of political defiance. In the context of the New Order regime, where sexuality was highly regulated and moral codes were enforced, Busye's works present sexual autonomy as a form of resistance against the state's control. By portraying characters who assert their sexual desires and make choices that challenge the state's prescribed gender roles, Busye's works create a space for the politicization of sexuality. The characters' resistance to patriarchal and military control through their sexual lives becomes a political act in itself, embodying Benjamin's idea of the politicization of aesthetics (Siregar, 2016; Sutrisno, 2014).

This resistance to state control through sexual autonomy transforms the *aura* of Busye's works into a revolutionary potential. Sexual narratives in Busye's novels are not simply vehicles for escapism or pleasure; they are politically charged acts that invite readers to question the ideological systems that shape their personal desires and relationships. By situating sexual desire within the broader context of political and social struggle, Busye's works engage with Benjamin's idea of art as a space for ideological reflection and resistance. In this way, Busye's sexual narratives resist the commodification of sex and instead become powerful tools for political engagement and critique (Pramono et al., 2023; Sutrisno, 2014).

4. Conclusion

In examining Motinggo Busye's sexual narratives, this study demonstrates the ways in which his works transcend the conventions of popular erotic literature by embedding political, social, and ideological critiques within the realm of sexuality. Busye's portrayal of women as sexually autonomous and actively engaged in their desires directly challenges the New Order's prescribed gender roles, where women were expected to uphold traditional family values and moral purity. Through his sexual narratives, Busye offers a radical reimagining of sexuality, one that resists the state's efforts to regulate not only political behavior but also personal desires.

Central to this study is the application of Walter Benjamin's concept of aesthetic politics. By politicizing the representation of sexuality, Busye's works resist the regime's commodification of sex and instead present sexual autonomy as a form of ideological resistance. The aura of his works, as outlined by Benjamin, is retained precisely because these sexual narratives do not exist in isolation but are deeply connected to the historical and political struggles of 1960s Indonesia. Busye's ability to connect personal desire with larger socio-political forces creates an auratic experience that encourages readers to critically reflect on the ideological structures governing their lives and desires.

Furthermore, by de-automating the repetitive sexual tropes found in mainstream literature, Busye opens up space for critical engagement with the commodified representations of sexuality promoted by the New Order. His works create a counter-narrative to the state's moral framework, providing alternative visions of gender, sexuality, and class that challenge the regime's ideological control. Busye's sexual narratives thus serve as a form of resistance that engages with Benjamin's notion of aesthetic politics, using eroticism not as a spectacle but as a politically charged tool for social critique.

In conclusion, Motinggo Busye's works remain a vital example of how literature can engage with and subvert the dominant ideologies of a repressive regime. Through his sexual narratives, Busye creates a space for ideological reflection and resistance, maintaining the aura of his works as

politically engaged texts that offer a critique of both the New Order's capitalist policies and its patriarchal control over personal lives. His novels invite readers to engage with the deeper ideological tensions of their time, offering a nuanced critique of the intersections between desire, power, and politics in a society under authoritarian control.

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