

QUESTIONING WOMEN'S FACTUALITY IN TRINITY'S *THE NAKED TRAVELER*

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Abstract

Women travel writing covers women's experience of enjoying their independence, learning from the real experience, and exercising the social influence as well as the authority they have. However, women's travel writings are often not considered worth analyzing as they are styled in a way that tends to be like fiction than a factual report of actual travels. This paper's objective is to analyze Trinity's travel writing, *The Naked Traveler*, in the light of post-truth. It is argued that Trinity's travel writing is very touristic and is lacked contemplations but her writing is, in a way or another, typical of travel writings. On one hand, Trinity's travel experiences indeed cannot represent Indonesian women's experience of traveling since most Indonesian women are not privileged to having access to domestic and overseas travel. In her travel writing, Trinity simplifies the process of planning and executing her travel, thus overlooking the financial limitation and cultural restrictions often faced by Indonesian women to travel. On the other hand, Trinity's lack of in-depth description and observation in her travel writing should not be regarded as her lack of credibility to present her actual travels. It should be seen as her way of stimulating Indonesian women's desire to travel, the same aim targeted by many other travel writings.

Keywords – women, travel writing, factuality, Indonesia

Introduction

Trinity's *The Naked Traveler* can be categorized as travel writing as it comprises writings on the journeys Trinity did (Traveler, 2007). Travel writing is a type of writing containing the experiences of the travelers on the trip they go (Sherman, 2002, p. 30). The way travel writing presented has changed over time. At present, it is written in various forms such as letters, reports, sketches, plays and poems, and essays. As far as the end of the sixteenth century, Sherman (2002) mentions, (Sherman, 2002)travel writing was commonly presented as

a report with much information added, to mention some, the chronology of the journey, the events witnessed during the travel, and the geography of the place visited. All elements were presented as ethnographic observations. Travel writing can be narrated in first-person point of view or third-person point of view. The choice depends on the focus of the travelers themselves, the author of the writing, or the experiences they undergo.

Travel writing is usually written as a personal narrative. It depicts the holiday destinations and the activities people do in both local

and overseas destinations. Activities might include sightseeing, consuming the local beverages, tasting local food, shopping, visiting favorite places, and other specific place related activities such as trekking in the mountainous area and sunbathing on the beach.

Among her many works, *The Naked Traveler* is special as it is Trinity's first collection of travel writings. The writings shared in this book were previously uploaded in Trinity's blog that bears the same name, *The Naked Traveler* (Trinity, 2005). Those writings can still be found in the blog. I particularly chose this book because the book is a personal narrative that is narrated in first-person point of view. Thus, the book contains self-constructed writing of one's experience.

I have my own reason for choosing Trinity's work as an object of my study, I chose the work because Trinity is a woman writer. Since early on, women's travel writing is considered as lack of factuality so it is not worth to be regarded a reliable report (Sherman, 2002). The opinion roots in the society's beliefs of women's stereotyped traits. Women are traditionally regarded as domestic creatures who rarely move outside their household. Thus, traveling is not an activity associated with women. Other than that, Trinity's book also attracts me because I personally think that Trinity's book offers fantasy and dreams for most Indonesian women. Financial limitation and cultural constraint are

two factors that often hinder Indonesian women from going traveling, particularly traveling overseas.

In the following discussion, I analyze Trinity's *The Naked Traveler* from post-truth point of view. The question tried to answer is whether Trinity's travel writing is factual or not and whether it is just a typical way of writing about traveling regardless of the writer's gender.

Methodology

To analyze the book, the method I chose was qualitative content analysis. The analysis is instrumental in studying the meaning of the media (van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001). It enables me to draw a general conclusion to answer the questions raised. In doing the analysis, I systematically did a close reading of the texts (Krippendorff, 2004). After that, I interpreted and rearticulated the texts into new narratives that are critical and analytical. Particularly for this study, I examined Trinity's *The Naked Traveler* book as a document. I made in-depth interpretation of the texts by examining various modes of information.

Since this study is about the factuality in women's travel writings, I used the feminist theories to make better interpretation and analysis. The feminist theories I employed were theories proposed by De Beauvoir and Ritcher who both were cited in Guerin *et al.* (Guerin, Labor, Morgan, Reesman, & Willingham, 2005, p. 223-227).

They say that since men more often write about women than the reverse, women are naturally defined by men, including the idea of femininity and masculinity that are more cultural than natural. The definition may lead to a false understanding of the women in reality and form stereotypical representations that reflect gender inequality in society. In short, the feminist approach used here helps to find out and analyze women's experiences.

Below are the details of the primary source:

Type/Genre : Travel Writing
Title : The Naked Traveler
Author : Trinity
Publisher : C Publishing
Year of Publication : 2007
City : Yogyakarta
Page : 153 pages

Finding and Discussion

The Naked Traveler is a collection of Trinity's journals of the travel she did for several years. In her book, she shared her experiences in the domestic (Indonesia) and overseas places she visited. In her book, Trinity also gives tips and tricks to do budget traveling as a backpacker. Trinity started writing her journals in a blog with the same name, *The Naked Traveler*. Her writings capture the interest of many readers, and she has followers coming from different kinds of backgrounds: writers, students, teachers, police officers, and many others. In turn, Trinity gives inspirations to her

followers to write their own travel journals that she helped to publish later as a book entitled *The Naked Traveler Anthology*.

The discussion on Trinity's book *The Naked Traveler* in the article is divided into two parts. The first part is how travel is represented by Trinity in her book, *The Naked Traveler*, and the second part is the discussion of whether the representations are factual or not.

The representation of travel in Trinity's *The Naked Traveler*

In the book, travel is represented as something easy as in daily routines. Look at the excerpt of Trinity's chapter opening in the book below.

Excerpt 1

Kalau Anda terbang long flight dan maunya bayar murah, harusnya Anda pernah terpaksa menginap di airport. Apalagi Jakarta jarang jadi kota asal untuk terbang direct flight karena hampir semua pesawat yang menuju ke Eropa atau Amerika... [When you are flying long flight and you want to a cheap ticket, you must have had the experience of staying overnight at the airport. Especially then Jakarta is rarely the origin of the direct flight to Europe or United States ...]. (p.10)

In this particular excerpt, the deliberate choice of using "must have had" in the sentence, "you must have had the experience of staying overnight at the airport" carries the idea that everybody "must have had" the experience of traveling abroad

and staying in the airport without exception. It contains the understanding that everybody, or almost everybody, can fly including flying the long flight to other continents. Thus, travel is easy as it is accessible to everybody.

The second excerpt implies the same idea that traveling abroad is accessible to all Indonesians.

Excerpt 2

Penyakit paling klasik kalau traveling di negara barat adalah sembelit atau susah buang air besar. Mungkin karena makanannya yang kurang kuah, kurang bumbu, kurang sayur dan buah. [The most classical illness when traveling in the western country is suffering from constipation. It is probably the result of western food that lacks soup, spices, vegetables and fruit. (p. 55)

Here, in this excerpt, the word, "classical" attached to the word illness, like the first excerpt, the word implies the idea that the illness is something usual, so not very special as it happens many times already.

Another excerpt that echoes a similar idea is the following excerpt.

Excerpt 3

Naik pesawat terbang jenis Fokker, Boeing, atau Airbus, dengan kapasitas tempat duduk lebih dari 100-an orang sudah biasa. Pernahkah Anda terbang naik pesawat non komersial atau bahkan

naik pesawat kecil berbalik-balik? Wah, seru...[Flying on a Fokker, Boeing or Airbus with the capacity of more than 100 seats is something usual. Have you been flying on non-commercial flight or even flying a small propeller plane? Wow, it is epic]. (p.24)

Again, excerpt 3 contains the word "something usual" when talking about people traveling by plane. It looks like Trinity wants to claim that traveling by plane is common and affordable for all Indonesians. That all Indonesians are in the habit of traveling with different kinds of big planes like Fokker, Boeing, or Airbus, so the traveling experience is only exceptional when it involves a small unique plane.

The last example in the discussion that travel is easy in Trinity's representation is in excerpt 4 below:

Excerpt 4

Seperti kebanyakan airport di dunia yang mesti berlokasi agak melipir di luar kota, transportasi dari dan ke airport adalah penting. Bila Anda seorang turis bule yang pertama kali ke Indonesia dan tiba di airport Soekarno-Hatta, Anda... [Like most airport in the world that is (always) located in the suburban, transportation to and from the airport is vital. If you are a tourist coming from western country in their initial visit to Indonesia and arrives at Soekarno-Hatta, you ...] (p. 23).

In this excerpt, Trinity gives the impression that she has been visiting many different airports; the phrase "most airports" implies the underlying idea. The tone of the text is so light that gives an idea that everybody else fully knows that airports are usually in the suburban area, very far away from the downtown area.

All in all, the four excerpts above have the same idea that traveling is very easy that it becomes everybody's business. The phrases "must have had", "something usual", and "most" create the impression of ordinariness.

Other than giving the idea that traveling is easy, Trinity's book also promotes the idea that traveling is fun. Instead of using serious and critical tone, I think it is Trinity's personal choice to present her journeys lightly. She puts herself as a spectator of an event than let herself enjoy the moment no matter how bad the moment is. The example can be seen in the excerpt that cited Trinity's travel to Cyprus, where she was misled by the no-visa policy found on a website about Cyprus. As a result, she was deported from Cyprus as she, her mother, and her friend failed to show their visa to enter the country. Here, Trinity viewed the whole stressful occasion lightly.

Excerpt 5

Alhasil kami semua digeret ke sebuah ruangan, dikerubutin orang-orang berseragam, diinterogasi ini itu, lamaaa banget. Kami bertiga

hanya menunduk sambil dituding-tuding, padahal kami berusaha setengah mati menahan tawa saking begonya kejadian ini. Akhirnya diputuskan bahwa kami semua harus segera dipulangkan ke negara kami masing-masing! Waduh! [As a result, we were dragged to a room and surrounded by uniformed officers, interrogated this and that, which took forever. Three of us stared down at the floor while the officers were pointing their fingers at us, in fact we tried hard not to laugh at our ultimate stupidity. Finally, they decided to deport us to our own country! O no!] (p. 53).

It is shown in the excerpt that even when she was in a depressing situation, in the danger of being deported and losing all the money spent, Trinity managed to smooth it over and turn it into something fun. Trinity even wrote that she, her mother, and her friend tried to hide their laugh while the officers were interrogating them in the immigration office. Trinity portrays the whole situation amusing as a holiday should be.

That everything that happened in the traveling can be easily handled and managed is also shown in excerpt 6 when Trinity recalled her experience while traveling to different countries in Europe. She gives tips to the readers that to survive the travel, someone only needs to find people who can speak English, the so-called international language that is used and known by many people, and make friends with them.

Excerpt 7

Di Eropa yang multi bahasa, saya tinggal mensensitifkan pendengaran dan mulai mencari arah suara yang berbahasa Inggris. Dimulai dari berkenalan dengan seorang cewek Inggris yang funky, lalu saya berteriak dengan bossy-nya “*Anybody who speaks English sit here please!*”, jadilah saya berkumpul dengan 3 orang cewek lain berkebangsaan Amerika. Kami berlima pun *traveling* bersama keliling Italia, bisa *share* makan pizza di restoran, bisa *share* menginap di bekas istana tua yang cantik di pinggir pantai, bisa *share* naik taksi, bisa ngegosipin orang lagi! [In the multi-lingual Europe, I only need to sensitize my hearing and scan the place to find the source of English speaking people. I started to introduce myself to a funky English girl, then I shouted in a bossy tone, “*Anybody who speaks English sit here please!*”, so at the end I was together with 3 other girls from America. Five of us traveled together around Italy, shared pizza in the restaurant, shared room in a palace turn into hotel in the seaside, shared the taxi, and gossip about others!] (p. 74)

In this excerpt, Trinity talks about the fun activities done in doing the traveling. She can have new friends to travel together, shared food, shared room, shared transport, and even shared gossip. Traveling in Trinity’s context is traveling for leisure, away from the daily routines

of work and domestic hassles. In Trinity’s book, traveling can be seen as a liberation for women, an escape from those daily routines (Rojek, 1991, p. 12-133).

In some chapters of this book, Trinity detaches herself totally from her daily routines as if her life is only about travel. Whereas in some other chapters, Trinity talks about her desire to get away from her office work.

Excerpt 8

Daripada pantat saya nempel terus di kursi kantor di tengah sumpeknya kota Jakarta dengan langitnya yang berwarna abu-abu, lebih baik saya disuruh ke luar kota untuk *meeting* kek, *survey* kek, *conference* kek, mengurus *event* kek, disuruh ngangkut barang juga saya bersedia [Instead of getting stuck in my office in the middle of stuffy grey skied Jakarta, I would rather be sent out of town for a meeting, a survey, a conference, taking care of an event, or even delivering some goods.] (p.145).

The excerpt shows that in this book, Trinity views traveling as an escape from the daily routines of public work rather than an escape from domestic works. For Trinity, traveling even when it is for business is liberating. As for the escape from the domestic sphere of women, since Trinity is single, she never mentions her domestic hassles in the chapters.

Traveling to escape daily routines is one of the reasons women do traveling. Other women’s reasons

to travel include to escape from society's pressure, to find a way to prove themselves, and to experience pleasure in the unexpected during the journey (Bassnett, 2002, p. 231). In fulfilling the reasons, women travel not only as an escapist like Trinity but also, as said by Bassnett (2002, p. 231), someone's wife, a diplomat, a scientist, or a missionary.

Factuality in Trinity's *The Naked Traveler*

Western women have written about their travel for many years now. Mills (1991) mentions that Mary Kingsley wrote *Travels in West Africa* that was released in 1897's publication, and Nina Mazuchelli wrote *The Indian Alps and How We Crossed Them* that was published in 1876. The publications show that women have been able to write their travel experiences for so long. Smith (2001) argues that traveling is very crucial in women's life since it enables women to be independent, to get an education outside schools, and to be able to measure their social influence and authority.

However, travel writing by women was not thought of as a quality reading in the past because it is claimed to lack the quality of a factual report of a real travel (Sherman, 2002, p. 31). Women's travel writing which tends to adopt the style of a fiction can not serve the "...chronological narrative movements and events with geographic and ethnographic observation" (Sherman, 2002, p. 30) much needed to exist in a travel

writing. When the same expectation is demanded from Trinity's *The Naked Traveler*, then the book fails to be a qualified travel writing book.

Trinity's choice of light descriptions of her travel experience does not meet the quality of "the geographic and ethnographic observation." Trinity tends to write her recollection and does fewer reflections of her travel experiences. One of the examples is her recollection of the toilet in Soekarno-Hatta International Airport, as shown by the excerpt below:

Excerpt 9

Baru-baru ini Soekarno-Hatta International Airport (bandara internasional bo!) baru merenovasi toiletnya. Memang lebih bagus dengan tegel dan dinding keramik yang baru dan berwarna, sabun cair sudah ada di setiap wastafel, bahkan ada pengering tangan yang berfungsi. Tapiii...dengan ruangan seluas itu, hanya ada 2 – 3 bilik saja. Di dalamnya...yah, sama aja bo'ong! Tetap kotor, becek, bau, dengan sampah berceceran, dan tidak ada tissue. ... Hiii! [Recently Soekarno-Hatta International Airport (it is an international airport, guys!) has just renovated its toilets. They look better with new and colorful ceramic tiles and walls, liquid soap in every basin, and the functional hand dryer. But...the wide space is occupied with only 2-3 cubicles. Inside the cubicle... oh my... it is kidding me. It is still dirty,

wet, smelly with lots of trash, and no tissue. ... Yuck!] (p. 14)

Trinity's recollection of the toilet condition in Indonesian airports stops with the word "yuck!" She does not go further to observe the reasons such condition exists. She misses giving a more comprehensive view of the Indonesian practice of using the toilet. It is not that Indonesians do not care about toilet cleanliness or hygiene, but it might be the result of different practices in using a toilet. Indonesians are not used to dry-toilet because they need water to clean themselves after they do the "business." This practice is also religion-related for some people. In short, ending the paragraph with the word "yuck" is like casting a personal judgment without giving ample explanation for the readers to understand the situation.

A similar situation can be seen in the excerpt when Trinity experiences discrimination during her travel in Edinburg because she is not white.

Excerpt 10

Giliran saya pun tiba. Dengan sopannya saya menanyakan paket *tour* sambil menunjuk brosur. Begitu saya memandang si ibu, hah, si ibu juga memandang langit-langit sambil berkata dengan intonasi datar, "*No tour today.*" Saya menanyakan lagi paket *tour* lain yang juga ke Loch Ness. Dengan gaya yang sama si ibu juga menjawab, "*No,*" dengan nada yang tambah tinggi. Saking kesalnya saya menunjuk beberapa

paket *tour* yang makin lama makin mahal, penasaran sama reaksi si ibu keparat ini. Dia pun menjawab dengan nada yang tinggi, "*I said NO tour today!*" [And my turn came. I politely requested the tour package by pointing at the brochure. When I looked at the lady, o what, she also stared at the ceiling and spoke flatly, "*No tour today.*" I asked her other tour package to Lock Ness. She replied with the same style, "*No,*" and raised her voice. Since I was upset, I showed her some packages with higher and higher price, just to test the reaction of the evil lady. She replied with a high tone voice, "*I said NO tour today!*"] (p. 48)

In this excerpt, Trinity recollects her experience when she was served by a white lady in the travel office who flatly ignored and declined to give her the service she requested. The excerpt above is then followed by:

Excerpt 11

Saya pun ngumpet di balik rak brosur, pengen tahu apa yang akan dilakukan si ibu terhadap 1 cewek bule yang mengantri di belakang saya. Hah? Raut muka si ibu tiba-tiba berubah menjadi sangat manis dan penuh senyum, menunjuk-nunjuk brosur, menerangkan tempat-tempat yang akan dikunjungi, dan akhirnya cewek bule ini membayar *tour* yang sama seperti yang saya inginkan! Darah saya langsung mendidih. Apalagi antrian berikutnya yang semuanya bule dilayani dengan baik dan ramah, ada eye contact... [Then, I hid behind a

shelf, just to know what the lady would do to the white girl queuing behind me. Huh? The lady's expression transformed into a sweet and smiley face, pointing at the brochure, explaining the places to visit, and finally this white girl paid for the same tour I requested! My blood was boiling. All the more, the white people in the queue were all served well and kindly, there was an eye contact...] (p. 48)

Trinity found out that the lady in the tour office was discriminating her because she was not white, an experience that cannot be taken lightly. It is unfortunate for the readers that Trinity ends this chapter by writing that she cut her stay in Scotland and decided to get back to London. She did not try to explain whether discrimination was prevalent in Scotland or what makes the lady discriminate the people of color. People who live in a homogenous culture all their life may not be easy to accept differences, so a short explanation of what consists of Scotland community will provide a better understanding of why the incident happened.

Trinity's choice of representing traveling as something easy and fun and her choice of writing in a light and fun tone may misrepresent the whole experience of travel itself. Her choice of word and phrases may represent the general understanding that all people without exception are in the habit of

traveling so that they "must have had" the same experience and do activities that are considered "something usual" in the journey. In the latter example, Trinity's descriptions about the toilet and the discriminating incident are indeed written as a recollection of her journey, without providing any contemplation of what or why the fact or the incident happened. Trinity's travel writing is indeed, very touristic that may misrepresent Indonesians and Scottish.

Another misrepresentation is on Indonesian women's access to travel. Trinity's *The Naked Traveler* depicts Trinity's ability to travel without any financial restrictions and/or cultural or even religion-related limitations. More Indonesian women are indeed in the line of paid work. The work makes women become financially independent. However, the income from their work is not always enough to support traveling for leisure, especially overseas traveling. Other than that traveling is not the priority for most Indonesians even when they have the money (Riyandari, 2013). House, car, motorcycles, and the preparation to have a family are more common priorities for Indonesians.

Additionally, traveling is not always easy for Indonesian women because of cultural and religion-related limitations. For example, single women in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, are culturally limited to travel to protect them from expressing sexual desire (Bennett, 2005). Even more, mature

professional single women should contact the family on a regular basis. Concerning religion-related limitation, Muslim women, who are commonly attached to the duty to home and family, can travel overseas to work and to do holiday, although in some cases they need to be accompanied by their *muhrim* (father, brother, uncle, or other male relatives) (White, 2006). In short, Trinity's ability to do domestic and overseas travel is a dream and fantasy for most Indonesian women.

In general, Trinity's travel writing is real as it is based on her travel. So, in a way, her depiction of the experiences is actual. However, Trinity's travel writing is not always factual because it only emphasizes the easiness and fun of traveling, thus misses to address the financial constraints and cultural and/or religion-related limitations experiences by Indonesian women. The offer of dream and fantasy in Trinity's book is not wrong, it is just like what Malatesta said about travel writing as cited by Hooper (2020), "...exaggerations had an essential role to play in stimulating people's imaginations - and their desire to travel."

Conclusions

Analyzing Trinity's *The Naked Traveler*, I found that the chapters in the travel writing mostly dedicate to portray traveling as something easy and something fun. It is concluded that Trinity's style of writing that recollects her travel experiences in a light and fun tone is

a matter of the writer's personal choice. Trinity's choice of writing style makes her travel writing very touristic as it lacks observation and reflection. Without sufficient observation and reflection, travel writings may misrepresent the actual condition of a society and its values. Moreover, in the case of Indonesian women and travel for leisure, Trinity's travel writing misrepresents the fact that most Indonesian women are not privileged to do traveling especially overseas traveling. Trinity's travel writing that represents women's liberation from their daily routines misses addressing financial constraints and cultural and religion-related limitations faced by Indonesian women.

However, although on one hand Trinity's travel writing is not factual as it may misrepresent the objects of the writing and it only offers dreams and fantasy for the readers, on the other hand, Trinity's style of writing is actually typical in travel writing that aims to stimulate people's imagination and desire to travel.

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