

The Earth is Getting Hotter: Urban Apocalypse and Outsider Women's Collectives in *Bumi Makin Panas*

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Ali Shahab's controversial 1973 film *Bumi Makin Panas* (*The Earth is Getting Hotter*) paints a scalding portrait of rapid urbanization and capitalization during Indonesia's early New Order years. Jakarta, the capital city, if not quite hell, is closer to a Marxian state of truth in which ideology—for Marx a pervasive, camera obscura-like “inversion” of the actual state of affairs under capitalism—appears to have suddenly capsized; set in a seething urban reality of open hypocrisy, exploitation, and violence, the film functions as material nightmare to the vapid moralist-humanist dreams produced and sold by the state and its agents. Yet while Marx sought to ground his critique in “real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process” (1947: 47), Shahab, who also wrote *Bumi Makin Panas*, perceived a different locus of truth: the brothel and its female laborers. As a magnet for those perhaps most thoroughly (and quickly) dispossessed by Indonesia's rapid shift to the right following the rise of Suharto seven years earlier—poor, formally uneducated women—Shahab sees in the brothel a central node of the morally bankrupt urban economy. Yet therein lies its ostensibly utopian potential as a collective space in which women simultaneously cater to, and learn to understand, exploit and shield themselves from, the unbridled “male” desire (pervading both men and women in positions of power) that is burning through city and nation.

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The Indonesian word *makin* in the title of writer/director Ali Shahab's 1973 hit film, *Bumi Makin Panas* (*The Earth Is Getting Hotter*), a streamlined version of *semakin*, meaning “increasingly” or “more,” raises an implicit question that exceeds the scope of the film's narrative, looking back at the recent past: hotter than what? Although it features no actual nudity, in a prurient sense, the film was certainly steamier than most of its predecessors during the first two decades of Indonesian national cinema, and, as a result, was banned from screening in Cianjur, West Java, and throughout Malaysia (*film indonesia*). If its title is interpreted literally, changes in weather, the environment, and methods of engaging with nature, such as farming, also play an important symbolic role in *Bumi Makin Panas*. But the film's main source of heat is shown in no uncertain terms to be an increasingly frenetic drive to abandon rural villages for the teeming, volatile atmosphere of new megacities like Jakarta. As the narrative, imagery, and sounds imply through diverse, if mostly indirect, means, this should primarily be seen as a symptom of a shift in Indonesia's political economic ecosystem.

Historically, *Bumi Makin Panas* comes on the heels of the major upheaval that brought president Suharto (1966-1998) to power, which began seven years before the film's release; in this sense, the "earth" of the archipelago had recently been scorched by the abrupt, and horrifically violent, institution of a US-aligned dictator and Western-style market capitalism following fifteen years of left-leaning anti-imperialism under Sukarno. In Shahab's vision, Jakarta, the capital city, if not quite hell, has become something closer to a Marxian state of truth in which ideology—for Marx, a pervasive, camera obscura-like inversion of the actual state of affairs under capitalism—appears to have suddenly righted itself, as if striving to create an image of the way things "really" are.¹ Set in a seething urban reality of open hypocrisy, exploitation, violence, and various forms of prostitution, the film evokes a material nightmare beneath the vapid moralist-humanist dreams produced and sold by the new state and its agents.

Yet while Marx and Engels (1947) sought to ground their critique in "real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process" (p. 14), in *Bumi Makin Panas*, Shahab perceived a more specific locus of truth: the brothel and its female laborers. As a magnet for one of the groups most thoroughly (and quickly) dispossessed by Indonesia's rapid shift to the right at the hands of Suharto's military regime—poor, formally uneducated women²—Shahab sees in the brothel a central node of the morally bankrupt urban economy. Yet therein lies its ostensibly utopian potential as a collective space in which women simultaneously cater to, and learn to understand, exploit, and shield themselves from, the unbridled, dystopian "male" desire (permeating both men and women in positions of power) that is burning through city and nation.

Seeking to further contextualize *Bumi Makin Panas* within the historical trajectory it alludes to, my analysis will focus in particular on the connections the film makes between the spheres of prostitution; bohemian artists seeking authenticity in pleasurable proximity to "the masses"; and the wealthy aristocrats and business elites whose patronage of both produces the always already compromised economic ground on which they meet. In this sense, I contend, the film reflects on the strong historical links between the birth of Indonesian national cinema and the post-independence gathering of artists, writers, filmmakers, and affluent patrons in Senen, an area of Jakarta featuring a famous movie house, a traditional theater, a number of literary and film-oriented production houses, cheap food and coffee, and rows of quasi-legal brothels.

Despite his reputation for blockbuster "sex films," Shahab was perhaps an ideal candidate to explore Indonesia's diverse, interdisciplinary artistic history as seen from the aftermath of the rise of Suharto in the mid 1960s.

Trained as a painter at the ASRI arts academy (now ISI) in Yogyakarta from 1959 to 1963, Shahab quickly gained national and international attention for his artwork (Sangh, 1990). After graduating, however, he found himself in Jakarta working as a reporter and an award-winning caricaturist, rising to the position of editor of the newspaper *Indonesia Jaya* at precisely the time when political tensions in Indonesia were coming to a boil (1965-1967), ending in the extermination and imprisonment of millions of Indonesians by Suharto and the right wing military (“Ali Shahab: Saya Bukan...,” 1988).³ During the same period, Shahab also led and acted in a theater troupe, and began working on films as a makeup artist and prop manager.

In 1967, as the worst of the violence and turmoil of the previous two years was beginning to subside, Shahab published his first novel, *Tante Girang* (*Ecstatic Auntie*), which was dubbed “pocket bedroom literature” by the press and was panned by critics, but became an immediate hit, selling out three printings (“Ali Shahab: Kerja Rangkap...,” 1973, p. 48). After resigning from *Indonesia Jaya*, Shahab kept producing fiction at a furious pace, and soon his books were being adapted into films, eventually leading to the opportunity for him to write and direct *Bumi Makin Panas*. When later defending his reputation as a creator of sexually and commercially oriented literature and films, however, Shahab pointed to his experience as a reporter, explaining that he works by “absorbing” (*panyerapan*) the social, political problems in which he finds himself embedded, a process that subsequently gave rise to the novels and movies that are often derisively labeled “hot” (“Ali Shahab: ‘Saya Bukan...’ 1988, para 6). Using an ostensibly prurient title and storyline, he explains, is indicative of his particular “mission” (*missi*) as an artist of the early Suharto years: to smuggle critiques of the status quo past a newly appointed censorship board—one with script-to-screen access to all films—that would immediately balk (and almost certainly cancel production) if he were to attempt to make movies about “police, bureaucrats, or government ministers” (Achmadi, “Ali Shahab: Menuruti...,” p. 10). As novel titles such as *Anak-anak Koruptor* (*The Children of Corruptors*) suggest, in the realm of literature, Shahab was able to be more direct (“Sedikit Tentang...,” p. 26).

An ardent admirer of Hitchcock, Shahab also expresses a strong sense of responsibility for not “poisoning” audiences with what he makes and sells. In his films of the 1970s and ’80s, he therefore often single-handedly took on the positions of writer, director, assistant director, and even art director, as if aiming to become the quintessential auteur (“Ali Shahab: Kerja Rangkap...,” 1976). Yet Shahab repeatedly emphasizes that his work is intentionally, pointedly commercial: in both economic and political terms, the goal is to reach the largest possible segment of the public. Because of this, more overtly partisan or intellectual aspects of the critical “mission” he refers to

above are submerged within a populist package that acts as “a layer of sugar for the bitter pill”⁴ (Yusuf, 1983, p. 1) that Shahab envisions himself offering to viewers. However, in the case of *Bumi Makin Panas*, at least, Shahab serves up an approach that intriguingly, and self-consciously, blurs the lines between kitsch and bold formal and narrative experimentation. The result couldn’t be more distinct, for example, from the steady, consistent style and Romeo and Juliet theme of director Wim Umboh’s hit *Pengantin Remaja* (*Teenage Wedding*, 1971) that Shahab cites as an important inspiration (Sondang, “Di Mata...,” p. 34). Perhaps, then, it is precisely because of the “hot” title and story of *Bumi Makin Panas* that Shahab’s strategy seems to have worked: due to the popularity of it and one or two of his other efforts in the early 1970s, almost overnight, Shahab became the highest paid director in Indonesia (Sondang, “Cinta Ali...,” p. 17).

In light of Shahab’s complexly strategized approach, to clarify the engagement of *Bumi Makin Panas* with history will take a certain amount of effort in close reading. As Krishna Sen (1993, 1994), David Hanan (2009), and others point out, Shahab was not alone in his circuitous political tactics: most writers and directors of the New Order era, working under the watchful eyes and ears of the heavy-handed state censorship body, quickly became masters of indirection, particularly in regard to issues of causality.⁵ For Sen, this was especially true of the “prostitution genre,” a long-standing trend in popular, melodramatic films focused on the experience of female sex workers, of which *Bumi Makin Panas* is one of the better-known examples. The genre began in 1970 with *Bernafas Dalam Lumpur* (Djunaedy, 1970) and *Ananda* (Ismail, 1970), hit films that helped pave the way for the cinematic work of Shahab⁶ and many others, establishing robust social, gender, and narrative themes that have continued to emerge, and re-emerge, throughout the New Order (1967-1998) and into the post-Suharto present.

In keeping with this approach, *Bumi Makin Panas* points a finger not at Suharto, the military, or their policies of terrorizing and eliminating any and all standing in their way, but at the “earth” (in this case, Indonesia) and its people. Populist in many senses of the word, this strategy also provided the film with a more symbolically flexible, yet eminently real and material, locus of power and experience to work with. As Shahab implies above, the situation on the ground in 1970s Indonesia must be seen as shaped by the efforts of those in positions of authority—whether they themselves are visible or not—to harness and steer the world surrounding them. As Raymond Williams (1954), Fredric Jameson (1981), and others have shown, there is always a strong, implicit relationship between the atmosphere of a particular milieu and its grounding in a certain system, discernible not only through scrutiny of its leaders and their offices, but

through the political, economic, and social effects of the system on the populace immersed within it.

As Sen (1993, 1994) argues about the prostitution genre in general, in *Bumi Makin Panas* there does indeed appear to be an “inner evil” pervading everything and everyone enmeshed in the political economic machinery of the early Suharto years, creating a wave of amoral socioeconomic practice and victimization of those pushed into weaker positions by the rise of the new regime. While the state apparatus itself remains invisible, Sen writes, its negative effects are ubiquitous, “dispersed through everyone, including the victim herself and every social institution” (1993, p. 209). Sen rightly implies a strong, gendered component to the critical engagement of the prostitution films with the rigidly hierarchical, patriarchal atmosphere of the New Order that gave birth to them. The films’ radical potential, she argues, lies in their focus on the most abject of victims of the military-patriarchal-capitalist status quo: the alienated rural woman turned urban prostitute.

Yet the issue of abject victimization, and, in particular, of the apparent silencing of politically, socially, and economically vulnerable women, is where both *Bumi Makin Panas* and this article part company with Sen’s analysis. For her, the disruption produced by foregrounding the prostitute as aberrant symbol of rampant injustice and the falsehood of the state’s ideological claims is, in the end, always contained, either through the death of the “fallen” woman, or through her reintegration into the normative patriarchal hierarchy in marriage. Furthermore, citing Laura Mulvey (1975), Sen (1993) argues that 1970s Indonesian filmic prostitutes’ image and character are tailored to the general demands of the “male” spectatorial gaze, exuding a stereotypical, passive femininity and sexually overdetermined “to-be-looked-at-ness” (pp. 208-209).

Ali Shahab, however, like certain other creators of popular, yet politically barbed, New Order cinematic fare,⁷ seems intensely aware of the problematic economy of visual pleasure with which he draws in and engages spectators. With his love of Hitchcock and eclectic combination of training, skills, experience, and the drive to succeed, Shahab brought an obtuse, cult filmesque bricolage of sights, sounds, and styles to the screen in *Bumi Makin Panas*. Despite the uneven, and occasionally substandard, aesthetic veneer this produced, however, Shahab and his collaborators succeeded in imbuing the space of the urban bordello with a sharp, absurdist-realist edge. While providing a certain amount of payoff for the obvious sexual innuendo that is borne by the title, the film simultaneously attacks and works to revoke the visual pleasure it sells, shredding the veil of prurient romanticism otherwise produced by images of besotted, powerful men surrounded with willing, scantily clad young women.

The enjoyment provided by the brothel is thus continually deconstructed, as the absurdly horrific truths that produce it are brought to the fore by tracing the path that has brought one woman, Maria (played by the actress Suzanna, an icon of the prostitution and horror/mystic genres in Indonesia) to the point that she is willing to consider the kind of life it offers. Furthermore, as suggested above, the concept of prostitute as abject victim is also placed in question by *Bumi Makin Panas*: given the nature of life under the New Order regime as it is pointedly, and at times hyperbolically,⁸ rendered by Shahab, in the end, a place in the brothel may come to seem preferable to various other, more traditionally respectable or powerful positions. By simply arriving at its doorstep, Maria has shown herself not only to be a victim, but a survivor, and, increasingly, an astute, critical reader of her surrounds; she should therefore also be seen, the film appears to be telling us, as something of an “agent.”

**Prelude to Truth:
Smoldering Rural Ideals and the Need to Act**



Figure 1. Maria, as a young girl (Kiki S.), unsettled by the rapid changes being instituted around her.

Maria’s story begins in the remnants of what appears to be an idyllic past in the nature-filled setting of a rural village. As a young girl, Maria cradles a lamb, standing barefoot in the green grass of a family farm by a big, colonial-style house, surrounded by a fluffy, bleating flock of sheep, and accompanied by a pleading, nostalgic bed of violins in the

score. But the sheep are soon to be transported—via the slaughterhouse—to another world; far darker changes are also afoot. Before the year is up, Maria, too, will find herself within the walls of another space of transformation: a women’s prison. For now, however, she clutches the lamb as its companions are loaded onto a truck by her father and two other men. Sternly, he orders her to release her self-appointed chargé. At first, Maria is firm in her resistance, until her mother, fearing her father will be



Figure 2. Maria’s mother (Sofia WD), glancing at her husband from afar, shares her daughter’s sense of suspicion and foreboding.

angry with both of them, softly implores her to let it go—the instinct to protect is thus transferred from lamb to mother. As we will see, it is indeed Maria’s mother who is the most frequent target of her husband’s recurrent outbursts of rage.



Figure 3. The face of a village gambler as depicted in the early New Order: no trace of emotion after witnessing a violent act.

The truck now fully loaded, Maria’s father drives off in search of short-term gain, intent on selling yet another part of the family’s remaining inheritance. Positioned under a wooden bridge, the camera captures the underside of the passing truck. As it moves directly overhead and fills the frame, the image freezes. The title *Bumi Makin Panas* then appears in wavering, orange type,⁹ and the music changes from the bittersweet, nostalgic score to an

ominous, 1970s heavy psychedelic rock. (The music itself can be seen as a sign of the shift from Sukarno, who was staunchly, if at times selectively, opposed to Western popular culture, to the authoritarian, America- and-rock-n-roll-friendly Suharto). After a few seconds, the image comes to life again, and the opening credits proceed as the sheep are brusquely thrown off the truck at a larger, industrial-looking farm. The sequence ends with a final freeze on the thick wad of bills that has just passed from the hands of the buyer to Maria’s father, under the credit “directed by Ali Shahab.”

After spending most of what he has gotten for the sheep at a brothel in the outskirts of the city, Maria’s father returns to the village, disheveled. As he gambles at home with a group of men a few days later, the “inner evil” of the surrounding milieu begins to shine through more clearly: upon losing the rest of his money, he orders Maria’s mother to place her necklace in the pot so he can continue to play. When he loses patience with her pleas to spare the family heirloom and simply tears it from her neck, the men around the table just stare, emotionless, as if nothing out of the ordinary has happened (their faces are pointedly shown in a series of close-ups). The only thing that seems to matter is to continue the game, which offers the potential for a quick and ample payoff.

For Maria’s father, however, the contest at hand is not enough. He appears as if driven by an unseen force (perhaps the “invisible hand” of the shifting Indonesian marketplace) to expend and ruin everything around him. A family farm in the countryside has become anathema to the kind

of life he envisions, and he now aims to off-load the entire estate quickly to a large-scale agricultural producer. As he tells Maria's mother, "what we need now is money, not a house as big as a museum or land in this crappy village... We'll move to the city. I'm bored here!"¹⁰ When Maria's mother protests the sale of the property inherited from her family, he rebukes her harshly, reminding her that she was once an "old maid" who should be grateful he was willing to marry her. As their argument heats up, Maria watches intently from the sidelines.

Her mother, it seems, has now finally reached her limits, and drops her previously demure manner, releasing pent-up anger straight into the face of her wayward husband, while the potential buyer of the farm looks on in surprise: "I don't need to thank you, you've already exacted your due by selling everything we own! Then you lower yourself with those disgusting women, while Maria and I serve you like slaves before their master!"¹¹ Reflexively,



Figure 4. Maria's mother is severely beaten after challenging her husband's authority over the family's finances and property.

he moves to silence her, grabbing her by the collar and throwing her to the ground. As she rises again into frame, now in close-up, her mouth no longer emits words, but is covered in bright, excessively red blood, expressing volumes about her husband's malevolence. As he grips her by the hair, pulling her up to strike again, the image evokes the hyper-real aesthetics of horror, a trope that will be repeated in a number of scenes throughout the film.¹²

Still looking on in shock, Maria's instinct to protect her mother is triggered again: Whatever happens, the beating must somehow be stopped. Spying a knife on a nearby table, she suddenly approaches from behind, and without hesitation, jabs it into her father's ample belly, producing a flow of blood to match the one issuing from her mother's mouth. Caught off guard, he drops to his knees, clutching his now-perforated midsection in disbelief. From his overdramatized movements and twisted facial expressions (and the sci-fi-esque echo effects placed on his final shriek of defeat), it is clear that his life will come to an end momentarily. As he falls backward in slow motion, grabbing at the tablecloth, plates and bowls rain down onto the floor around him. What at first appears to be the sound of their impact, however, is revealed by the next shot to be the clanging shut of a heavy prison door.

Women's Collective I: In and Out of Prison

Dolly through the prison hall accompanied by the deep, suspenseful bass notes of a piano, the camera comes to rest on Maria's face, now a young woman (played by Suzanna), who is seemingly lost in thought behind the bars of her cell. The dark atmosphere, however, is quickly dissipated by another quirky musical cue, this time resembling an upbeat theme song from a 1970s American sitcom, with a flute providing a bubbly tune. A brief montage reveals a space devoid of men, in which women work together in apparent harmony, sitting at rows of sewing machines or weaving bamboo baskets, wearing unadorned blue



Figure 5. The first glimpse of Suzanna as Maria, behind bars. The context and darkness in her glance make clear the connection to her younger self without requiring further explanation.

uniforms, and eating together from simple, metal bowls—a collective and egalitarian existence, it seems, save for the locked doors and guards. Yet there are few overt signs of coercion, and when Maria's time is up, she is shown out by a kindly matron in a khaki uniform. What appears to be the only man stands at the last gate, marking the border where Maria will re-enter the ever heating, urbanizing world outside.

Introducing a technique frequently employed thereafter in the film, when Maria exits the jail, we encounter a mirroring in the construction of the sequence, in this case a repetition of an earlier image—the ominous close-up of the gate slammed shut and locked with a chain—that functions to complicate its meaning. As Maria's escort suggests before seeing her out, at this point in history, a greater loss of freedom may well occur upon leaving the structured, guarded environment of the penitentiary. Continuing the film's symmetrical/contrapuntal structure, once outside the austere, yet protective, walls of the prison, the difficulties of Maria's past almost immediately return to confront her; these, too, are expressed in a way that is formally similar to earlier scenes, yet reveals a far more profound lack of hope than that, with which Maria was faced before she was imprisoned. Arriving at her former home, Maria finds it as it once must have been: green and sunny, a horse-drawn cart in the yard, the bleating sheep returned and left in peace. Now, however, operations are handled by the employees of the wealthy, cigar-smoking proprietor who bought the land for next to nothing from her late father. Taking in the scene while cradling a black lamb, Maria

is recognized by an elderly man who once worked for her family; when he relates the dismal fate of her mother, Maria once again abandons the sheep and springs into action to protect her only surviving kin.

With no money and no home, Maria's mother has long ago been driven from the village. Now thin, grey, and corpse-like, Maria finds her holed up in the interim space that links the rural with the urban: the train



Figure 6. Above, Maria's protective instincts focus her attention on getting money, whatever the means. Below, Thief! Maria's efforts to survive the political economic climate of the early 1970s have made her a criminal in the eyes of the elite.

yard. Lying in an empty freight car, her mouth is once again full of blood; this time, however, it seems due to an advanced case of tuberculosis. With the small amount of money collected from donations given by her fellow prisoners and guards, Maria runs to the drug store. Finding herself a few rupiah short, however, she is forced to wander on. As with the knife that was earlier used to kill her father, when a wealthy woman in a jewelry store drops her money, we are given a quick, Eisenstein-esque series of shot-reverse shots between Maria's face in close-up and the bills on the floor, as she formulates an act that will hopefully save her mother. Grabbing what she needs, Maria quickly exits the store, as the woman stutters and screams: "M...m..m maling! Copet!" (Th...th...thief! Pickpocket!). For Maria, it seems, to survive on the outside is to break the law.

Clutching the medicine and pursuing the receding camera along the railroad tracks, Maria stumbles and falls. The score, once again orchestral, evokes a chase scene, with strings swelling heroically (and perhaps ironically) as she presses on. But by the time she reaches her mother's car, the music has changed to a more dampened, sinister, dramatic tone: she is too late. Her mother's blood is now visible as stains on the sheet with which a group of men enshroud her, carrying away her lifeless body on a pallet of bamboo. As they pass, the camera pans into a long medium close-up on

Maria's face, expressionless, absorbing the scene as the men cross again in front of her. Finally, she closes her eyes, and we dissolve into a shot of her bare feet walking along the tracks outside of town, then into a long shot, the camera tracking ahead of her, where we can see she is "walking with no direction": she seems to have simply wandered off, unsure of what to do, her connections to the social world now completely severed by the pervasive "evil" that possesses everyone and everything around her.

Sensory Overload and the Beginning of Ideological "Inversion"

The trope of women having seen, heard, or otherwise internalized, "too much" and then wandering off in a (temporary) trance-like state is an important one for the prostitution genre. It is a major element in the aforementioned *Bernafas Dalam Lumpur* (Djunaedy, 1970) (also starring Suzanna), one of the two "original" prostitution films, and can be seen in a number of others with similar themes, as well as in later mainstream drama films like *Pengemis dan Tukang Becak* (*The Beggar and the Pedicab Driver*, Mansun & Umboh, 1978), *Kerikil-Kerikil Tajam* (*Sharp Rocks*, Jiwat & Sjumanjaya, 1984), or *Istana Kecantikan* (*Palace of Beauty*, Prahtna & Sihombing, 1988). In general, the trope reveals a coming into consciousness of a falsehood formerly taken to be a truth (or vice versa). Often, as in both *Bernafas Dalam Lumpur* and *Bumi Makin Panas*, what is revealed to be false is an entire ideological system, as its promises of ethical leadership, protection, and equal opportunity for all citizens begin to melt and disappear from the vision of those whom history and fate have exposed to the constant heat of violence and injustice.

The moment of seeing too much is thus one in which an image of the world as neat, positive, and logical is not simply turned on its head, as Marx's (1947) deceptively simple terms would seem to assert, but is shown to be produced by, and thus to signify the existence of, a far more complex and disturbing state of affairs.¹³ To perceive this semiotic excess is thus not to glimpse anything unusual per se, but to begin to read the visible in a different way, to feel that something else is connected to the image, or the seen. In the Indonesian films that deploy the trope, those placed in vulnerable positions and preyed on by the system around them are often not simply presented as victims, but as people who are also subject to an alternate, and possibly more "true," perspective. For these common cinematic figures, the normally unconscious and invisible architecture of experience that undergirds and shapes the character of a given historical milieu—what Raymond Williams (1954) calls the "structure of feeling"¹⁴—becomes more closely understood through its effects. From this point on in *Bumi Makin Panas*, leading us down the path that takes Maria to the looking glass world of the brothel, the

film endeavors to draw its audience further and further into the absurdist-realist atmosphere of 1970s Jakarta—a place where, in the eyes, ears, and embodied experiences of its central character, the newly installed capitalist ideological veil of development, prosperity, and harmony has already begun to show heavy wear.

Before reaching the brothel, however, Maria attempts to resist the pull of the hellish, desire-ridden layers of the earth that she has been exposed to. She seeks a last refuge in the beauty of nature on its surface, while simultaneously, it seems, attempting to follow her mother's successful escape, in death, from the only certainty with which they have both been provided: that of a life of suffering. After emptying the now-useless medicine into a scenic stream beneath a bridge, Maria passes out (it is not clear if she ingested some of the pills), abandoning herself to fate on a boulder surrounded by pure, rushing water. Yet this is far from the end of her life or her troubles. On the road above, the hubcap of a Mercedes Benz, shown in close-up, comes to a stop in mid frame. A pair of leather shoes emerges from the door and approaches Maria; soon, she is lifted in a man's arms, carried gingerly and placed in the backseat of the waiting German car. When she awakes, she is in a bed with clean, flower-print sheets, a vase of freshly cut *sedap malam* (tuberose) nearby. A phone is ringing, and is answered by an elderly maid, who hands Maria the receiver. The soothing male voice on the other end is Pak Johan, the apparent good Samaritan who found her unconscious by the stream. There are, he tells her, some new clothes in the drawer that he hopes will be to her liking; perhaps she has indeed died, and gone to heaven.

But as the maid soon explains to her, Pak Johan is a wealthy businessman whose wife, after an operation several years ago, is unable to bear children. Maria now finds herself in a second house he normally uses to entertain clients, and not in some disinterested space of endless comfort as heaven is often imagined to be. Nonetheless, for the moment, Pak Johan's concern seems more fatherly than anything else, and a few happy, peaceful days pass as he shows her around his lush gardens, explaining that many of the flowers there also contain properties which help those, like him, with weakened hearts. Despite his powerful position, Pak Johan's image is indeed rendered in "weak," or simply fleeting terms, as he is always either fully or partially hidden from view during the time Maria stays with him. Like some overeager *deus ex machina* that arrives far too early in the story, Pak Johan's sudden appearance in the guise of a caring and capable protector is just cause for suspicion. This is particularly the case given the pervasive nature of the cruelty we have glimpsed thus far through the perspective of Maria. Somewhat unsurprisingly, then, when he vanishes again for a business trip in Tokyo, the angelic, natural veneer of his secret getaway is quickly subjected

to the same burning heat that seems to permeate every other person and place outside of the women's prison.

As Maria sleeps, she is revisited by the formal evocations of horror: along with a spooky, suspenseful line played on a stand-up bass, a subjective, yet somehow inhuman, perspective (due to the choice of a longer focal-length lens, rarely applied to shots where the camera operator is walking, particularly without the use of a steady cam) stalks through the house, seeking its prey. Finding Maria within its sights, it pauses to take in her image, as her "to-be-looked-at-ness" is offered up in the most voyeuristic manner possible: while she is oblivious, comfortably tucked into bed, eyes closed. Yet, here, the look of the camera, if not seeking a fetish *per se*, is filled with malice and a lust for material violence. Mimicking, yet altering, the early close-up of Maria unconscious at the river, this time a woman's hand snakes out from behind the lens and touches Maria's face. Instead of "saving" her, however, it makes as if to cover her mouth and smother her. Then, as if changing its mind, it rips away the covers, startling her awake and drawing her gaze toward itself: the aim is to confront and punish directly, not simply to stare.

The perpetrator turns out to be Pak Johan's wife: seeking to protect her own apparently precarious position as a barren woman, she has come to drive out the young stowaway that she assumes is after her husband's riches. When she recognizes Maria as the person who stole her money in the jewelry store a few days earlier, her suspicions are confirmed beyond a doubt. "*Lonte! Buaya!*" ("Whore! Crocodile!") she screams, "No wonder my husband never comes home! There's a more shapely piece of meat here to make his hot tea!"¹⁵ When Maria protests that she's not actually a prostitute, and that Pak Johan hasn't so much as laid an inappropriate finger on her, the



Figure 7. Above, the hand of Pak Johan's wife emerges from the initially voyeuristic, and implicitly violent, shot of Maria, identifying the "male" gaze of the camera with an upper class female subjectivity. Below, Maria is severely "manhandled" by Pak Johan's furious wife.

older woman, who is surprisingly spry, merely grabs her hair and throws her to the floor, a tactic reminiscent of Maria's own father. Maria's face, in close-up as Pak Johan's wife rants and hurls her new belongings at her, appears to register a further realization: in the dominant, normative view of her more seasoned interlocutor (which the film has also infused with a sense of monstrosity and inhumanity), her own protestations must indeed ring untrue. Given the "facts" that Pak Johan's wife has witnessed, Maria's plea is logically—structurally—impossible to believe. As a young, single woman who has suddenly become socially and economically dispossessed following the rapid changes surrounding her, Maria has been pegged with a particular fortune, one simultaneously read and produced by Pak Johan's wife. In the immediate present, of course, the older woman is wrong about Maria, but her words have driven home the inevitability of the future that is taking shape in the changing landscape of the early New Order, one in which millions of politically dispossessed Indonesians are increasingly finding themselves pushed into a vast, impoverished, and exploited underclass.¹⁶

When the next scene begins, like the previous one, with a phone ringing, this time the older woman who answers is the proprietor of a brothel. Ratna, Maria's former cellmate, who previously offered to help Maria get started in the city following her release from jail, is employed here. At first, however, Ratna scolds Maria, telling her she's still young and has a chance to make a better life for herself. But Maria, with the help of Pak Johan's wife, has already made her final decision: somehow, this brothel has come to seem like the place where she belongs. As such, it will also be the center of the film's various social and political interventions into the status quo.



Figure 8. One of the first images we are shown of the brothel depicts a camaraderie born of difficult times.

Women's Collective II: In the Brothel

Not unlike the women's prison, Shahab's rendering of the space of the brothel and the people whose lives are intricately entwined with it conveys a sense of camaraderie born, perhaps, in the collective acceptance of an inevitable, systemic fate. Here, of course, unlike the jail, men are also an important part of the social and economic fabric of life, yet they

are clearly outsiders: they do not live and work together within the walls of the brothel—structures that simultaneously protect, enable, limit, and

contain—as the women do. Although their money makes them “kings,” the male customers are of secondary importance, and subject to the authority of the female proprietor, who, again mirroring the jail, almost certainly employs guards, albeit without uniform or official status. “Mami Marno,” as she is known (mami, essentially “mommy,” is an affectionate appellation often used by students with female teachers of which they are particularly fond), is obviously astute in running her business, and although at times brusque with those in her employ, she is never harsh. She builds loyalty among Maria and her colleagues, it seems, by treating them fairly, and by understanding that they have limits: if someone is exhausted or feeling unwell, she will make an excuse, steering potential customers gently but firmly toward another choice of partner for the evening.¹⁷

The brothel is also, however, anything but a safe, heavenly space of disinterested play; like the women’s prison, it has a specific function, and to be accepted there involves submission to its terms of practice, in which some of the most basic social codes of the outside world are invalidated or reversed. To enter, then, requires an initial transgression that functions as a right of passage—one that forever alters the life of the inductee. As Maria, who is a virgin, undergoes her first night

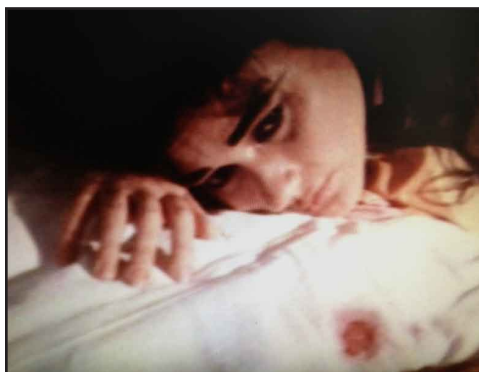


Figure 9. The frequent appearance of the blood of Maria’s mother is now replaced by her own, as she enters a new stage of her engagement with the political economic system in which she is embedded.

with a client, we return again to the familiar scene of a woman’s blood, and of its marks on the sheets that accompany both Maria and her mother along the transformative paths on which the ever-hotter “earth” has placed their fates. (After the events of her first night have wound down, the indelible red stains on the sheets, like that of her mother’s shroud, are aligned with Maria’s mouth, as she and her first customer have ended up sleeping head to foot).

As an unmarried woman in the brothel, however, Maria now has a community of sorts, while her mother, dependent on the crumbling sociopolitical economy of the rural farming village, was essentially killed by the decimation of hers. If the film’s political interventions in a broader sense involve a pointed re-reading, rather than a simple inversion, of the way ideology produces positive images of the status quo, in the brothel,

there seems also to be an effort to create an alternate, perhaps indeed upside down, image. The function, I would argue, is to demonstrate in a more literal sense the sheer absurdity of unbridled privilege and desire that creates both ideology and that, which is submitted by Shahab as its steamy, bustling flip-side: the brothel. It is the harnessing of this immense, ridiculous power by those most directly subject to the power—prostitutes—that is the central focus of the remainder of *Bumi Makin Panas*.

To begin with, emphasis is placed on the apparent absurdity of the rituals that take place in the brothel from the perspective of a newcomer. The gleeful regular customer who pays to initiate Maria into the system, a man in his fifties, calls in his order from home wearing an ostentatious pink tuxedo, simultaneously talking and downing a shot of what looks to be whiskey. Later, wearing a silk robe and drinking cognac in front of a large tank of exotic fish, he tells Maria not to worry: “It’s not only you who is a virgin in this world. My grandmother too, was a virgin when my grandfather first slept with her. Ha ha ha...everyone will eventually experience a first night like this.”¹⁹ While his attempt at philosophizing does little to put Maria at ease, with the confidence and self-assuredness of a man of position, he



Figure 10. During Maria’s first night at the brothel, the focus is on reactions to the transaction that occurs, rather than the transaction itself.

soon pulls open her nightgown. Facing the image of her naked body, however (which we glimpse from behind, drawing our attention to the effect it has on the man’s facial expressions), he looks not unlike a disco-era Superman after discovering a stash of kryptonite. Suddenly overcome, it is as if the object of his desire, thus revealed, might simply reduce him to ash with its radiant power. It is this force that Maria soon learns to wield: by the end of a montage of her

clients during the first two months, her inhibition fades away and she begins to expose herself as if reflexively, expecting a certain result. In one instance, she opens her clothes before an elderly man. Desperate, but unable, to untie his knotted shoelace and thus remove his trousers, the aging John finally gets out a pocket knife and, hands shaking, hurriedly cuts the leather loafers from his feet.

Laura Mulvey Pre-visited: Gender, Agency and “Silence” as Imagined in 1970s Jakarta

In most of the brothel scenes, something similar to the visual economy of “to-be-looked-at-ness” as formulated by Laura Mulvey (1975)¹⁹ is evoked and simultaneously pulled apart (although the release of *Bumi Makin Panas* preceded Mulvey’s writing by two years, as in other “lowbrow” 1970s films, such as director Nya Abbas Akup’s *Inem Pelayan* Sexy trilogy [Azhar, Djamaluddin & Akup, 1976-1977], here the gendered dynamics of the cinematic image and gaze have clearly been taken into close, critical consideration). The looking that happens in *Bumi Makin Panas*, while in some sense objectifying women, nonetheless is shown to occur within a space that is set up by women to harness and exploit the “male” desire that has both entrapped, and, within a set of closely proscribed limits, empowered them. Therefore, nothing is simply offered up to be freely consumed from a dark, voyeuristic space of control and ostensible agency. Viewers, in exchange for a few “hot” or romanticized, if absurd, moments, must submit to the film’s critical objective regarding the contemporary state of Indonesia, and the entanglements of gender and power in the formation of early New Order society.

While Shahab claims that a large collection of “sex books” and Playboy and Penthouse magazines have been useful for his career as a director (“Ali Shahab: Kemungkinan...” 1976), he is quick to criticize those who deploy bedroom scenes in a raw or simplistic manner (Rao, 1980, p. 1). Surmising that in the case of his novels, there are those who simply skip from one “hot” scene to another, Shahab laments the fact that such readers will “not encounter the mission that I’m trying to convey” (“Ali Shahab: Saya Bukan...” 1988, para 6), particularly in relation to the unevenly distributed freedom he sees as unleashed by the rise of Suharto, the flipside of which is widespread moral decadence.²⁰ At the time, however, Shahab’s production of films allowed for the engagement of viewers in a critical space of “hotness” in which it was far more difficult to excerpt or separate the bedroom from the broader context of the film’s narrative and diegetic world. Even then, in *Bumi Makin Panas*, great care was taken to complicate nearly every morsel of heat, flesh, or romanticism on offer. What we are given on screen to potentially enjoy is not only a nakedly, and self-reflexively, economically driven experience, but one that is presented in large part through an approximation of the perspective of a female sex worker in 1970s Jakarta. Therefore, the ostensibly heroic, on-screen male of Mulvey’s (1975) analysis—“the active one advancing the story, making things happen” (p. 384)—here more frequently serves as the customer-object of a particular, feminized gaze that is elsewhere often positioned or understood as passive and marginal.

Watching *Bumi Makin Panas*, there is a strong sense that one is not only witnessing the creative genius of Ali Shahab as writer-director/assistant director/art director/script boy/etc. The feeling is deepened upon a visit to Sinematek, the film archive in Jakarta, where the clippings on Shahab are inevitably haunted by the presence of one of the main sources of his “female gaze” on screen: the actress Suzanna, who plays Maria and worked with Shahab on several other films. As then co-owner of Tidar Jaya, a successful Jakarta production company, it was Suzanna, along with producer and actor Dicky Suprpto, who offered Shahab the opportunity to make *Bumi Makin Panas*, his first film as both director and writer (Sondang, “Cinta Ali...,” p. 16-17). Often billed as overly ambitious or arrogant by the press (Sondang, p.17; “Ali Shahab: Kerjang Rangkap...,” 1973, p. 49), in discussing Suzanna’s role as a collaborator (words that continue well beyond his brief financial dependence on her company), Shahab begins to loosen his claims on absolute auteur-ship to some extent. He refers to Suzanna’s approach to cinema in the journalistic or ethnographic terms with which he describes his own work, as a process of “digesting” or “absorbing” (here *pencernaan*) the context and details of the story, in this case allowing her to imbue the work as a whole with a character and atmosphere that exceed Shahab’s own expectations and plans (Sondang, “Di Mata...,” p. 35).

Indeed, Suzanna’s experience in film far outstripped Shahab’s. A deceptively youthful and impish thirty-one-year-old when *Bumi Makin Panas* was released, Suzanna was already a seasoned, if then only recently iconic, actress whose career began during the emergence of Indonesia as an independent nation. In 1950, at age eight, she was chosen to play in Usmar Ismail’s *Darah dan Doa* (*The Long March*), often referred to as Indonesia’s first national film. She won domestic and international awards for her next role in Ismail’s *Asrama Dara* (*Girl’s Dormitory*, 1958), but did not become a household name until starring in *Bernafas Dalam Lumpur* (*Breathing in Mud/The Longest Dark*, Junaedy 1970), the aforementioned catalyst for the prostitution genre. Although she is now mostly remembered for her numerous roles in 1980s horror movies, it was the unprecedented success of her early portrayals of villagers-turned-prostitutes that made Suzanna the highest paid actress in Indonesia through much of the 1970s. Like Shahab, she mixed artistic commitment with business acumen and populist flair, carefully selecting roles and creating a “brand” that has far outlasted her acting career, as well as her death from diabetes in 2008.²¹

As Shahab explains it, in *Bumi Makin Panas*, it was Suzanna who pushed hardest to be placed in ever-more extreme, absurd, or seemingly compromised situations (Sondang, “Di Mata...,” p. 34-35), breathing life into precisely those elements of the film most critical to the success of its

hyperbolic realist sensibility, and to its economic, and potential political, impact. Mirroring its own eclectic use of music, sound, and formal elements, *Bumi Makin Panas* might therefore be thought of as composed of a divergent, contradictory “bricolage” of gazes, out of which Suzanna’s, as Maria, consistently emerges as the dominant subject position and point of view. The many “hot” scenes and elements in the film are thus shot through with a stark complexity—alternately humorous, ironic, or horrific, and often all three at once—that stares back from the screen, acknowledging both the consumption, and the tense exchange, at work in the pointedly gendered images and their reception. When we are inevitably shown scantily clad young women, we almost always also see money, which is implicated as the reason for the women’s having chosen to reveal themselves. At other times, Maria and her young colleagues chat in a backroom while one, for example,



Figure 11. Maria’s and others’ daily routines at the brothel frequently occupy the screen.

opens the wrapping on a sanitary pad, joking about the odd experiences she has had with clients. Maria herself is frequently depicted in various combinations of revealing, silky lingerie, yet as often she is also plucking her armpits or performing some other “unsightly” daily preparatory task (the only time she is shown nearly naked, her torso and backside are covered in rupiah notes, and thus are mainly revealed in financial terms).



Figure 12. When she becomes pregnant (but does not, as we will see, end up giving birth), Maria muses to a colleague, while looking into the camera: “Who could the father be? A well-positioned bureaucrat? A businessman? Or perhaps a corruptor. It could be just about anyone.”

Furthermore, while Sen (1993) argues that in 1970s Indonesian melodrama in general, “the unspeakable crimes of the upper class may be visible, but they remain unspoken and inexplicable” (p. 213), here, their crimes and absurd predilections are not only visible, but, through the access we are given to the brothel, they become a topic of

constant discussion. Positioned within a central node of the local structure of feeling and power—a place that those in high positions are driven to visit repeatedly, in turn revealing something of themselves, and of the nature of the system from which they, too, are unfree—the women of the brothel speak straightforwardly of the system they have become so intimately acquainted with. As they divulge the secrets of the world of privilege and influence to each other, and thus to the camera, they simultaneously insert their findings into the public discourse of the film’s broad range of viewers. Within the diegesis, their embodied knowledge—not unlike the sexually transmitted diseases they alternately joke about or lament—is also frequently passed on to the wives of wealthy clients who come to them begging to leave their husbands be (there is, of course, no mercy here for the rich, be they male or female).

As the narrative of *Bumi Makin Panas* implies, the knee-jerk actions of Pak Johan’s wife, aimed at protecting her own position by ejecting Maria from proximity to her husband, have backfired, essentially placing Maria



Figure 13. Pak Johan arrives at the brothel; as usual, he at first appears in a semi-obscured fashion, as if hiding something from Maria, from spectators, and from himself.

in a far more “agentive” role within the local power structure. Furthermore, as we will see, Ibu Johan has unwittingly set in motion a series of events leading to her husband’s fatal realization of his own lack of true agency. Returning from his business trip, Pak Johan is surprised to find Maria long gone from his client getaway, and his suspicions that his wife has intervened are soon confirmed by the maid. Despite his stature as a man deeply empowered by the status quo, it

seems his attempt to act as Maria’s savior has nonetheless been cancelled by the still more powerful feelings and gendered relations that are inseparable from his position, and function to mobilize those around him, haunting and counteracting his every move.

Pining for Maria all the more now that she has been taken from him, Pak Johan is forced to seek her out in the brothel. Bearing a bouquet of *sedap malam*, he is perhaps hoping to sweep her up and carry her home as he did in the past. For a brief moment, it seems that this will be the case: Maria is overjoyed to see him, but in the midst of a warm embrace intercut with flashbacks of the two of them wandering hand in hand through his peaceful

garden, she remembers the piercing truth of his wife's words, and stiffens. "Anyone at all can take me out," she says coolly, "as long as they are willing to pay the tariff set by Mami Marno."²² The ostensibly heroic power to which Pak Johan feels entitled as a particular kind of individual, flowing from his gender, wallet, heritage, and position within a political economic network, is now twice exposed as impotent and illusory: first by the actions of his wife in re-positioning Maria into her systemically determined fate, and then by Maria's own realization of the severe limitations of his agency. Left with no other choice, Pak Johan accepts her terms; back in his Mercedes, on the way to a club that she has chosen, he asks if she'll be able to stay out late. Anything but demure, Maria mocks his stubborn naïveté: "It's up to you, sir... We're usually chartered, like a taxi. However many hours you ride, that's how many you pay for,"²³ she quips, sending a sardonic glance his way. Now that she is able to read him, and his actual capabilities, more clearly, Maria appears to be taking revenge for the false hope he once instilled in her, that she (and, by extension, he) was exceptional, and that with his help she might diverge from the steady, downward path on which he found her.

The Nightclub: Space of Unfettered Unfreedom

The space of the club Maria has steered them into is a dynamic one, its various elements beginning to immerse us in a reflection on the political economy of art in recent Indonesian history (more about which later). From the start, we are greeted by a sign of the present times: a band of men with Afros (possibly Indonesians in blackface, although it is difficult to tell in the VCD copy of the film I have) playing wildly energetic funk-jazz that is probably best compared to Herbie Hancock's 1973 album *Headhunters*. Together with the psychedelic rock elsewhere on the soundtrack, the music here sets the tone for the strong, Suharto-era entrance of American popular culture. In films, it is often depicted in settings such as this, which reflect its entanglement with other, darker elements flowing into, or stirred up by, Indonesia's arms opening to the West. The club sequence begins with a rapid fire, spatially incongruous assemblage of Eisensteinian montage and other techniques broadly associated with both experimental and "exploitation" cinema, building up the obtuse, unpredictable atmosphere of the place. It is filled with prostitutes, gangsters, artists, and wealthy entrepreneurs, and appears to have none of the protective limitations offered by Mami Marno.

As if on cue, a man we've previously seen at the brothel appears, bent on retribution for a perceived snub: a few days earlier, at Maria's request, Mami Marno politely refused to let him book time with her. Removing a cigarette lit by Pak Johan from Maria's mouth, he jeers, "You think only old moneymen like this guy can pay for your services? Haaa!"²⁴ while crushing the cigarette

and matches into Pak Johan's beer. The man then empties the concoction onto Maria's dress, challenging Pak Johan to defend her. Pak Johan stands up, but is immediately floored by a right hook from his younger opponent, who follows with a foot to the ribs. Within seconds, however, Pak Johan's



Figure 14. Corpse cam: Pak Johan's rain-soaked, final view of Maria.

status as an actual moneymen (*cukong*) within the local system kicks in. While he is clearly out of his element here, it turns out he is far from unknown. Seeing him in danger, a young painter named Arie, who, as we later learn, lives on Pak Johan's patronage, quickly steps in to save him. The painter makes short work of Pak Johan's attacker by throwing the man through a glass door, turning his face into a bloody mess. The

hierarchy of money and privilege is thus preserved, but Pak Johan, having tried to act out of step with its interests by extracting Maria from her place in its underbelly, has been dealt more than his weak heart can take. A few days later, his wife slinks into the brothel, duty bound to deliver Pak Johan's last wish: that Maria attend his funeral. There, we are provided with Pak Johan's final glimpse of Maria—from the grave, as she places a bouquet of sedap malam on top of his lifeless body—before he, and what is left of his vision, are obscured once and for all by clods of the same earth upon which he once appeared to be a powerful giant.

Agency, nobility, and heroism, it seems, are not what flows through the "male gaze" intermittently assigned to characters in the film, or taken up by viewers that may identify with them. Accordingly, Krishna Sen (1993) suggests that in the prostitution genre, viewers' pleasure is based on identification and solidarity with the female "victim" who represents, for both male and female spectators, their own, historically situated "circumstantial inability to act" (p. 208). Nonetheless, Sen criticizes the prostitution genre for always reinstating what she argues is the national (and certainly also global) patriarchal ideal of a passive, silent female who is both positioned "to-be-looked-at," as Mulvey (1975) puts it, and, in Sen's (1993) terms, "to-be-acted-on" (p. 209). For Sen, the aberrant power of the prostitute that emerges in many of the films, signaling a "crisis of the symbolic world" (1994, p. 144), is, in the end, always placed back within the bounds of patriarchal control. As we have seen in *Bumi Makin Panas*, however, while women still frequently occupy a central position before the

gaze of spectators, the concepts of patriarchal norms, sociopolitical control, and the symbolic order as they are commonly understood are shown not only to be in constant crisis, but to be practically invalid in terms of the operative structures shaping local experience.

Only one woman, a colleague of Maria's who is unable to disconnect herself emotionally from a regular client, experiences anything like what Sen (1993, 1994) terms the final "silencing" that comes at the end of most prostitution films: either the death of the fallen woman, or her re-integration into the patriarchal structure in heterosexual marriage. Even then, the situation here is perhaps not quite the romantic rescue one might imagine it to be. The woman in question is evicted from the brothel because she has violated the codes set by Mami Marno: when the client spurns her to visit Maria's room (despite Maria's strong protests), she flies into a rage, throwing the helpless man to the ground and then attacking Maria with a pair of scissors. Her decisive-yet-presumptuous act, however, is taken as a sign of weakness—unfitness, perhaps, for the



Figure 15. Above, a potentially deadly struggle ensues when the unspoken rules of the brothel are violated. Below, a hapless John is stuck outside the door while Maria fights with a jealous colleague.

important position she holds at the center of various networks of power. The man, clearly the least important part of the equation, is nonetheless also considered at fault for arousing the woman's jealousy, his behavior insensitive to the economic and emotional position of the women. While Maria and her colleague soon make amends, it is understood that the latter must leave the brothel. The John, furthermore, is now expected to take responsibility for her, and he nods as Maria smilingly delivers his orders: "Be a good husband and don't ever 'lose your way' into my room again." This, it seems, is what passes for a happily-ever-after ending in *Bumi Makin Panas*.

Gender and Agency in Historical Perspective: Pasar Senen and the Political Economy of National Art



Figure 16. Even as Pak Johan's gaze is extinguished, upon seeing Maria at his former patron's funeral, Arie's is ignited.

Even after Pak Johan's death rains on what appear to be the last vestiges of hope in the patriarchal/ideological dream of one day rising into a position of real power and influence, another romantic ideal quickly rears its head: that of the artist as hero, champion of the people, and upholder of egalitarianism over rigid hierarchy. Arie, the young painter who defended Pak Johan at the nightclub, becomes infatuated with Maria after she appears at

the burial of his former patron. Like Pak Johan, Arie seems to see something "pure" in Maria,²⁵ and asks her to pose for him in the formal, purple dress she wore to the funeral. She, too, at first reads Arie as an unlikely outsider to the sordid socioeconomic space inhabited by herself and nearly everyone else we've met so far. When he comes to visit her at the brothel, she teases him at first: "You sure you've got the right address? This is a house of prostitution, not an art studio."²⁶

Yet this is the thinnest of ruses, and the film, applying its critical realist perspective to everything in sight, has already begun to blur the lines between the economy of art production and that of selling one's body. As is made clear in an earlier scene where Arie paints two of Maria's colleagues, placing a wad of bills on the table and dismissing them when he is done, the structures driving art and prostitution are based in many of the same spaces, and rely on the same pool of *cukong* (patrons or moneymen). It is through Arie's position and artwork (we are shown a number of his paintings of prostitutes from Maria's brothel) that *Bumi Makin Panas* evokes and engages with the history of art in Indonesia. In particular, Arie brings to mind the struggle for independence and years of early nationhood that followed, when the Pasar Senen area of Jakarta was host to daily discussions, critiques, and heated debates among established and up-and-coming artists alike. In this way, the film looks back to the modern emergence of many of the tropes and themes that inhabit its images and narrative, implicitly marking the vaporization, in the ever-hotter atmosphere of Suhartoism, of the nationalist ideals they were once considered inseparable from.

Pasar Senen (which translates as “Monday Market”²⁷), or Senen, as the area is commonly known, distinguished itself from other traditional market-based areas by the presence of an important train station (providing a link to rural areas and other cities); a bus terminal; the Senen Grand, a classic movie house built in the 1920s, and now one of the few, still-functioning historical movie theaters in Jakarta; the Bharata theater, a space for traditional dance drama; a book market; rows of cheap, informal food and coffee stands and restaurants of various stripes; and a large, quasi-legal prostitution zone. Perhaps not surprisingly, a closer look into the history of the area and its best known patrons of the 1940s and ’50s exposes not only the glory days of the revolution and early nationhood, but a number of interesting parallels with the urban milieu peopled by artists, prostitutes, and *cukong* that is depicted a few decades later in *Bumi Makin Panas*. Since at least the Japanese occupation era (1942-1945), Chairil Anwar, the controversial, yet nationally celebrated, poet originally from Northern Sumatra was a storied customer of the brothels in Senen. As a writer, he also made use of the concentration of publishing operations and journals nearby, as well as of wealthy, established families; particularly in times of war and national struggle, such families were known for helping to provide for those “in the movement.”

As described in the late writer-director Sjumandjaja’s best-selling, but still un-filmed, biographical script *Aku (I)*, Sjumandjaja, 1987/2003), from the beginning of the War until his early death from syphilis in 1949,²⁸ Anwar was a divisive figure. A brilliant and prolific source of the emerging discourse of national identity, in Sjumandjaja’s work,²⁹ the poet is in equal parts depicted as an untrustworthy, red-eyed nihilist creep who begs, borrows, and steals to support his unquenchable literary and corporeal desires. Whip-smart and unpredictable, in *Aku*, Anwar wanders the city, pockets filled with books, pausing to jot down a few verses when inspiration strikes and frequently stopping by houses of ill repute. His interactions with one woman in particular, a prostitute named Marsiti, are instructive, as she is portrayed not simply as the symbol of a “working girl” or victim, but as a member of a loose and varied community—one thrown together to a large extent by the circumstantial structure of Senen, and by the pressures of the Japanese occupation—with whom Anwar frequently discusses his work, as in the scene below:

[Anwar] also does not fail to reach the train cars,
in the yard of the old Senen Station.
There he enters a rickety shack of depravity, one of hundreds
that stand there, and finds Marsiti,
a woman he has known for some time.

Marsiti is pregnant, but this does not prevent her quickly removing her sarong and clothing, and attending to her client, who looks to be a longtime patron. So carefully the man's clothes are slipped off, as she massages his knees. But this man simply continues to read deeply from the books he has stolen along the way. He soon speaks, however: "No Joke! You'll be happy to hear this one. Our own conversations are a lot like this, Listen, Siti"³⁰ (Sjumandjaja, 1987/2003, p. 20-21).³¹

What follows is Anwar's recitation of two short poems, one in which a man and woman envision themselves older, arthritic, and (venereal) disease-ridden, their lives soon coming to a close, and the other a more romantic image of a young girl³² who bravely wanders alone through life, searching for something unclear on the beach at dawn. The latter ends with the verse:

Girl, my hair loose and unraveled
What are you looking for,
In the cold sea on a foreign beach,
Girl, go home! Go home! (Sjumandjaja, 1987/2003 p. 22).³³

Important for our purposes are the images of a woman's life set adrift into a dark, "foreign" sea of potentiality by circumstances from which there is in fact likely no return, and ending in a decidedly unromanticized companionship with a john. Also of interest is Anwar's fleeting use of the first-person "my" (*ku*) in the initial line of the second poem quoted above, briefly merging the author/narrator's voice with that of the wandering girl who is the object of representation. Following some unnamed, "offscreen" series of events that have produced the girl's, and likely also the narrator's, current state of affairs, the blurring of voices suggests the potential, and the desire, for unification—for the formation of a new collectivity in response to what has occurred. (The poem almost certainly indicates the difficulties caused by the sudden installation of a brutal Japanese regime in Java, Sumatra, and elsewhere during WWII). As Tinuk Yampolsky (2002) and others note, however, Anwar and those of his generation were both criticized for an "individualistic" perspective understood by many as related to the

influence of European literature, and celebrated for infusing Indonesian, the new national language, with an informal and broadly accessible grammatical and structural approach.

In *Aku* (I, Sjumandjaja, 1987/2003), Sjumandjaja's poetically rendered scene-descriptions, framing Anwar's actual poems, work to foreground the concept of unification across the boundaries of both class and gender, while taking great care not to idealize or deify the poet and his contemporaries: like the prostitutes surrounding them, the artists who frequent Senen remain eminently flawed and human. While Anwar is the son of a high official (a *Bupati*, or region-head, in Sumatra), and Marsiti is a prostitute of low socioeconomic standing, the war and the nationalist movement have had a certain leveling effect, pushing them, along with other ostensibly disparate groups and interests, into closer alliance. With Marsiti, Anwar not only has conjugal exchanges, but intellectual ones, in which he recites his work and asks for her opinion. The poet's motivations, on one level, are very much construed to be that of an individual man seeking his fortune in a chaotic historical moment. But his interactions with Marsiti can also be seen in light of the nationalist movement's strong need to reach out—using art, literature, and film, among other methods—and engage the people, that vast, at the time largely poor and uneducated, public spread across thousands of cities, villages, and islands, and rife with class, ethnic, and linguistic divisions. Only by the herculean task of translating itself into terms understandable—and attractive—to all these people would the movement continue to live and grow, expanding its communal body and spirit.³⁴ Senen, where key revolutionary images, slogans, and texts were conceived and produced in various media, was among the de facto centers of operation for this particular part of the mission.

During the crucial years of nationalist struggle and early independence, for artists of the “1945 generation,” many of whom, like Chairil Anwar, were at the time living on little or no money, Senen offered the possibility of survival and growth: the area afforded close access to the central nodes of national arts and literature production; to other artists and *cukong*, or moneymen, and thus to the possibility of finding collaborators and/or paying work; and to people from all economic and social walks of life, who collectively represented the “object” of the new national discourse being formulated there.³⁵ It is this bustling, hustling scene where individualistic desire strikes an uneasy coexistence with collectivist, ostensibly altruistic ideals that is evoked by Bumi Makin Panas as a historical/artistic “essence” with which its narrative, and its existence as a cinematic work of art, are densely entangled.

Furthermore, looking at the work produced in and around Senen in the 1940s and '50s, and at memoirs and histories of that era, in addition to Anwar, the emotional, intellectual, and corporeal proximity to the "masses" provided by prostitution appears to have made a particularly deep impression on a number of other major figures in literature, painting, and film. The memoir *Sudjojono dan Aku (Sudjojono and I, 2006)*, by Mia Bustam, narrates the lives of the author and her former husband, the famous leftist painter Sudjojono, during the same period. Before marrying Bustam, he, like many of his colleagues, frequented Senen, and produced paintings, among other things, of prostitutes he encountered there. Sudjojono, writes Bustam, also became a regular patron of one woman in particular, and she a model for his work, because he was interested in the story of her life (p. 35). Eventually, he felt that he should "pull her from the world of desire"³⁶ (p. 35), and, after changing her name to the respectable-sounding Miryam, the two began living together as a married couple in the Sunter area of Jakarta.

Miryam's background, however, was not so easily concealed, and Sudjojono's marriage to her put great strain on his relations with family and friends, all of whom, it seems, disapproved out of hand of his choice of a "fallen" woman. Famously hard-headed and unwilling to relent, the well-regarded painter soon lost his job at an established art school, and instead began teaching the children of sailors from his parents' small home, causing a nine-fold reduction in his income. For Miryam, after all the problems with his family and friends, poverty was the last straw, and she soon ran off, returning to the "world of Senen" where she easily earned more than Sudjojono's original salary. After trying several times to convince her to come home, the artist finally gave up on the notion of extracting his lover, and perhaps himself, from the economy of strife, vice, and catastrophe that brought them together. As Miryam appears to have realized, her position there, if not "respectable" in general terms, was nonetheless much stronger than it would have been were she re/integrated into the more rigid, and at least as patriarchal, hierarchy outside. Indeed, it was within Senen that women working as prostitutes, like artists and *cukong*, became a visible, sensible part of the nation-in-process and its discourse, their presence making a deep impression on the nationalist movement and the effort to unify Indonesians in the struggle against the Japanese and Dutch.³⁷

As Robert Cribb (2009) and others have shown, the impact of sex workers during the fight for independence was not limited to the art scene, as their intimate familiarity with various powerful interest—including Dutch and Japanese officers—whose trust they were skilled at obtaining, led to the women's frequent employment by the army as spies and smugglers of weapons. The direct involvement in military affairs of so-called *tuna susila*,

or “nonethical,” women, many of whom also reportedly donated generously to the National Party (PNI), was not without controversy, however, and was harshly criticized on moral grounds by certain officers. Yet Sukarno himself brushed off their protests as small minded, referring to prostitutes as the “best revolutionaries” (Khalid, 2013) and boasting that he had employed 670 of them in the military on the basis of their undeniable value as agents and intelligence gatherers.³⁸

In the acceptance of “nonethnic” prostitutes as fellow revolutionaries by key figures in the nationalist movement, we can arguably see an earlier historical reflection of the kind of pragmatic, “realist” understanding of gender and agency that infused the work of Ali Shahab and others during the early New Order. (Sukarno’s stance on prostitution in particular was also recently praised for its open mindedness and “brilliance” by contemporary feminist scholar Ayu Ratih [Khalid, 2013]). More important still for the task at hand, in the storied alliances formed by artists like Sudjojono and Chairil Anwar with prostitutes, we glimpse the modern emergence of the particular, anti-heroic narrative arc that would later characterize many of the films of the prostitution genre, among others.³⁹ As in Shahab’s later method of journalistic “absorption,” the narratives that came to light in the process can also be seen as the result of an effort on the part of artists, intellectuals, and others to gather the histories and experiences of those with whom their lives became intertwined. It is almost as if Senen had been the site of an informal, yet extensive and highly self-reflexive ethnography project, the “data” from which would be passed along via memoirs, artworks, and legends.

The perspectives shaped there have continued to appear in the work of successive generations of painters, writers, and filmmakers, many of whom also came of age artistically in Senen.⁴⁰ As a result, I would argue, in many of the films of the early 1970s in particular, the intimacy and detail in the representation of economic, social, and gender concerns approaches the ideal of “thick description” that anthropologists like Clifford Geertz so highly valued. In particular, the urban prostitute as a central figure—unlike the important, yet peripheral femmes fatales of American Noir, for example—is normally “fleshed-out” with rich historical, emotional, and intellectual detail,



Figure 17. As from the movie screen, Maria’s complex gaze radiates from Arie’s canvas.

adding a dynamic, perhaps paradoxical, sense of humanity and intelligence to what are often narratives of systematic dehumanization.

The New Order and the Prostitute as Symbol of Transformation

In *Bumi Makin Panas*, not unlike Anwar's poem above, the film's narration and political intervention are very much entangled in, and dependent upon, the perspective and voice of Maria, a woman shaped by her experiences as a prostitute in Jakarta, and vividly brought to life on screen by the performance of actress Suzanna. Shahab's positioning of the figure of the painter, Arie, also functions to reflect on the continuing economic limitations placed on the ability of artists to express themselves freely and lead a bohemian lifestyle: not unlike many of his revolutionary forebears, Arie, who is not well-known and sells few paintings (although he appears to be of an educated, if not affluent, background), is as dependent on the patronage of the local *cukong* as are Maria and her colleagues at the brothel. Maria, like the companions, models, and objects of desire of previous artists in Senen, also appears to represent for Arie the dream of liberation from the economic, social, and political bonds to which he is subject, through an alliance, however difficult or uneasy, that might allow him to surpass the limitations of an individual/ist painter, becoming empowered as a bohemian artist "of the people."⁴¹ As in Mulvey's (1975?) analysis of on-screen women, Maria does, at least in Arie's eyes, signal the potential for heroic, individualist masculinity: the possibility of acting to create change in oneself and others. He sees in her the "purity" of the downtrodden *rakyat kecil* ("little people") who must be saved from injustice, much as he sees in himself the inherent ability to do so, and to be needed and valued because of it.

Yet in a broader sense, the film sees, feels, and expresses something very different in Maria, its narrative tracking the inevitable transformations within her as it moves its characters, and viewers, toward a darker, dystopian view of freedom, independence, and collectivity—one in which the artist, as well as the wealthy *cukong*, is destined to fail as liberator of himself or others. The failure, furthermore, is not that of the ever-critical, yet still hopeful, 1945 generation, who "saved" few prostitutes but succeeded as part of the broader effort to liberate the nation from Dutch colonialism. Rather, we now find ourselves in the early New Order years, in which the local ground, and nearly everyone on it, is pervaded by an intense, manic heat, producing a contemporary social, political, and economic atmosphere in which even Chairil Anwar would seem like a gentleman. Arie's idealism, like that of his former patron, Pak Johan, is thus soon shown to be catastrophically anachronistic, and his attempts to liberate himself and Maria are quickly,

and reflexively, countered by the steaming urban milieu and its various agents.

In this context, it seems that Maria has become not only a symbol of the people, but an embodied manifestation of the system that has suddenly and thoroughly permeated their lives: it is “it” that she has found herself unifying with, not “they” or “he.” She therefore cannot—need not—be saved, because after having entered the brothel, she is always already preserved by the system as it acts to sustain itself. She has been inducted, it seems, into the new, totalistic “nationalism” under Suharto as its valuable agent and secret representative. Accordingly, when Arie’s wealthy fiancé, Yanthi, learns that Maria is carrying his child and tries to kill her, it is as if everything surrounding them,

including animals and the weather, is mobilized in Maria’s defense. While a thunderstorm rages outside, Yanthi is abruptly attacked and mauled by a dog, sending her to the hospital, her face a distorted reflection of the man who was earlier thrown through the glass door at the club.

While Yanthi does eventually succeed in running over Maria with a car, her actions, like those of Pak Johan’s wife before her, merely trigger a final transformation with unintended results, a process and sequence that constitute the penultimate moments of *Bumi Makin Panas*. Collapsing after being struck on the roadside, a familiar red substance flows from under Maria’s skirt, staining her thighs, and indicating the beginning of another phase in her existence. As she is treated in the hospital soon afterward, we are given what is perhaps the most “explicit” image of Maria in the entire film, as she lies on the operating table, unconscious, legs spread wide apart. A man, staring intently, inserts metal implements between her thighs as an iron lung breathes life into her mouth through a rubber mask. Using tongs, the doctor removes several dripping, red chunks of flesh—what appear to

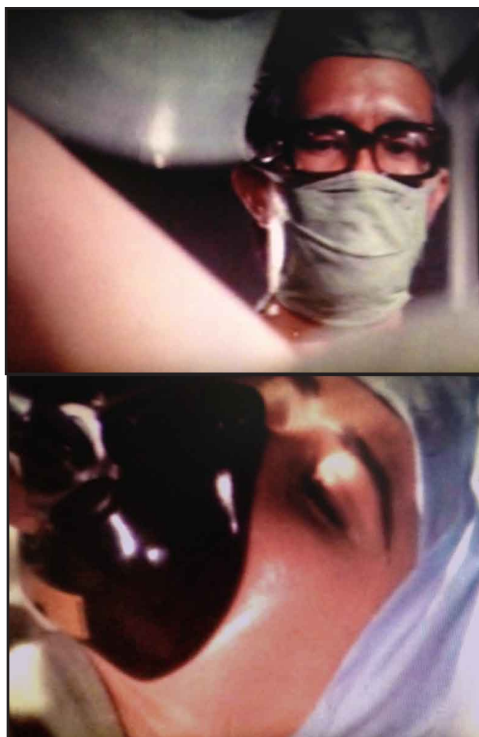


Figure 18. Above, Maria under the doctor’s gaze. Below, Maria’s near-death experience and operation appear to effect a “completion” of the processes of change occurring in her throughout the film.

be pieces of the now-decimated potential for life that Arie implanted within her—dropping them into a bowl, which we are shown in gut-churning detail.

Beyond the shock value of the gore that fills the screen, the many close-ups of machines and technological apparatus of modern medicine that are now working in place of Maria's damaged internal organs, add to the sense that what is occurring is a historically unprecedented transformation. It is as if Maria is truly being reconstructed from the inside, and her integration into the collective, dystopian structure of feeling under the New Order regime is now nearly total. The result is that Arie's image of her is irreversibly altered—or, more properly, translated, since she looks the same from without—into its ideological obverse, the flip side of what she signifies within his positivist, masculinist, and, as the film endeavors to demonstrate, thoroughly unrealistic, gaze (Appropriately, just prior to this moment, Arie's romanticized paintings of Maria and other prostitutes are shredded by a knife-wielding Yanthi, who has suddenly been consumed by a fit of jealous rage). In deconstructing, and then destroying, Arie's familiar discourse and belief system, Shahab blurs the lines between the film as a narrative of dehumanization, and one of horrific "liberation," perhaps the only sort now available in the director's vision of the current historical moment. Within the system at hand, Maria has become efficient, structurally aware, and largely free from the normative expectations and desires of individual subjects, almost like a strikingly beautiful—and potentially deadly—cyborg.

Seen in this way, one might recall the plight of another long-suffering Maria, the one who was rebuilt with cogs and steel in the brutal, industrializing, interwar German landscape of Fritz Lang's 1927 *Metropolis*. There, however, the automaton fatale was simply a clockwork copy, a ruse to underscore the triumphant return of the pure-hearted original. What has been made clear enough by now in *Bumi Makin Panas*, on the other hand, is that Maria's internal makeover is permanent, and that any attempts to possess, harm, or recuperate her will be met with deadly consequences.

Yanthi's final, desperate effort to do away with Maria, shooting blindly at a shadow cast on the window of a closed door, thus unsurprisingly ends in the death of Arie, her own fiancé, who turns out to be the actual source of the offending silhouette. In the ending scene that follows, Maria finds Arie in front of his studio, riddled with bullets meant for her, rendering their potential romance now physically, as well as socially, politically, and economically, impossible. The last shot freezes as Maria bends over him, pulling a shroud across his lifeless body. The image, however, is presented from the point of view of Yanthi—the final representative of "good" normative society—placing the ball, so to speak, squarely back in the audience's

court. Like the vast number of viewers who would have been affected by, had witnessed, or had perhaps been complicit in, the extreme violence of recent history, Yanthi looks on in horror at what her beliefs and actions have actually wrought, her own face and arms still covered with bloody bandages. The score, true to Shahab's maverick, bricolage style, asserts (presumably in ironic jest) the triumphant, orchestral tone of a Western coming to its heroic conclusion, evoking men on horseback riding into the sunset.⁴²

Conclusion: Happy Ending?

While it may well appear that the newly installed, Suhartoist "system" has won the day, and that Maria, despite her status as the last woman standing, is truly a sign of the Indonesian people's historical silencing and "circumstantial inability to act" (Sen. 1993, p. 208), I would like to offer a slightly different interpretation. If Arie has failed to learn from the lessons of history, Shahab certainly has not, and in his and Suzanna's hands, Maria indeed has been fashioned into a powerful, symbolic weapon. Like the revolutionary sex workers before her who spied on the Dutch and Japanese, her circumstantial ability to become embedded within the structures of Suhartoist patriarchal authority enables her to profoundly convey the "hidden" amoral drives and strategies that undergird its positivist/capitalist ideological discourse. Following the death of the artist, it is therefore the brothel that stands as the last trace of the troubled ideal of collectivity born in nationalism under Sukarno, and now reworked, it seems, from the inside-out by the rise of Suharto. Yet in the extra-diegetic context of the exhibition and reception of *Bumi Makin Panas*, unlike the vast armies of compliant cronies that pay for her services, Maria/Suzanna is also no longer a figure, or an image, that can be considered fully colonized in terms of its signification. Furthermore, the brothel, we can safely assume, with its collective of female "outsiders," will continue to be her center of operations, and to serve as the film's central vehicle of critique – an image and idea that are meant to linger with its audiences. Unlike so many other areas of life, here, the brothel is anything but a place of silence. For Shahab, a troubled artist who has survived the apocalypse, the brothel, for the moment, has become the heated locus of a new, critical realism. As it was in the past, it is also a method to reach out to "the people."

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NOTES

[1] As I will explain in more detail below, Marx's and Engels' concept of ideological inversion – “if in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process” (1947, p. 14) – is one whose seeming simplicity has been much debated. In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels admit that actually representing what is “real” outside of its abstracted, ideologically inverted state is a complicated task to say the least. As they put it, “our difficulties begin only when we set about the observation and the arrangement – the real depiction – of our historical material, whether of a past epoch or of the present. The removal of these difficulties is governed by premises which it is quite impossible to state here, but which only the study of the actual life-process and the activity of the individuals of each epoch will make evident.” In my analysis, *Bumi Makin Panas* seeks to address precisely these long-standing difficulties – how to critically and truthfully represent the state of affairs in a given historical milieu when the modes of representation made available within it must be seen as always already ideologically compromised. A direct or literal re-inversion may be politically

dangerous, and therefore counterproductive, and furthermore will only produce another image, itself a mere abstraction of the material reality that is sought.

[2] In reference to the changing positions of women beginning 1965, see Larasati (2013) and Wieringa (2002), who chronicled the fates of those associated with the leftist-progressive organization Gerwani (the Indonesian Women's Movement), or with various other left-leaning groups, including farming and arts associations such as Lekra (The People's Arts Guild) and BTI (Farmers Front of Indonesia). Both writers show that women from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds who were thought to have links to the left were particularly singled out for ideological vilification and social, legal, physical, and sexual attack under the conservative, patriarchal New Order regime. Many who once occupied socially and economically stable positions were pushed into a vast, new, political underclass with sharply curtailed rights and opportunities. Furthermore, Larasati focused on class and rural upbringing as factors in the vulnerability of women associated with the left, often leading to prostitution when most other options were foreclosed (importantly, Larasati also included a case study in which an otherwise "helpless," politically dispossessed, village woman uses her dancing skills to manipulate her position vis-à-vis local officials and community members alike). Like some of the women described by Larasati and Wieringa, Maria, the main character in *Bumi Makin Panas*, appears to come from a formerly well-to-do, rural family that has been impoverished by circumstances. In presenting the situation of her "fall," Shahab avoids any direct critique of the government or reference to the violence of 1965. Yet it is precisely Maria's vigilant, if not explicitly leftist or progressive, approach to the problems of gender for which she is "punished" by the system, thereafter losing access to most opportunities to support herself outside of prostitution. Maria thus seems to be a character devised with both recent historical developments and the right wing, patriarchal discourse of the new state, firmly in mind.

[3] For detailed analyses of the rise of Suharto and its effects, see Wieringa 2002, Roosa 2006, Larasati 2013, Yngvesson 2011, and Heryanto 1999.

[4] I translated from the Indonesian: "pil pahit dilapis gula."

[5] It is interesting to note, as A. L. Becker (1995) has argued, that in the local history of pre-cinematic performing arts, such as shadow play (*wayang kulit*), there is also a strong tendency to de-individualize the causality of events, taking power out of the hands of on-screen kings and heroes and locating it in the "coincidental" events brought about by the collective forces of history and fate. Becker relates this, among other factors, to the indirect expression of causality (as well as time) common to the grammatical structures of Javanese, Indonesian, and other local languages.

[6] In that they were hit films focusing on themes of prostitution, local and international capital, urbanization, and sociomoral decay, *Bernafas Dalam Lumpur* and *Ananda* certainly paved the way for Shahab and *Bumi Makin Panas*, testing the waters for both censor and audience response. However, as noted above, Shahab's first novel, *Tante Girang* (1967), preceded both films and made a huge splash in Indonesia, helping to popularize a genre of what is elsewhere often referred to as pulp fiction. Shahab continued to write novels throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, and all but one film he made during that period was first written as a novel, either in serialized or continuous form (see "Ali Shahab: Kerja Rangkap . . .," 1973; "Sedikit Tentang Ali . . ."; Sangh, 1990; and others).

[7] Directors Nya Abbas Akup and Tourino Djunaedy both share Shahab's interest in gender as an on-screen political tool. Akup's *Inem Pelayan Sexy* (*Inem the Sexy Maid*) trilogy (Azhar, Djamaluddin & Akup, 1976-77) in particular radiates an awareness of the "male" gaze of spectators, turning its central, female

recipient – a maid named Inem – into a scornful activist for the rights of her exploited and dispossessed comrades in the employ of entitled, wealthy, and frequently lecherous, upper-class homeowners.

[8] Given the extreme nature of the violence and exploitation many sources (Larasati 2013, Wieringa 2002, Roosa 2006, Yngvesson 2011) describe during the rise and reign of Suharto, an argument could be made that *Bumi Makin Panas* is in fact not hyperbolic, but represents an effort to create a new realism that would match the sheer ridiculousness and unpredictability of life under the New Order.

[9] The title is preceded by “Suzanna in” – by this time the actress was already a household name following starring roles in popular films like the aforementioned “prostitute” film *Bernafas Dalam Lumpur* and also *Beranak Dalam Kubur* (1971), a quasi horror film co-directed by Ali Shahab and Awaludin.

[10] I translated from the dialog: “*Yang kita butuhkan sekarang ini adalah uang, bukan rumah sebesar museum dan tanah di kampung sialan ini... kita pindah ke kota. Aku Bosan!*”

[11] I translated from the dialog: “*Aku tak perlu terima kasih padamu! Kau sudah mengambil upahnya dengan menjual semua milik kami! Dan menjatuhkan harga diri dengan bermain dengan perempuan-perempuan kelas kambing. Sementara aku dan Maria di sini melayanimu, seperti hambah terhadap majikannya!!*”

[12] Shahab, ever on the cusp of innovations in popular aesthetics, also co-directed the 1971 film *Beranak Dalam Kubur* (*Giving Birth in the Grave*), which was hugely successful and touched off a long-standing trend in horror films.

[13] Louis Althusser’s 1963 “On the Materialist Dialectic” demonstrates the ongoing theoretical difficulties and debates caused by Marx’s concept of ideological inversion over a century after *The Germany Ideology* was written. For Althusser, what was “clear as day” was not the concept itself, but “that we have to make a very serious theoretical effort if we are to succeed in thinking this inversion which seems so obvious... as if knowledge could be born merely of the cohabitation of the known and the little known or unknown.” The problem, for Althusser as for Marx, was how to conceive of a new, and ideologically untainted set of *terms* in which reality or truth (or “science”) could be revealed as such: “For a science is not obtained by inverting an ideology. A science is obtained on condition that the domain in which ideology believes that it is dealing with the real is abandoned, that is, by abandoning its ideological *problematic* (the organic presupposition of its basic concepts, and with this system, the majority of these concepts as well) and going on to establish the activity of the new theory ‘in another element’ in the field of a new, scientific, problematic.”

[14] Raymond Williams coined the term “Structure of Feeling” in his 1954 essay “Film and the Dramatic Tradition” (in the book *Preface to Film*, written with Michael Orrom). It indicates the combined forces of social, political, and economic undercurrents that essentially (and largely unconsciously) shape the way we think and feel during given periods. For the purposes of this essay, I am particularly drawn to the way he described it in a 1979 interview: “...it was a structure in the sense that you could perceive it operating in one work after another which weren’t otherwise connected—people weren’t learning it from each other; yet was one of feeling much more than of thought—a pattern of impulses, restraints, tones” (qtd in Mathews, 2001).

[15] I translated from the dialog: “*Pantas suamiku jarang pulang ke rumah. Rupanya ada daging yang lebih montok yang bikin teh hangat di sini!*”

[16] Suharto’s takeover in 1965-1967, supported and carried out by right-wing, Western-aligned factions in the military, hinged on a public vilification and attack of the then-powerful Indonesian

Communist Party (PKI). In the months following September 1965, approximately 500,000-1,000,000 members, and suspected members, of the PKI were executed by soldiers, civilian paramilitaries, and vigilantes. Many thousands more were imprisoned without trial for up to fifteen years. Thereafter, those thought to be members of the PKI or other left-leaning groups, as well as their relatives and known associates, received a special mark on their identity cards, and were banned from government schools and jobs, and often subject to severe social and legal harassment. See Larasati (2013), Wieringa (2006), Roosa (2006), and Yngvesson (2011).

[17] While an environment such as that of the brothel in *Bumi Makin Panas* seems potentially plausible, it would likely be best to assume that Jakarta brothels in the 1970s were not all run by people with the ethical sense of Mami Marno, and that Shahab has created the atmosphere of this particular establishment in order to make a point.

[18] I translated from the dialog: "*Bukan kau saja yang perawan di dunia ini. Nenekku juga perawan ketika kakekku pertama kali menidurinya. Ha ha ha... semuanya juga bakal mengalami malam pertama seperti ini.*"

[19] In her still-ubiquitous article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975), Laura Mulvey famously coined the term "to-be-looked-at-ness" in reference to the status of on-screen women, particularly in Hollywood films of the classical era (although her theory of a cinematic economy of gender can essentially be extrapolated to almost any film that uses the general technique of "continuity" in narrative and formal style). The term indicates the "passive" status of women who are positioned to be visually "consumed" by both "active" on-screen men and the spectators who are alternately sutured into the men's view or able to stare voyeuristically/without being caught looking from their position outside the world of the diegesis.

[20] I have drawn from and translated a statement of Shahab's quoted in the 1988 article from the newspaper *Minggu Merdeka* cited in the text above, in paragraph 6: "...saya bermaksud menggambarkan era kebebasan yang sulit dikendalikan oleh sebagian anggota masyarakat – setelah sekian lama kebebasan ditekan oleh kepemimpinan Presiden Soekarno. Kebebasan yang sulit dikendalikan itu akhirnya banyak menimbulkan dekadensi moral. Jadi begitu. Kalau orang membaca novel saya dengan hanya 'mengintip' bagian-bagian pasangnya saja, tentu yang akan ia dapatkan hanya tentang itu saja, dan tak akan menemukan misi yang hendak saya sampaikan."

[21] See Film Indonesia, *Suzanna*; Sondang, "Di Mata..."; and Sondang, "Cinta Ali Shahab...".

[22] I translated from the Indonesian dialog: "*Siapa saja bisa mengajak saya keluar. Asal mau membayar sesuai dengan tarif Mami Marno.*"

[23] I translated from the Indonesian dialog: "*Terserah Bapak... Kami biasa dicarter seperti taxi. Berapa jam dipakai, sekian pula dibayar.*"

[24] I translated from the Indonesian dialog: "*Kau pikir cuman cukong-cukong tua macam dia saja yang bisa membayarmu? Haaa!*"

[25] In Indonesia, and in Indonesian cinema, names are usually important; one might well assume that the locally uncommon name Maria here represents a connection to the long-suffering, Christian religious icon of the same appellation. It is also almost certainly a way to suggest that Maria is not Muslim, which may in itself signify a strategy to avoid potential censorship of some of the film's more controversial moments. As Krishna Sen shows, government censorship guidelines have, since at least the early New Order, called for extreme caution in regard to images or ideas that might be construed

as offending religious groups, of which Muslims are by far the majority in Indonesia (1994, p. 67-71). Furthermore, considering the New Order's elimination, imprisonment, and extreme vilification of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) during and after its rise to power in 1965-1967, elements of films understood by the National Censorship Board (BSF) to include "any hint of atheism and flags of socialist nations" (p. 69) were generally cut.

Perhaps for these reasons as well, there are no overt references to religion, or to characters' religions, in *Bumi Makin Panas*. There is, however, a scene in which a bearded, typically Islamic-looking public figure gives a fiery speech to enthusiastic applause against the ills of prostitution, demanding that it be abolished so as to set an example of proper morals for the younger generation. At the end of the speech, the scene freezes into a photograph of the man at the podium; the camera then pulls out to reveal the photograph as part of a newspaper article about the speech, which is being read by Maria, sitting on the edge of her bed. As the frame becomes wider still, Maria slyly glances behind her, where, of course, the same speaker is now fast asleep, apparently exhausted by her services.

[26] I translated from the dialog: "*Bung Mungkin salah alamat. Di sini rumah lacur, bukan sanggar.*"

[27] Jakarta is, among other things, divided into a number of traditional market areas, where sellers would congregate on different days of the week (therefore certain other similar areas still have names like Pasar Minggu "Sunday Market," etc).

[28] Some sources say he was also suffering from typhus, and possibly tuberculosis. The day of his death, April 28, 1949, is now celebrated as National Literature Day.

[29] Portrayals of Anwar can be found in both *Aku* and Sjumandjaja's 1974 film *Atheis Kafir (Atheist Heathen)*, the latter of which is based on the 1949 novel *Atheis* by Achdiat K. Mihadjo. Mihadjo presents Anwar in a similar way.

[30] Siti is short for Marsiti

[31] I translated from the original: *Tidak urung sampai juga dia ke daerah gerbong/ kereta, di daerah gerbong Stasiun Senen lama./ Dimasukinya sebuah gubuk reot mesum dari ratusan/ yang berdiri di sana, dan ditemuinya Marsiti,/ seorang perempuan kenalan lama.*

Marsiti sedang hamil,/ tapi tidak menjadi halangan baginya untuk segera/membuka kain dan bajunya,/ menerima seorang pelanggan,/ yang nampaknya pelanggan lama./ Telaten sekali dilicutinya baju sang lelaki,/ dan dipijitnya lutut-lututnya./ Tapi lelaki ini terus saja asyik membaca/ atas buku-buku yang barusan saja dicurinya./ Dia bahkan segera menyuara:/ "Bukan main! Kau pasti senang/ mendengarkan yang ini./ Omong kitanya kira-kira begini,/ dengarkan Siti:

[32] The text uses the word *dara*, meaning a young girl or virgin; the combination of an image of innocent, if troubled, youth, and an unabashedly experienced, tainted aged person appears to function as a potential map of the life of Marsiti, here imagined as commiserating life-partner for the poet himself.

[33] I translated from the original: "*Dara, rambutku lepas terurai/ Apa yang kau cari,/ Di laut dingin di asing pantai,/ Dara, pulang! Pulang!*"

[34] Bustam (2006) provides an excellent exposition of the nationalist/artistic drive to reach "the people" (*rakyat*) during the revolution and early independence years. For more on the politics of the Sukarno years see also Larasati (2013), Wardaya (2006), and Friend (2003).

[35] The chapter "Jadi Seniman Senen" ("Becoming a Senen Artist") (109-143) in Misbach Yusa Biran's memoir *Kenang-Kenangan Orang Bandel (The Life and Times of a Rebel)* (2008) is particularly useful in understanding the interaction of *cukong* and semi-impoverished, up and coming painters, filmmakers,

writers, and other artists in Senen in the 1950s. See also Biran's (1971) collection of short journalistic/ethnographic articles based on his experiences there, *Keadjaiban di Pasar Senen (The Miracle in Senen)*.

[36] I translated from the original Indonesian: "*Mengentaskannya dari dunia nafsu.*"

[37] Perhaps most notably, when the painter Affandi, working together with Sudjojono in the group SIM (Seniman Indonesia Muda, or Young Indonesian Artists), was asked by Sukarno to create a motivational poster that could be surreptitiously pasted on walls all over the city and elsewhere, it was Chairil Anwar, having just wandered into their meeting, who ended up supplying the now-famous tagline "*Boeng, Ayo Boeng!*" (Brother, let's go, Brother!). The line, as was well known, was taken from the calls of Senen prostitutes to passing men, who used the same informal, pointedly egalitarian appellation – "boeng" (now spelled "bung"), which means older brother but also connotes something closer to "comrade" – with which the revolutionaries normally referred to each other (see Sembiring 2010). Along with the scrawled phrase *merdeka atau mati!* (freedom or death!) that adorned thousands of walls as illicit graffiti, the resulting poster became one of the most iconic elements of the nationalist movement.

[38] For more information on the roles of prostitutes in the nationalist movement, see Adams (1965), Cribb (1991), Khalid (2013), Isnaeni (2014), and Fadillah (2012).

[39] In earlier films such as Asrul Sani's *Pagar Kawat Berduri (The Barbed Wire Fence)*, 1962) or Usmar Ismail's *Dosa Tak Berampum (The Unforgivable Sin)*, 1951) among others, the questioning of heroism, individual agency, and potential for national unification between disparate groups and interests is already very clear, although prostitution is not a major theme.

[40] Senen continued to be a popular meeting place for artists and filmmakers until the late 1960s, when the Taman Ismail Marzuki arts complex was built. While the core group of artists known as the "Seniman Senen" was limited in number, discussions, meetings, performances, and social events in Senen were regularly frequented by most of the best-known artists, writers, filmmakers, and producers in Jakarta (See Biran, 1971; 2008).

[41] While Arie does not explicitly use the term "of the people," his idealist rejection of the goals of earning money (through art or other means) and living a respectable lifestyle in the eyes of the establishment clearly implies a desire to transcend the economic limitations imposed on him as a struggling individual artist, and to seek financial freedom through a greater public appreciation of the value of his work, which, as we are shown, is focused on the importance of representing "the people," and prostitutes in particular.

[42] Indonesia, like most other countries, was the recipient of thousands and thousands of US films, particularly in the decades following World War II (Sen 1994); one would surmise, therefore, that the evocation of men on horseback riding into the sunset (or some similar image) would be obvious enough to Indonesian audiences of the 1970s.

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