

The Politics of Religion in Sisworo Gautama Putra's and Joko Anwar's *Pengabdi Setan*

Anton Sutandio

Maranatha Christian University, INDONESIA
 e-mail: anton.sutandio@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This research compares two films, the original *Pengabdi Setan* and its remake, in the context of politics of religion to show how the two films depict the issue of religion at two different eras based on the released years of the two films. The display of religion in the two films is viewed as an allegorical representation as well as critical responses to the socio-political situation of the two eras. Separated by almost four decades, Joko Anwar's nostalgic remake and the original film subtly converse with each other, share distinctive similarities yet also polarized differences that underlie their endeavor to allegorically bring back and relive public memory of certain national trauma; that is repression during the New Order regime and marginalization of the minority in contemporary Indonesia. By focusing on the films' cinematography and mise-en-scene, this research attempts to locate those allegorical moments within the depiction of religious practice that challenge, criticize or accentuate the dominant ideology of their respective eras.

Keywords: Allegorical moment; religion; national trauma; politicization.

INTRODUCTION

"On its first day of release, 91.070 people have met mother," Joko Anwar wrote in his instagram on 29 September 2017. "Mother" refers to the evil character in the remake of Sisworo Gautama Putra's *Pengabdi Setan* (1980). Joko Anwar's remake (or prequel as he claims) will definitely be one of the best-selling Indonesian horror films that gains more than 3 million viewers and is still counting, with the prospective additional foreign audience when it is released in 42 different countries, so it says. Based on databoks.co.id. which was released on February 26, 2018, *Pengabdi Setan* becomes the number one box-office film of 2017 with 4.2 million audience ("Pengabdi Setan Film Terlaris 2017," 2018). In an interview, Anwar states that the reason why he chose *Pengabdi Setan* is because the original film leaves a great impact on Anwar's love towards the horror genre. In fact, he claims that he has been waiting for about 10 years until Rapi Films gave him permission to remake the film. Anwar states that it was a horror film that was enjoyable to watch, in which the horror "penetrates the bones" (Nurjanah, 2017, par. 16).

Putra, also known as Naryono Prayitno or S. Gatra, is known as the most productive horror genre director during the golden era of Indonesian horror in the early 1980s to early 1990s. It is said that through horror

films, he can achieve his mission to introduce Indonesia mystical culture. Suzanna, the Indonesian horror icon, partly achieved her status through Putra's films such as *Sundel Bolong*, *Nyi Blorong*, *Telaga Angker* and *Nyi Ageng Ratu Pemikat*. Written and directed by himself, *Pengabdi Setan* was one of the best horror films at his time that turns into a cult film.

There has never been a previous academic research comparing the two films, thus this research becomes the first to do so. There are some non-academic articles comparing the two films in the form of blogs, forums, or popular online magazines. Santana briefly mentions the two films as having similar premise, that is about household instability (Santana, 2017). In a popular online magazine, Cervesa discusses six explicit differences between the two films (Cervesa, 2017).

There are, indeed, numbers of research papers on each of the films. In her unpublished paper, Guttman uses the 1980 *Pengabdi Setan* as an example of "...Suharto-era Indonesian cinema" when she compares it to the Indonesian horror films of the Post-Reformation era (Guttman, 2015). Imanjaya looks at the same film as an example of Indonesian cult cinema that attempts to struggle against the dominant New Order regime (Imanjaya, 2009). Pratama discusses Anwar's *Pengabdi Setan* from the psycho-

logical point of view, arguing that the film received great attention from the audience because it offers a construction of horror that goes along with the perception of the majority (Pratama, 2018). Thus, this research looks at the gap in which a comparative research of the two films in the context of politics of religion is non-existent.

The story of both films revolves around a family who experiences a tragic loss which is related to the supernatural. The history of Indonesian horror genre has often dealt with the issue of supernatural. In fact, according to Kusuma as quoted in Sutandio, one of the typologies of Indonesian horror films is black magic (*perdukunan*) films (Sutandio, 2016, p. 7), which often deals with rite practices that are rooted in the traditional beliefs. One of the earliest Indonesian horror films, *Tengkorak Hidoep* (1941) also indicates that the source of Indonesian horror genre has always been legends, folktales, and supernatural stories.

In the tradition of film analysis, treating horror genre as an allegory to certain horror in the history of humankind is very common, as seen in the work of Adam Lowenstein, Linnie Blake or Lim Bliss Cua. They discuss some films which they claim to be allegorically related to certain traumatic events in the history of certain countries. In Jameson's words, the concept of allegory is a means to an "opening up of the text to multiple meanings, to successive rewritings and overwritings, which are generated at so many levels and as so many supplementary interpretations" (Jameson, 1994, p. 29-30). Lowenstein considers cinematic allegories as "a shocking collision of film, spectator, and history where registers of bodily space and historical time are disrupted, confronted, and intertwined" (Lowenstein, 2005, p. 2). The premise of most horror films are about the return of the past or the reluctance of the past to stay in the past, which is usually represented by the presence of monsters, ghosts and other supernatural beings. Sutandio argues that the haunting of the past allegorically signals the need to heal past traumatic wounds (Sutandio, 2016, p. 21). Based on this argument, horror genre is the most fitting genre to allegorically represent the unhealed historical trauma. Kusuma also argues that the presence of ghost and revenge in Indonesian horror films can be interpreted as the return of things that are repressed or oppressed. The ghost is the metaphor to the frightening, painful or traumatic past. Horror films, unlike other genres in Indonesian cinema, present images from the past that show pain, cruelty, atrocity and revenge which are brought to the present time (Kusuma, 2011, p. 215). In a similar tone, Imanjaya argues that films such as Gautama's *Pengabdi Setan* is produced with "subversive and exploitative techniques to struggle against a dominant

order..[and] allegorically "...positioned their villains and criminals as the symbol of Soeharto's government..." (Imanjaya, 2009, p. 143). Thus, utilizing allegory or subtle techniques to criticize or attack the regime is the safest way, as shown in Gautama's *Pengabdi Setan*.

To understand the political/historical trauma that the two films relate to, one needs to refer to the period when the films were released. Gautama's *Pengabdi Setan* (Putra, 1980) was released in 1980, under Soeharto's New Order regime. At that time, film censorship is very strict and any films published should always reflect the regime ideology. Thus, criticism through films towards the regime should be done subtly, for example through the use of allegory.

Anwar's *Pengabdi Setan* is released in 2017 (Anwar, 2017), although the political life is more dynamic compared to the New Order regime, undeniably the reminiscence of New Order fear and trauma still remain, haunting people to this day, especially on the issue of public persecution, intolerance and discrimination towards those who have different beliefs or ideologies. The so-called reformation that began right after the fall of Soeharto's regime is misinterpreted as freedom to express or even forcefully enforce one's belief or ideology to others.

POLITICS OF RELIGION

Islam is a holistic religion which contains a complete belief, value and action (Epley, 2010, p. 10). Thus, as the nation with the largest number of Moslems in the world, it is not uncommon that religion is also pervasive in the Indonesian political dynamic. Although the country is not an Islamic country and seen more as a democratic country with diverse cultures and ethnicities, Islam is always the major part of the nation building process, as the majority of Indonesian Moslems belong to at least one of the two largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, Nahdatul Ulama or Muhammadiyah. Indeed, there has not been an agreement on whether or not Islam, "...is the part of the state or whether or not Islam has a particular imposed form of the state" (Hasyim, 2013, p. 7). This absence of agreement on the role of religion in the state building also caused tensions among different Islamic organizations for years which underlines the politics of religion. During election years especially, the politicization of religion usually escalates as political parties or candidates attempting to win vote from the majority. Politics of identity that pertains to the dominant religious belief and politics of religious sentiment are often played although it undermines the Pancasila state, as displayed in the 2019 presidential election. This proves that even though generally the

state and religion is separated in Indonesian politics, the politicization of religion remains attractive to politicians.

During the New Order regime, the involvement of religious groups or any groups in politics was limited as the country was run under an undemocratic and authoritative regime. Soeharto put a strict boundary between religion and the state; religion must not come out from its private sphere. Thus, the manifestation of religious norms and values are mostly apparent in other aspects of life, such as culture. The regime was well aware that film as one of the cultural products was an important instrument to maintain their power. Through strict censorship the regime ensured that every film produced had to consistently reassert their ideology. When the film contained religious elements, the regime would also make sure that the content was not provocative or controversial. There was little or almost no space for the filmmakers to criticize the regime unless they did it subtly through symbols or allegory. Not until the early 1990s that the regime started to embrace religious groups when their power started to deteriorate and needed new ally.

After the fall of the New Order regime, people began to re-engage in politics, which include religious groups. In an extreme case, the much freer atmosphere of the Reformation era is seen by some religious fanatics as an opportunity to showcase their power, although the majority of Indonesian Muslims reject the radical ideas as they have committed to democratic system which is implemented in *Pancasila*. In the context of Reformation era, cultural products such as film now becomes a 'battle arena' for competing values and norms that previously have no place in the political realm during the New Order regime. The board of censorship remains strict, if not more so, now that they have to accommodate not only the government, but numbers of social, cultural, and religious groups who have different interests.

DISCUSSION

The discussion begins by the elaboration of the opening and ending of both films. The two parts of the film are a significant part in establishing the mood of the film. Putra's *Pengabdi Setan* sets a funeral rite scene of the mother as the establishing shot. The opening shot is a photo of a mother surrounded by flowers, before the camera tilts up and the audience sees the coffin being lowered down to the grave. Once the coffin is out of sight of the camera, the audience is shown lines of people, and the camera zooms in at the mourning family, in particular the son. Then there is an establishing bird-eye shot of the whole burial ground, confirming the mourning atmos-

phere of the scene and emphasizing the horror tone of the film, because the death scene in the opening of the film suggests that death is only the beginning. In the next scene the audience is literally brought into the grave when Putra intentionally puts the camera inside the grave thus giving the audience the point of view of the buried dead, creating an eerily intimate distance between the audience and the dead body. The cause of her death remains a mystery; however the audience can see that the family's beloved mother is well-loved and missed by the family member. This opening scene establishes the film to be about rite, religion, death, and family.

Gautama's version has a relatively close ending. Relative because albeit the return of the order when the family at the end repent and is saved from the consequences of their being unfaithful, Gautama still leaves some questions when he ends the film abruptly with the shot of a car in which two mysterious characters are sitting. The audience can only see their back inside the car thus evoking some questions such as who they are and what they want (see figure 1).



Figure 1. The closing shot of Gautama's *Pengabdi Setan*

The ending of the film suggests that evil will always lurk around you, and only by being faithful to God you will you be saved from them. Contrasting the opening and the ending of Gautama's version, it is clear that he still applies the standard plot pattern of the New Order regime as Heider suggests: Order-Chaos-Order (Heider, 1991, p. 35-36). The film is opened with an order (the end of the mother suffering, thus the family can resume their normal lives) which is then followed by chaos when the dead returns and with the coming of the evil lady, and is ended by the defeat of the evil by the religious figure. Heider states that order and disorder is "the key to much Indonesian life" (Heider, 1991, p.36) and related to the film production of the New Order regime, order restoration is the regime's keyword. To maintain power, they believe that every aspect of people's life has to be in order. That is why the plot of films produced during that time has to follow the following pattern: The film usually opens with the presence of order, then conflicts come and create disorder, and at the end order is restored by a certain authoritative figure such as a father or religious figure. The figure who restores

order at the end is almost always a male figure as it also reflects the patriarchal system adopted by the regime. Films that do not follow such pattern will be banned or will receive harsh censorship.

In Anwar's *Pengabdi Setan*, the film opens with the close-up shot of the left side of the mother's face. She lies helplessly on her bed while chanting some unclear words, suggesting a mystery behind her misery. The camera stays on her for about twenty seconds before it tilts up and transitions into an office scene in which the daughter, Rini, first appears. It is not until eighteen minutes into the film that the funeral scene comes in. The pattern is almost similar to the original film: the shot of the family and the coffin, the face of the praying man, the lowering down of the body to the grave, close up shot of the body in the grave, close up shot of the father and children, close up shot of the dead mother's face, the shot of the grave digger tilting the dead body and putting a stone under its neck. Besides this detailed funeral scene, there are another two less detailed funeral scenes: one of the grandmother's and the other of Hendra's. Similar to Gautama's version, the funeral scenes want to emphasize a sense of closure to someone's life and loss to others, yet being a horror film, the scenes also foreshadows that death is not the end. The stark difference is how Anwar still shows the mother when she is alive, how she still interacts with the children and husband albeit in her dying condition.

In the context of religion, the fact that the face of the mother figure appears in the opening shot while chanting some mantra suggests that Anwar depicts her as an independent and brave figure. Anwar applies a long take for this scene to ensure the audience's attention is on the mother's figure on the bed. In addition, the mother is the breadwinner of the family, and without her presence the family falls apart. Not to mention that the misery fell upon the mother is the result of her nurturing desire as a woman: she is ready to face the consequences of working with the devil as long as she can have children. All these facts about the mother figure seem to defy the traditional role and portrayal of Moslem women and even the Qur'an in which one verse states that "men are the leaders of women" (Wajiran, 2018, p. 292). Furthermore, in the Javanese view, as represented by the women portrayed in the film, "...women's destiny is primarily centered on a women's role as wife and mother. There is a common cultural justification for women's subordination in Javanese culture where women (wives) are defined as 'background companion' or the better one 'the companion at the husband's side'" (Maula, 2016, p. 113). In terms of the mother portrayal, it is clear that Anwar wants to distant himself from the original

Pengabdi Setan by bringing feminist values into his version. Anwar's mother figure, and the female characters in general, are more dominant than the male figures, thus in the context of religion, Anwar's version brings a more modern interpretation of Moslem women and equality for women in general.

In Gautama's version, the audience never sees the mother when she is alive and can only see her through her photos in Tomi's room and when she turns into a zombie. This difference reflects the socio-political situation of the two periods. In Soeharto's time, the patriarchal system is very dominant and it positions women as objects. In the context of cinema, women are often portrayed as the weak, the victim, or as the monsters. Women are everything that men are not. Thus, it is clear that the absence of the caring and nurturing mother in Gautama's version reflects the undermining of female characters.

In the context of religion, Gautama's version still confirms "...to many studies conducted in Moslem countries: the status of women in Muslim world is still dominantly inferior to that of men" (Alfitri, 2014, p. 27). The patriarchal nature of the New Order Regime goes hand in hand with the studies, although the Qur'an itself, according to Munir, grants equality between men and women albeit it "...speak[s] of man having a slight edge and social superiority over women" (Munir, 2004, p. 5). Thus, in the shadow of the authoritative and patriarchal regime, Gautama chooses to depict a clear gender hierarchy in the religious context, such as reflected in a selected Qur'an verse that mentions about the legislation of "...men's authority over their women, conferring on them the right to discipline their women in order to ensure obedience" (Munir, 2004, p. 5). The gender hierarchy is evident in the film in which the father serves as the most dominant figure, followed by the son who is depicted to show more feeling and concern in the wake the mother's death when compared to the hedonistic daughter. By confirming to the ideology of the regime and adjusting the role of religion as the bearer of order and obedience, the film managed to pass censorship.

Although the role of nurturing and caring mother is also absent in Anwar's version, the film shows strong figures of female characters through the mother and the daughter. The mother is portrayed to be the breadwinner while the father seems to be jobless. When she is gone, the daughter takes over the role of the nurturing and caring mother to her brothers while the father leaves the children in a needy time for an unclear purpose. His response to the children when the children ask him to stay: "What do you need me for?" suggests how the male character is portrayed to

be less significant than the female ones, that everything is fine without his presence. The portrayal of strong female characters reflects the shift in how the female figure is depicted in the post-reformation Indonesian cinema. They no longer are seen only as victims or monsters, but also heroines and in Clover's term, "the final girl."

Unlike Gautama's version, Anwar's version has an open ending, at least to the audience because as far as the characters know, they have been delivered from the evil. The audience is given a hint of the neighbors' sinister plan for the family, which may be revealed in the next installment of *Pengabdi Setan*. Anwar's ending clearly suggests the prevalence of evil that disguises itself as something benevolent which makes it even harder for people to recognize (see figure 2). Cinematographically, Anwar's ending is the reverse of Gautama's ending when Anwar confronts the evil characters with the audience to emphasize the elusiveness of evil, as it cleverly disguises itself as the good neighbors.



Figure 2. The closing scene of Anwar's *Pengabdi Setan*

In the following parts, the analysis is divided into elements that become an allegory to some traumatic or haunting historical/political events in Indonesia. The aspects are the funeral scene, the zombies, and the religious figure.

The Funeral Scene

The funeral rite scenes in the two films are significant because they lay the foundation of the politics of religion within the films. The details of funeral scenes of the mother are not only to generate an uneasy and thrilling atmosphere, but also to establish the dominant belief, that is Islam. The following figures show comparison screenshot of the funeral scene in Gautama's (see figure 1) and Anwar's (see figure 3) version. The two films meticulously depict the funeral rite in which the audience is literally taken into the grave, next to the body. The audience is also shown a close up shot of the dead mother, confirming that the mother has really passed away. Both films cinematography for this particular scene is almost identical in which the audience can see the whole family and guests in front of the grave, mourning for the loss.

The difference is that there are less people attending the funeral in Anwar's version compared to Gautama's version. The social status of the family in the two films seems to be the defining factor; the family in Gautama's version is wealthy while the family in Anwar's version barely survives their daily needs, thus there are less people attending the funeral.



Figure 3. Funeral scene in Gautama's *Pengabdi Setan*



Figure 4. Funeral scene in Anwar's *Pengabdi Setan*

According to the study of a funeral as a ritual, Abbink argues that mourning and burial usually emphasize two aspects, "the way in which it is tried to 're-establish the social order'...[and]...the way in which the death ritual can re-affirm the forces of life as against death, and thus uphold the 'cosmological' order" (Abbink, 1992, p.221). In horror genre, however, death is never the end, but the beginning. Thus, the return of the dead and consequently the haunting of the past in both films undermine the funeral rite, in which case death brings chaos to the social and cosmological order when the dead returns and haunts the living.

The Zombies

Zombies are not part of the traditional Indonesian monster tropes in Indonesian horror genre. The Indonesian audience is more familiar with *pocong*, *kuntilanak*, *genderuwo*, or *wewe gombel* than zombies. However, western film influence remains strong in Indonesian cinema that allegedly, Gautama's version is said to be influenced by Don Coscarelli's 1979 *Phantasm* in which an undertaker turned the dead into dwarf zombies. In Anwar's case, the influence may come from the success of TV series such as *The Walking Dead* or other zombie movies of the 2000s.

Allegorically, the context of the return of the dead in both films is different. It is widely known that the New Order regime is an authoritative regime and in

the film industry they assert a very strict censorship, especially censorship on contents that are considered to be subversive and against the regime. Despite the strict censorship, filmmakers whose creativity and freedom are shackled are still able to deliver their criticism against the regime, in which one of the ways is through the use of allegory. In Gautama's case, although the film explicitly carries the regime's ideology and message about the importance of order and the superiority of male figures, it subversively allegorizes the cult, here represented by Darminah, as the regime, which is cruel, merciless and controlling. Darminah, the cult leader and the "monster", murders the man servant and Herman because they become a threat to her. Her action can be seen as the allegory of the regime which persecute or omit any threat against them with violence. When the two are raised from the dead, they become submissive and are under control of Darminah, which can also allegorize the regime's needs to assert control and order.

Anwar's *Pengabdi Setan* is released in 2017, during a heated political situation of the election of Jakarta's governor. Anwar himself is conscious politically as evident in his films that explicitly talk about politics such as *A Copy of My Mind* (2015) or *Kala* (2007). Anwar himself in fact actively participated in collecting identity cards in favor of one candidate during the election of Jakarta's governor (Rahadian, 2014. para. 2), thus he is definitely aware of the Indonesian political dynamics. In his tweet on Indonesian Independence Day 2018, he calls people to condemn corrupt and unqualified politicians, people's representative or government officials ("Rakyat musuhin politikus korup, pejabat dan wakil rakyat yang nggak mutu aja") (Pangerang, 2018, para. 3). Thus, it is safe to argue that Anwar's political consciousness often shows in his works, be it explicit or reflected allegorically. The Jakarta governor election process is smeared by political identity that resulted in identity sentiment, especially drawn on the racial and religious difference. Ethnic and religious issues were raised and mixed with practical politics that in result splits the country into two major ideological strongholds. Public demonstrations involving a large number of mobs occurred several times during the election period. In a way, the zombies which attack Rini's family can represent the mobs that persecute or demonstrate against those who are not having similar ideology/belief. In the film, the cult orders the zombies to attack Rini's house with the goal of taking Ian, Rini's youngest brother. What the cult does allegorizes the provocateurs or orators during the election period who systematically moved the mobs to do what they wish, and most of the times, just like the zombies, the mobs blindly followed the order without realizing the significance or essence of

their action, in other words, they are being used or controlled by those who are more powerful. In the film, Rini's family definitely represents "the other" who is not embracing the mainstream belief and thus, needs to be "corrected." Anwar knows exactly how it feels when his candidate was slandered to the point that he is sentenced to prison.

The Religious Figure

One interesting discussion in social media regarding Anwar's *Pengabdi Setan* is about the death of the religious figure in the hand of evil. Indeed, throughout the history of Indonesian horror genre, it is difficult, if not impossible, to find a film in which the religious figure is defeated, let alone killed by the dark forces. The fact that this discussion even surfaces in social media may also suggest the perseverant effect of the New Order indoctrination on patriarchal system within Indonesian cinema. The basic formula of most films during that period is to have one powerful or influential male character as the order restorer, and in horror genre, it is usually a religious figure. Thus, Anwar's surprising omission of the religious figure from the equation creates controversy, albeit not to the point that makes the film banned. The immaturity and close-mindedness of the audience also plays a part in this. Within the general horror tradition, it is actually not unusual when religious figures are killed or even turned into monsters, which suggest that after all, humans are weak and invincible, not a superman-like character. It takes maturity and open-mindedness to accept that a religious figure is not the almighty character no matter how close he is to the Almighty.

Answering this controversy, Anwar claims that he never clearly states that the religious figure in the film is an ustadz. He says that the character is just a regular pious person who tries to bring back the family to the right path. However, another character, Toni, the son of that seemingly religious figure, explicitly says that he is a son of the ustadz, which raises question against Anwar's claim. Regardless the controversy, the film has managed to come out from the shadow of the original version, and most importantly, has boldly depicted that controversial scene when the so-called religious figure is killed and turned into a zombie. This controversy can be seen as an allegory to what happens in our contemporary world. The film was produced and released in 2017; it was a political year when people focused their attention to the capital city and its contestation for the new governor. Throughout the campaign period, people witnessed how religion has become a political commodity when the boundary between politics and faith is blurred. Series of public demonstration and persecution caused by differences in ideology or faith occurred. Anwar, as a

sympathizer of one of the candidates has to face the fact that politicians exploit religion and religious figure for political purpose, and in many cases some shabby businessmen or even a nobody, can easily be regarded as being religious only by appearing like one or because of their political preference.

Comparing the appearance of the religious figures in the two films, it is evident that Gautama's depiction of the religious figure is typical of the horror films of the New Order period: as a *deus-ex-machina* who is wise, patient, pious and most importantly, as the order restorer. Throughout the film, he patiently keeps trying to meet and talk with Munarto, the father, to tell him that he should return to God's way. Munarto, on the other hand, keeps on avoiding the meeting, until at the end of the film the religious leader comes to the rescue and saves the day. Cinematographically, his domination and superiority is seen at the climactic scene when the religious figure is facing the monster.



Figure 5. The religious figure facing the monster

The religious figure is positioned in the central frame, wearing white that suggests cleanliness and holiness, and he is protecting the family who stands behind him. The background shows another typical ending of New Order horror films, when the mobs holding torches accompany the order restorer to defeat the monsters. Besides defeating the monster through prayers, the religious figure also sends a very explicit message to the whole audience about the importance of being a pious Moslem and the awareness that evil is lurking around us. This scene clearly shows a strong ideological message within the film.

In contrast, the religious figure in Anwar's version is more down to earth. He is a quiet and seemingly lonely person who lives with his son after the death of his wife. Similar to Gautama's religious figure, he also repeatedly tells the family to pray and return to God's way, which is actually responded to by the family, although it does not seem to instantly cast the evil away. Instead of being a problem solver, he and his son become the victim of the evil when at the end they are turned into zombies. Cinematographically, there is a stark contrast when the religious figure has to face the monster. In one scene, the children take shelter in the house of the religious figure after they

experience disturbances in their house. At night, zombies are coming and they try to snatch Rita, the eldest child. The other children are screaming for help while pulling their sister away from the zombies. Surprisingly, the religious figure, who is supposed to help them, does nothing and only stares at them in somehow a satisfying look, as seen in figure. Audiences may understand his reaction as an expression of anger because his son is indirectly killed because of helping them.



Figure 6. The religious figure in Anwar's version

Although he is put in the central frame, the audience cannot see his whole body or face, as it is blocked by the door in front of him. The way Anwar frames him in such a way suggests his emotional weakness. He does not stand in front of the children or even say something to save them but he chooses to stand behind a door and calmly watch the suffering of the children and finally shuts the door in front of him. I argue that the defeat of this religious figure becomes the counter representation against the 'all powerful' religious figure in New Order horror films. It also serves as a political satire in the context of Jakarta's governor election when religion becomes the political commodity and suddenly people claim to be a pious and religious person only by looking like one or because of their political preference.

CONCLUSION

After comparing and analyzing the two films, it can be concluded that both films allegorically raise the issue of politicization of religion. In Gautama's version, there is a much idealistic, if not simplistic idea that faithfulness is a requirement to literally defeat evil. The film also carries an ideological message for people to conform to the mainstream belief, to obey and be faithful to the authority. In a way, religion is situated in a more spiritual realm that can be an instant remedy to defeat the evil. In the context of the zombies, those of Gautama's version are very personal. The zombies are people whom the family knows well when they were alive. Thus, their return to the family as haunting zombies is also very personal, because the zombies seem to want to revenge their death that is directly caused by the family's actions. Gautama's version has a close

ending when the monster is defeated and despite their mistakes, the family does not have to bear the consequences of their actions as long as they repent.

In Anwar's version, faithfulness and lots of praying do not seem to be the key to defeat evil, especially when being faithful or pious is merely a charade, a satire to those who only appear religious physically, but not spiritually. It can be concluded that being faithful in Anwar's version means that words, actions and heart are in harmony, as shown by the determination of the family to be together and love each other. Thus, Anwar's version situates religion in a more practical and realistic realm, when religion, if not practiced seriously, will not become an instant remedy to defeat evil. In Anwar's version, not all zombies are people that they know, in fact, most of them are random zombies awakened from their grave, thus there is a distance between the zombies and the family. The zombies are somehow not directly linked to the family's actions or what the family is like. This relates to the allegory of the zombies as the angry mobs during political demonstration, who move and shout in harmony for a certain similar goal. Anwar's version has an open ending when the family is unaware of the evil that is still lurking around them, suggesting a more realistic depiction of evil as an entity that can appear as anything, and in this context as a good neighbor.

Both films carry subversive messages that addresses the condition of their respective periods. Gautama's version allegorically criticizes the authoritative regime through the occult itself. The regime is likened to the occult member who is controlling and merciless when it comes to defiance. When the film explicitly delivers religious messages to the audience, Gautama also wants to satirize the politicization of religion when it becomes the tool to maintain order and prevent resistance. The family in the film can be seen as the representation of those who defy the government, and thus they need to be punished. Anwar's version also satirizes the politicization of religion, when religion becomes an instrument to undermine others with different belief or ideology. The family becomes the victim because they are different, so in a way they are being persecuted and punished, just like what happened during the governor's election in Jakarta.

This research shows that films, with their capacity to evoke different emotions from the audience, are an efficient instrument to deliver certain messages to wide audience. The research offers new perspective to the readers and society on how to look at films, especially horror films. The allegorical moments shown in the two films provide insights on how they accentuate and challenge the dominant ideology of

certain era, in this case the New Order and Post-Reformation era. One can safely argue that belief and religion have been and will be playing significant part in Indonesian politics as an instrument to gain or maintain power.

Indeed, not all horror films carry deep and implied messages yet the ongoing intensive study of the genre all around the world proves that the horror genre cannot be brushed aside as a nonsensical genre. In addition, the horror genre remains one of the most-produced genres in Indonesia that suggests its potential to reach and influence a wider audience.

REFERENCES

- Abbink, G. J. (1992). *Funeral and ritual: An analysis of Me'en mortuary rites (Southwest Ethiopia)*. 2(47), 221–236.
- Alfitri, A. (2014). Women's rights and gender equality issues in Islamic law in Indonesia: The need to re-read women's status in the Islamic religious texts.. *Mazahib*, 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.21093/mj.v13i1.349>
- Anwar, J. (2017). *Pengabdi setan* [Horror]. Rapi Film/CJ Entertainment.
- Cervesa, B. (2017, September 30). Sama-sama mencekam, ini 6 perbedaan Pengabdi Setan dulu dan sekarang [Popular web magazine]. Retrieved January 10, 2019, from IDN times website: <https://www.idntimes.com/hype/entertainment/bebe-cervesa/perbedaan-film-pengabdi-setan-dulu-sekarang-c1c2/full>
- Epley, J. L. (2010). *Voices of the faithful: Religion and politics in contemporary Indonesia* (Dissertation). University of Michigan.
- Guttman, H. (2015). *The evolution of Indonesian horror cinema: From the New Order to Post-Reformasi film and television*. Retrieved from http://www.academia.edu/25061542/The_evolution_of_Indonesian_horror_cinema_-_From_the_New_Order_to_Post-Reformasi_Film_and_Television_2016_
- Hasyim, S. (2013). State and religion: Considering Indonesian Islam as model of democratisation for the muslim world. *Liberal Institute Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung Für Die Freiheit*, 36. Berlin: the Liberal Institute Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung für die Freiheit.
- Heider, K. G. (1991). *Indonesian cinema: National culture on screen*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Imanjaya, E. (2009). The other side of Indonesia: New Order's Indonesian exploitation cinema as cult films. *Monash University*, 18, 143–159.

- Jameson, F. (1994). *The political unconscious: Narrative as a socially symbolic act* (7. print). Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press.
- Kusuma, V. (2011). Hantu-hantu dalam film horor Indonesia. In *Mau dibawa kemana sinema kita (Where is our cinema heading?)* (pp. 199–225). Depok: Salemba Humanika.
- Lowenstein, A. (2005). *Shocking representation: Historical trauma, national cinema, and the modern horror film*. New York, NY: Columbia Univ. Press.
- Maula, B. S. (2016). Indonesian muslim women: Between culture, religion, and politics. *Ijtimā'iyya: Journal of Muslim Society Research*, 1(1), 113–131. <https://doi.org/10.24090/ijtimaiyya.v1i1.930>
- Munir, L. Z. (2004). *Islam, gender, and formal Shari'a in Indonesia*. Retrieved from <http://www.law.emory.edu/IHR/worddocs/lily2.doc>
- Nurjanah, R. (2017, October). Wawancara khusus Joko Anwar: Mari rayakan 'Pengabdi Setan [Interview]. Retrieved from kumparan website: <https://kumparan.com/rina-nurjanah/wawancara-khusus-joko-anwar-mari-rayakan-pengabdi-setan>
- Pangerang, A., M. K. (2018, August 17). Joko Anwar: Ngga usah berantem gara-gara politik, selamat 17-an. *Kompas*. Retrieved from <https://entertainment.kompas.com/read/2018/08/17/085038810/joko-anwar-enggak-usah-berantem-gara-gara-politik-selamat-17-an>
- Pengabdi Setan film terlaris 2017. (2018, February 26). Retrieved December 30, 2018, from kata-data.co.id website: <https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2018/02/26/pengabdi-setan-film-terlaris-2017>
- Pratama, R. K. (2018, March). Film horor dan psikologi kita [Article]. Retrieved January 10, 2019, from GeoTimes website: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324105230>
- Putra, S., G. (1980). *Pengabdi setan* [Horror, DVD]. Rapi Film.
- Rahadian, L. (2014, March 24). *Joko Anwar blak-blakan soal Ahok, bus Wedan, dan bully Twitter*. Retrieved from <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/kursipanasdki1/20170324070747-516-202421/joko-anwar-blakblakan-soal-ahok-bus-wedan-dan-bully-twitter/>
- Santana, A. R. (2017, October 13). Kekalahan ustaz, kemenangan Setan [Article]. Retrieved January 10, 2019, from tirtio.id website: <https://tirtio.id/kekalahan-ustaz-kemenangan-setan-cyi4>
- Sutandio, A. (2016). *Sinema horor kontemporer Indonesia: Sebuah pembacaan alegoris*. Yogyakarta: Ombak.
- Wajiran, W. (2018). Polygamy and muslim women in contemporary Indonesian literature. *Jurnal Humaniora*, 30(3), 291. <https://doi.org/10.22146/jh.v30i3.34821>.