

- Sjamsuddin, Nazaruddin. 1985. *The Republican Revolt: A Study of the Acehnese Rebellion*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Surya Online. 2010. "Fatwa Haram untuk 'Suster Keramas.'" Jan 6. <<http://www.surya.co.id/2010/01/06/fatwa-haram-untuk-suster-keramas.html>>.
- Van Dijk, Cornelis. 1981. *Rebellion under the Banner of Islam in Indonesia: The Darul Islam in Indonesia*. Leiden: Martinus Nijhof.
- Van Heeren, Katinka. 2010. "Reverberations of Kantata Takwa." *Asian Cinema*. Fall.
- Warta Kota. 2004. "'Buruan Cium Gue' Menuai Protes." ("Kiss Me Quick" Received Protests). Aug. 15: 3.
- Weller, Robert P. 2008. "Asia and the Global Economies of Charisma." In *Religious Commodification in Asia: Marketing Gods*, edited by Pattana Kitiarsa, pp. 15-30. London and New York: Routledge.
- Wiegele, K.L. 2005. *Investing in Miracles: El Shaddai and the Transformation of Popular Catholicism in the Philippines*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Wijanarko, Putut. 2010. Interview with Eric Sasono, Jakarta, Indonesia, Jan. 11.
- Wijaya, Yan. 2006. "Film-film yang Gugur dalam Kandungan (Aborted Films)." *F Majalah Film*. No. 03/ Feb.-Mar. 2006.
- Wright, Melanie, J. 2007. *Religion and Film: An Introduction*. London and New York: IB Tauris & Co Ltd.

Eric Sasono is a Jakarta-based film critic, founder and editor of www.rumahfilm.org, and also secretary of the executive board of the Jakarta International Film Festival, and international honorary advisor for Hong Kong-based Asia Film Award (2009-2012). He edited the book *Kandang dan Gelanggang: Sinema Asia Tenggara Kontemporer* (In and Out: Contemporary Southeast Asian Cinema) in 2007.

Passing and Conversion Narratives: *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* and Muslim Performativity in Contemporary Indonesia

Intan Paramaditha



Fig. 1. *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (The Love Verses, 2008) from www.ayatayatcintathemovie.com.

The success of *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (The Love Verses, 2008), a major box office Islamic themed film, was one of the key moments of Islamic hype in Indonesia after the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998.¹ Based on the best-selling novel by Habiburrahman El Shirazy, the film broke the record of Indonesian cinema after 10 years by attracting more than four million people. With an audience ranging from political elites to students of Islamic boarding schools, it exemplifies the dominant Islamic visibility in popular culture after a long suppression of Islam under Suharto's dictatorship. Some Indonesian Muslims view *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* positively as a moving melodramatic tale that attempts to spread *dakwah* (Islamic teaching), yet the film has triggered various debates in the public sphere.² One of the issues raised was the convert story of the character Maria Girgis, a Christian Egyptian woman who is fascinated with Islam, yet never really practices the religion until, on her deathbed when she asks her husband to teach her to pray in an Islamic way.

There has been a mushrooming of "Islamic cinema" following the commercial success of *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*. In the past two years, movie theaters

have been populated with films about the everyday lives of Muslims, such as *Kun Fayakun* (Be/It Is, 2008), *Mengaku, Rasul* (The False Prophet, 2008), *Syahadat Cinta* (The Love Declaration, 2008), *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (The Scarfed Woman, 2009), and *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih 1 & 2* (When Love Glorifies God, 2009). In this essay I will return to *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* as the convert stories on and off screen help us reflect on the question of Muslim performativity. I will explore how the characters on screen, as well as the filmmaker and actors, project desirable Muslim public identities within the conflation of piety, politics, and consumer culture in post-authoritarian Indonesia. Furthermore, I will examine how the narrative of passing is used as a motif in religious conversion to solidify the fiction of religious authenticity.

Islamic Resurgence in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia

The end of the New Order regime (1966-1998), characterized by its developmentalist, militaristic, anti-fundamentalist Islam, and anti-communist politics, has resulted in the emergence of various long-suppressed social forces. The demise of the regime has not just allowed greater freedom of expression in the arts, culture, and politics, but also the rise of both progressive and fundamentalist Islamic voices. This secular nation with a Muslim majority is now facing a surge of Islamicization with stronger influences of Islamist parties that call attention to the politics of visibility. Whereas in the New Order regime Suharto banned the *jilbab* (headscarf) from public schools until the 1990s; when he reversed that ruling in order to gain more sympathy from the Islamist groups, today the *jilbab* is more visible and even represented as modern and hip (Heryanto, 2008).

On the political level, with the fundamentalist groups gaining more power, we witness attempts to censor women's bodies; as most clearly shown in the case of the patriarchal Anti-Pornography Bill that prohibits any behavior or images deemed as sexually arousing. Introduced in 1999 and constantly revised, the bill has received criticism from feminists, artists, cultural activists, and moderate Muslim groups.³ Yet the passing of the bill (now called "Pornography Law") in October 2008 reveals which groups are more visibly powerful in contemporary Indonesia. In the meantime, in popular culture, the proliferation of celebrity preachers, Islamic melodrama TV series, Muslim women's magazines, and "Islamic cinema" indicate how capitalism takes part in this Islamic revival. The popularity of the *jilbab*, for instance, signifies the new image of Muslim femininity, and was quickly appropriated first by TV serials and later by cinema. It is worth noting that, in the New Order period, there were a number of popular Islamic-themed films, such as the *dakwah* films featuring the preacher/*dangdut* superstar Rhoma Irama. Yet women appearing in these films are either not wearing the *jilbab*, or they would wear *kerudung*, a

traditional headscarf worn loosely over the head. The tight *jilbab*, rather than the loose *kerudung*, has now become much more prominent, constructing an ideal image of Muslim bodies in the media and the public sphere.⁴

The celebration of public Muslimness also coincides with the boom of the media industry after President Abdurrahman Wahid abolished the Ministry of Information in 1999, a legacy of Suharto's rigorous state censorship on the media, radio, film, and television. Media liberalization quickly triggered the mushrooming of sensational tabloids and sex comedies, which caused a moral panic among Muslim organizations and activists who regard representations of sexuality as a product of Westernization and secularization. The display of piety in the media, argues Amrih Widodo, can be seen as a reaction among Muslims to have more control over media production and consumption. At the same time, this Islamic resistance also paves the way for "the establishment of an Islamic consumer culture" (Widodo, 2008).

The interwoven connection between piety and consumer culture results in the promotion of Muslim middle-class values, which one could observe in the discourse of production of the novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*. The novel was born out of a writers' network called Forum Lingkar Pena (FLP) that often propagates Islamic/moral teachings. Although FLP founder Helvy Tiana Rosa – a Muslim intellectual whose educational background is in literary studies – claims that FLP is not an Islamic association but a network that emphasizes moral values in writing, most books produced by its members have strong Islamic themes. *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*'s author Habiburrahman El Shirazy is an active member of FLP, and his works reflect the Muslim middle-class intellectual background shared by many FLP members. The novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* is inspired by Shirazy's experience as a Master's student at the prestigious Al Azhar University in Cairo.

Ayat-Ayat Cinta – both the novel and the movie – project the new Muslim public identities that highlight education and transnational connections (see Sasono, this edition). Like the author, the novel's protagonist Fahri is pursuing his Master's degree at Al Azhar. Other films after *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* such as *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* (2009) follow the same formula: foregrounding intellectual Muslim characters who study abroad.⁵ Egypt codifies an authentic Muslim space and the transnational trajectory pursued by middle-class Indonesian Muslims. While *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, to save budget, was shot in India and Central Java rather than in Egypt, *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* underlines its authenticity on its promotional materials as the first Indonesian film "actually set in Egypt." Eric Sasono (2009) holds that Egypt functions as a sanctuary that allows the audience to escape from contemporary political and social issues at home. The utopian dimension certainly exists, but rather than seeing it as purely escapism, I argue that the authenticity of space contributes to the discourse of authentic Muslimness, a concept that I will elaborate later. Also,

Egypt represents the access-to-transnationalism that constitutes the aspirations of the new Muslim middle-class.

The first people who saw the potential of the novel to be made into a successful film, however, were not Muslims. *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* the movie is produced by Indian-Indonesian producers Manoj and Dhamoo Punjabi from MD Pictures, renowned for their profit-oriented soap operas and horror films. They clearly take advantage of the Islamic revival in politics and the commodification of Islamic visibility in popular culture. The Punjabis at first wanted to reduce scenes that highlight Islamic messages using Koranic verses and show more romantic scenes such as in the popular Hindi film *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (1998). Nevertheless, filmmaker Hanung Bramantyo and El Shirazy himself insisted on making the film more religious. As I will discuss further in this essay, the film production and exhibition involved a lot of negotiations between Islam, secular identities, and the market.

Conversion, Passing, and Authenticity

The main story line of *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* is typical: it revolves around the love life of the student Fahri, who is admired by four beautiful women during his time in Egypt. He ends up marrying the Turkish-German woman Aisha, leaving his Christian neighbor Maria brokenhearted. Another Egyptian admirer, Noura, takes revenge for her unrequited love by accusing him of raping her. The only witness who knows the truth is Maria, who is now in a coma following a murder attempt. To save Maria from her illness, Fahri, albeit reluctantly, decides to take her as his second wife. Fahri is freed after Maria gives her testimony in court, and the plot shifts to the complexity of polygamous married life that Fahri has to undergo with both Aisha and Maria.

Members of Islamic groups regard the film and the novel as "a must-see and must-read for Indonesian Muslims" (Widodo 2008). Launched right after the controversy of the Dutch film *Fitna* (2008) by Geert Wilders that portrays Islam negatively, the film makes claims for religious tolerance at a time when Islam was associated with terrorism. The spokesperson for the President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Dino Patti Djalal, dubbed *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* as an antithesis of *Fitna*, as it projects the "gentle spirit and the positive energy of Islam that should be seen by Muslims and non Muslims the world over."⁶ As *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* is situated as a part of a global discourse over Islam, it becomes quite clear why its promotional strategies overlook recent violence done in Indonesia in the name of religion and disregard the sensitive topic of representing religious conversion.

The film has sparked debates about the story of Maria converting from Christianity to Islam, which, according to some people, contradicts its own message of respecting differences. A member of Mediacare, a popular mailing

list that discusses media literacy and criticism in Indonesia, writes that *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* does not promote religious tolerance because Maria, in her dying day, cannot enter heaven for not having the key:

"The key [to heaven] is to be a Muslim. As a Coptic Christian Maria is very righteous, respectful to her religion and parents, and she even memorizes the Koranic verses. But she cannot go to heaven unless she is a Muslim."⁷

In agreeing, another interjects: "This is a new chapter of religious campaigning in Indonesian culture. The question is, if another film portrays the reversal, such as a Muslim converting to Buddhism, will the choice be safe for the filmmaker?"⁸ This reflects the critical question of Islamic resurgence in Indonesia. Another member even links the possibility of converting out of Islam to censorship and violent demonstrations by Islamic hardliners: "If a film showed a Muslim converting to another religion, would it pass censorship? If it passed censorship, would there be demonstrations from different groups that label themselves as Muslims?"⁹

Still, some other members say that as long as the film represents "the beauty of inter-religious peace," emphasizing moral and educational values, there is no reason to continue the heated debates. The conversion is simply seen as "a part of the narrative," to show how Maria is really in love with Fahri: "As long as there is no coercion, it's fine. Besides, Maria has been interested in the Quran. So why do we need to see it as a problem?"¹⁰ Those who regard the film as unproblematic express the same idea of universal tolerance and perceive conversion as merely a necessary part of the narrative.

The acceptance of such a narrative might be understood in the context of how *muallaf* (convert) stories in Indonesian media are normalized as narratives of enlightenment. When famous actress Dian Sastrowardoyo became *muallaf*, converting from Catholicism to Islam, the media showed pictures of her wearing a headscarf even though she never wears it in her everyday life. Similarly, Muslims celebrate the conversion of sex symbol Inneke Koesharawati from secular to religious when she decides to don the jilbab. Yet the conversion from Islam to other religions is not treated in the same way. It is often framed as a personal decision instead of a heroic act of taking up a new public identity. Sometimes, those who discard their Muslim attributes are portrayed as people who are disloyal to their belief, such as musician Tya Subiakto who was criticized for not wearing the jilbab after covering herself for six years. Meanwhile, those who convert need to maintain their status as "authentic" Muslims through visible markers including modest clothing (such as the jilbab) or practices that reflect Muslim piety. Koesharawati, for instance, is renowned as an avid supporter of the Anti-Pornography Bill with other Muslim public figures. In these conversion stories of public figures, "religious authenticity" must be performed and maintained; once public figures convert, they need to create (and preserve) an image in the media affirming they have left their former identity completely.

What is interesting about Maria in *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* is her in-betweenness. Before she converts, she is described by other characters as having the qualities of a “true Muslim,” yet we are always reminded visually that she is a Christian with a permanent signifier – a cross – tattooed on her hand. There is a notion of “Islamic authenticity” that Maria imitates as well as escapes from. I view her act of imitating the tropes of Muslimness before her conversion as a form of passing, which Pamela Caughie defines as “the practice of assuming the identity of another type or class of persons in order to pass oneself off as a member of that group, for social, economic, or political reasons” (1999: 20). To illuminate my analysis on the passing narrative in the film, I will briefly describe how passing has been reconceptualized.¹¹

The word “passing” is rooted in the American racial history when Black Americans who phenotypically look white assume white identity to gain certain privileges. However, passing as a concept has been extended to other social categories that rely on the assumption of “essential” identities such as gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, and religion. A famous case of passing in U.S. history is the 1896 Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson*, in which Homer Plessy, who passed as a white person on a whites-only railroad, was accused of “an act of unqualified theft of an identity” (Robinson 1996: 238). This case shows that the social practice of passing arouses anxieties. Passing has been associated with “deception, dishonesty, fraudulence, or betrayal” since what lies beneath the practice is “an effort to disguise or suppress one’s racial heritage, racially marked body, or sexual orientation” (Caughie, 1999: 20).

The perception of passing as a betrayal of authenticity, however, depends on binaries between “essence and appearance, authenticity and fraudulence, the real person and the persona [assumed]” (Caughie, 1999: 21). This concept of passing implies that there is an authentic identity that a passer leaves before he or she assumes another identity; it is based on the assumption that identity is fixed and coherent. Caughie and other contemporary literary and cultural critics have criticized this underpinning logic of passing and proposed that passing be seen as a performative practice. The concept of performativity is indebted to Judith Butler who, in *Gender Trouble*, criticizes (feminists’) deployment of identity politics for relying on “foundationalist fictions” (1991: 6), arguing for the performativity of gender, as a “repeated stylization of the body” that produces the illusion of an inherent or essential identity. She further emphasizes that performativity is not an act that happens at one particular time as it requires the subject to “cite” or reiterate social norms; repeated enactment produces “effects” in a way that appearances look natural and necessary (Butler, 1993).

The practice of passing allows us to challenge the fiction of identity based on the assumption that essence, or one singular identity, exists (Ginsberg, 1996: 4). My research benefits from the idea that passing should be seen as

“performing” and “trying out” some desirable identities, and within that practice, there is also a process of disidentification that complicates the stability of the new or pre-existing identity. Jose Munoz’s explanation in *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* helps me frame my point here. Munoz borrows from Eve Sedgwick’s argument that identification means also “simultaneously and partially counteridentifying, as well as only partially identifying, with different aspects of the social and psychic world” (1999: 8). In performing an identity, the process of disidentification allows one not only to mimic the tropes of that identity but also to partially disavow them. The oscillation between imitation and distance is what I will explore further in analyzing the performativity of Maria and the cultural producers of the film.

In a country where religiousness is normative, one does not often question to what extent religiousness is performed. Many scholars have discussed the connection between the expressions of piety resulting from the Islamic fever in popular culture and the Islamic resurgence in politics in post-Suharto Indonesia, but the performative dimensions of Muslimness have not much been explored.¹² I find it useful here to refer to Gaik Cheng Khoo’s article, which discusses the performativity of Muslims in Malaysia combining Judith Butler’s theory of performativity and Michael G. Peletz’s conception of a “Malay Panopticon.” Khoo argues that the Malay Panopticon – consisting of Islamic laws, social institutions, and peer pressure – produces subjects who perform Muslimness through visible markers in public (such as wearing the headscarf or going to the Friday prayer) although such performativity might not be related to their spiritual connection to God (2009: 115-116).¹³ In Indonesia, identity cards require everyone to state that they are members of one of the five official religions: Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Many Indonesians who do not believe in religion, or those who believe in Confucianism or local beliefs, do not have any other choice but to pass as believers of one of the five religions.¹⁴ Yet it is notable that Islam has never been smoothly incorporated into the state, at least until the 1990s. There are no clear sanctions for practices such as eating in public during the fasting month or drinking alcohol, which, for Malaysian Muslims, are strictly regulated by laws. People perform their Muslimness in public not so much because they feel that they are under the scrutiny of the state, but rather because they want to gain acceptance from their social environment (families, especially) or to draw sympathy from the Muslim majority (as in the case of public figures).¹⁵

The fasting month (Ramadan) is an entry point to observe the practice of passing in everyday life. Many non-practising Muslims admit that they are fasting (or pretending to do so) simply to avoid hurting their parents’ feeling or giving a bad example to their own children. It is also common that, during this month, celebrities express their piety through clothing or religious practices whenever they appear in talk shows or entertainment news. Female celebrities

don the jilbab and tell nostalgic stories about their family rituals of fast breaking, but when the fasting month is over, they return to other aspects of their identities that are not Islamic. As people take on and discard their Muslim attributes so easily, the practice of passing is understood as a “normal behavior.” Ramadan and the inconsistencies of Muslim performance that follow have “trained” the audience to see forms of religious passing and learn about their motives (i.e. celebrities are people who adopt anything popular). With the famous idiom “Islam KTP” (Identity-card Islam), Indonesians are in fact aware that many of them are religious passers.¹⁶

The common practice of religious passing in Indonesia, I argue, exists simultaneously with the on-going desire to claim “authenticity.” By authenticity I do not mean that an essential Muslimness exists; rather, I am referring to the discourse of authentic Muslimness that has been circulating among Muslims. The modernist Islamic organization Muhammadiyah has long criticized syncretistic practices of Islam especially in rural areas. Unlike many leaders of another major organization Nahdlatul Ulama, who emphasize pluralistic Islam and thus do not discourage the blending of Islamic teaching and pre-Islamic local beliefs, Muhammadiyah leaders view syncreticism as corroding Islamic faith. Inspired by the modernist revolution in Islamic thought emerging in Egypt at the beginning of the 20th Century, they attempt to purify Islam from non-Islamic traditions that are often superstitious by using “authentic” standards: the Quran and the Hadiths (Riddell, 2002). In daily practice, the Islamic stream of Muhammadiyah has made many Muslims question whether they should follow certain traditional rituals such as *njuh bulanan* (baby shower) or *tahlilan* (a ceremony to pray for a deceased person after 40 days of his/her death) as these rituals might not be markers of “pure” Islam. The standards of authentic Islam are of course not monolithic, as other groups have tried to argue for their own versions, posing their own markers of Muslimness as well. But the discourse of authenticity – the questions about whether certain practices make a “true” Muslim – continue to shape and inform Muslimness in Indonesia.

The post-Suharto period allows the desire for authenticity among Muslims to be articulated in various ways. Female members of the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) wear longer jilbab and looser dresses to advocate a more modest, therefore more Islamic, attire for Muslim women. On the extreme side, conservative Islamist groups condemn “inauthentic” practices of Islam, such as in the case of Ahmadiyah, a minority Muslim group accused of spreading wrong Islamic teaching.¹⁷ The radical Muslim group Front Pembela Islam (Islamic Defenders Front), while emphasizing markers of “authentic” Islam – wearing Middle-Eastern clothing and shouting “Allahu Akbar” (God is Great) – attacks places that it deems morally corrupt and Westernized, such as nightclubs and entertainment centers, to assert their version of authentic Islam over the public sphere.

Islamic resurgence has strengthened and escalated both the need to pass as devout Muslims and the articulations of desire for authenticity, and *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* reflects how these practices exist simultaneously. Foregrounding the Maria character, the film seems to celebrate the playfulness of passing, in this case, the fluidity in “trying out” Muslim identity. However, as the discourse on Islamic authenticity in Indonesia becomes more prominent and needs to be displayed, the film imposes closure to the practice in which the passer decides to embrace Islam as the desirable, “authentic” identity. The playfulness of passing is acceptable and even lauded as long as authenticity is achieved in the end.

Ayat-Ayat Cinta: Fahri’s Authentic Muslimness and Maria’s Passing

A version of desirable, authentic Islam in *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* is personified by Fahri, who is described by Maria as an “honest, straight-forward, and modest” man. Fahri embodies a mixture of a new, intellectual Muslim identity found in Indonesian popular culture and the faithfulness to preserve authentic – in this case scriptural – Islamic teachings. He is known as a bright student who prays and studies the Quran diligently. Despite having many women admirers, he refuses to have a girlfriend and chooses to remain chaste before marriage. He writes an article about the positive roles of women in Islam, indicating that he is a progressive Muslim, yet he is also faithful to the strict Islamic rules that govern the relationship between men and women. He even avoids shaking women’s hands except with his female relatives. This blend of intelligence and piety echoes the new model of Muslim masculinity promoted by the middle-class Muslim writers of Forum Lingkar Pena.

The markers of authentic Muslimness in the film include submitting oneself to God (often shown through voiceover) and religious practices such as *sholat*, studying the Quran, the veil,¹⁸ and the *taarif* (a ritual of getting to know each other for man and woman in the presence of the woman’s parents before deciding to get married). At the same time, it clearly differentiates itself from the violent religious practices by propagating the idea that the true understanding of Islam will lead one to discover the values of tolerance, not violence. The scene where Fahri meets Aisha for the first time is intended to illustrate this. It begins with an American woman journalist getting on the bus with her exhausted mother. No one wants to offer their seat except Aisha, who is soon confronted by Egyptians in the bus for giving her seat to a “*kafir Amerika*” (American infidel). A man asks her harshly, “Do you know what the Americans did in Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq? They are accusing Muslims of being terrorists whereas in fact they are the terrorists!” He is about to hit Aisha when Fahri interrupts and lectures him that his attitude toward foreigners contradicts “the true nature of Islam.” Despite acknowledging that Fahri is an

Indonesian student at Al Azhar University, the man hits Fahri in the face out of anger. This scene projects the image of an idealized Islam in Indonesia, in contrast to the image of angry, narrow-minded Egyptian Muslims: This is confirmed by Aisha, who thanks Fahri for defending her in the bus. In German, she expresses her respect for Fahri, "You are a good Muslim. I rarely come across a good Muslim like you." The combination of religious and national identity in Fahri differentiates him from other Muslims. The film is indeed very problematic for portraying Egyptians as either patriarchs who beat women or police officers who beat prisoners.

Tolerance is a part of religious national identity in Indonesia. After watching *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (and crying through the film), President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono spoke in front of a group of ambassadors invited to a special screening, saying that *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* – now deemed as a national film¹⁹ – shows Indonesia and Islam as tolerant and peaceful. The word "tolerance" has been used as a political strategy. In the Suharto regime, it was the keyword to suppress irreconcilable internal religious and ethnic differences in Indonesia in the name of order, whereas now it is used to create a positive international image, especially after the Bali bombing and a series of terrorist-related bombings in Indonesia after 9/11. The bus scene, separating "us" (Indonesian Muslims) from "them" (the non-tolerant Muslims), projects the image of "exceptional" Muslimness in the global arena while disavowing current violence done by Islamic hard-liners at home.

To emphasize Fahri's piety, the film never shows him courting women; instead, he believes in taaruf, the marker of Muslim authenticity, as the proper procedure to find a future wife. Although Fahri and his Christian neighbor Maria often spend time together, the relationship never goes beyond friendship. This is not explained in the film, but presumably, it is because Fahri never intended to marry someone of a different religion. Urged by his teacher, he decides to do the taaruf with Aisha. He marries Aisha after a short taaruf period, leaving Maria broken-hearted and ill. The film is ambiguous about the relationship between Fahri and Maria. It shows moments where Fahri gazes at Maria's face, but he later realizes the danger of his erotic looking and quickly looks away. Filmmaker Hanung Bramantyo captured this temptation as he wanted to make Fahri more human than in the novel.

While Fahri and Aisha do not know each other very well when they are married, it is Maria that Fahri looks for when he is in trouble. Maria is represented as an intelligent university student with an extensive knowledge about Islam. She memorizes Quranic verses and is capable of engaging in debates about the Quran. Also, she is visualized as a woman who never dresses provocatively. Fahri does not comment on her dress in the film, but in the novel, he states that Maria looks more "Islamic than Egyptian girls who claim themselves as Muslims" (*lebih Islami daripada gadis-gadis Mesir yang*

mengaku muslimah).²⁰ Through her clothing, Maria can pass – though in this case she is mistakenly identified – as a Muslim woman, whereas her performance as a person knowledgeable about Islam is an act of willful passing that rewards her with a sympathetic gaze from her Muslim peer.

It is important to show that her passing is not, or not merely, motivated by her romantic attraction to Fahri. Her sincere interest in Islam is highlighted in the diary she writes: "I thought Muslims were close-minded and self-righteous, but after meeting Fahri, I saw peace. I could feel that Islam is truly a religion that could bring peace." In a conversation with Fahri, she expresses her disagreement with a professor who, in her view, does not understand Islam: "He said that *Alif lam mim*²¹ has no meaning. In my opinion, Alif lam mim is truly God's greatest creation with the most sublime meaning." While she is saying this, the camera zooms in on the cross tattoo on her wrist. It emphasizes the contradiction of Maria being a religious passer who is attracted to Islam for a sincere reason and yet remains a Christian. When Fahri gazes at her tattoo, Maria tries to make her performance believable: "You don't believe it? I really like the Quran. I memorize the Maryam verses very well." The camera captures her reciting the verses, followed by a shot of Fahri looking at her in amazement:

Maria's modest clothing and her search for peacefulness are of course characteristics that belong to Christianity as well, especially because Islam and Christianity are both Abrahamic religions. In the film, however, these traits are constantly codified as markers of Muslimness. It thus confirms how Christianity is situated in the imagination of many Muslims in Indonesia: despite having the same root of tradition, Christianity – metonymically represented by Maria's cross tattoo – is the marker of otherness.

Despite the knowledge about Islam that Maria projects, the film shows that she is a "true" Christian in her private moments. Her room is full of candles and crosses. When she learns that Fahri is married to Aisha, she breaks down, grasping a cross from her dressing table and holding it near her chest. The film suggests that although in public places – especially when she is around Fahri – she can pass as a Muslim, in her heart she is a Christian. Maria's passing is made clearer when later in the film she covers her head to go everywhere, giving the impression to the audience that she is ready to become a Muslim. Her first dress rehearsal is portrayed as a ritual, accompanied by a melodramatic song. Having just had a depressing dinner with Fahri, his mother, and his wife Aisha, Maria returns home desperately and contemplates while looking at herself in the mirror. After a series of shots displaying Christian icons, the camera tilts down to focus on the mirror in which we see Maria's reflection. She dons a red headscarf while examining the way she looks in the mirror, crying. Beside the mirror we see a photograph of her, in the old days with her hair down, serving as a contrast to her current image with the headscarf. In low-key lighting, the red headscarf becomes the center of the mise-en-scène. The

scene cuts to Maria's mother who kneels down and cups her hands together, praying in the Christian way. The juxtaposition of shots reminds us that Maria, just like her mother, is still a Christian, but as she dons the headscarf in her private moment with tears in her eyes, the film foreshadows a revelatory moment when Maria stops trying out and completely assumes Muslim identity.

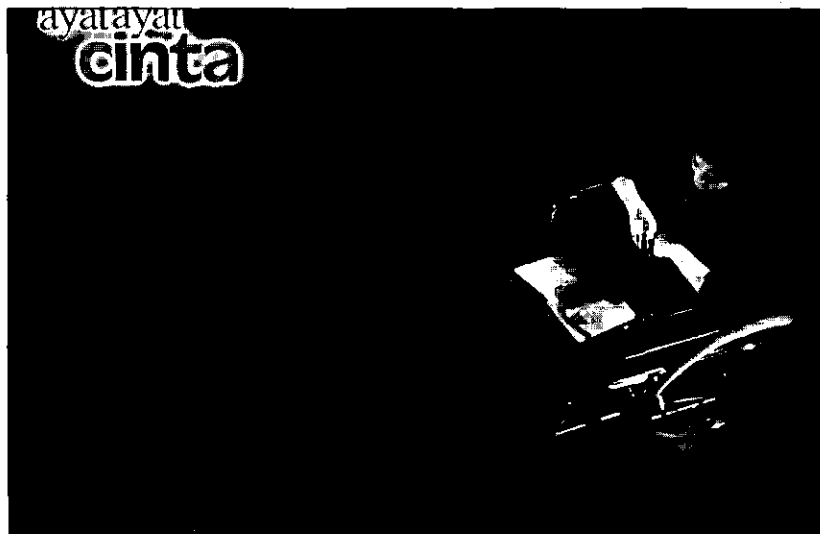


Fig. 2. Maria with her red headscarf (from www.ayatayatcintamovie.com).

Maria herself does not claim to be a Muslim but from this breakdown scene onwards, she wears the red headscarf everywhere, including when a car hits her from behind and leaves her unconscious for weeks. Her oscillation between her interest in Islam and her Christian identity continues although Fahri marries her in Islamic way, immediately followed by her uttering the *al-shahaadatain*, the declaration of becoming a Muslim. The narrative emphasizes that Fahri practices polygamy under an extraordinary circumstance. Aisha persuades Fahri to marry the sick Maria to save her life, so that she can testify to Fahri's innocence in court after the rape accusation. At first Fahri refuses, but he finally agrees. The film's portrayal of Fahri's reluctance to take another wife seems to negotiate between justifying the "authentic" Islamic practice of polygamy, which has caused a stirring debate after the end of the Suharto regime, and the (especially female) audience's expectation of the monogamous, heterosexual romance in popular culture.

When urging Fahri to take Maria as his second wife, Aisha says, "There is a Muslim woman inside Maria." This essential Muslimness, however, cannot be achieved, because Maria is only passing and is therefore not authentic. She passes as a Muslim by marriage, but until her dying day she does not

practice the religion. The film does not portray her passing as negative, as in many cases of religious passing in Indonesia, but it celebrates the time when she stops oscillating from one identity to another and totally embraces Islam by asking Fahri to teach her how to pray. In a melodramatic scene towards the end of the film, Maria prays with Fahri and Aisha and dies during her prayer. As she closes her eyes, the scene cuts to her room where we see her picture and a cross. This final moment shows that Maria's Christian identity ends with her life as she becomes a true Muslim. The true conversion on the deathbed, visualized as a climactic moment, finally validates Maria as a true Muslim. The film acknowledges and normalizes the act of passing within the conversion, yet eventually it highlights the virtue of religious passers who choose to claim authenticity.

Performing Muslimness Off Screen

As mentioned in the beginning, *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* emerged from an intellectual Muslim network called FLP, but the background of the people involved in the film production is diverse. It is produced by Indonesian-born Indians, played by secular actors, and directed by a filmmaker who was once known to be secular. To conform to the mainstreaming of Islam, the cultural producers, especially the filmmaker and the actors, extend on-screen representations of piety to their off-screen public persona. They create and maintain Muslim public identities to fulfill the expectations of their imagined audience that constitutes Muslim consumer culture. These public identities operate through "inclusionary boundary work," a phrase that I borrow from Kathryn Lacy in her book about middle-class blacks who try to blur distinction between themselves and middle class whites by emphasizing sameness (2007: 75). The people involved in the production highlight similarity and erase differences from the dominant culture to project credible Muslim public identities. Furthermore, in performing Muslimness, the cultural producers also deploy the narrative of passing interwoven in convert stories.

Filmmaker Hanung Bramantyo is described by *The Jakarta Post* as someone who "has tried going to the left, to the right, and in between" (Mariani, 2008). Bramantyo was previously known as a secular filmmaker who made the horror film *Lentera Merah* (The Red Lantern, 2006) that critiques the unjust treatment of members of the Communist Party in 1965. Even though *Lentera Merah* is packaged as a commercial film, Bramantyo to a certain extent positions himself as one of the idealist filmmakers who try to engage with the previously-taboo topic of communism after the dictatorship ended. However, as he became involved in the production of *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, we suddenly see his Muslim background foregrounded. In his blog and interviews, he reveals that he was a student in an Islamic boarding school. By emphasizing the shared

experience between him and devout Muslims, he tries to blur the distinction between himself, his text, and his audience.

Richard Dyer in *Heavenly Bodies* writes that a star image consists of him/herself, screen roles, “stage-managed public appearances,” and images that manufacture that image. He further states, “Each element is complex and contradictory, and the star is all of it taken together” (1987: 7-8). Bramantyo’s public identity as the director of *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* incorporates “himself” as a secular filmmaker and the image of Islam that shapes his “new” self. In his blog and interviews, his life story as someone who converts from being secular to religious, is always embedded within the behind-the-scenes stories of the film. Although he was born from Muslim parents and educated in an Islamic school, he never really identified himself as a Muslim before the production of *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*. Like many Indonesians with their “identity-card Islam,” he used to pass as a Muslim. He emphasizes that he was “a badly-behaved boy from Jogja” (*lelaki bengal dari Jogja*) who “could not respect women” (*tidak menghargai perempuan*).²² Yet when he was asked to be the director of *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, he had to learn about Islam from the beginning, like a *muallaf*.

In his blog, Bramantyo writes that at first he could not identify with the Islamic teachings that he grew up with, nor could he relate to El Shirazy’s religious novel. He recalls how his mother suggested that he make a film about Islam, but he did not take her words seriously: “A film with a moral message for me was far-fetched, let alone a religious film.”²³ When he was asked by MD Pictures to make *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, he read the novel with detachment because he could not relate to Fahri’s too perfect character. He had to pass himself off as a Muslim to be able to digest the novel, but there was always disavowal. This process of disidentification is similar to Maria, who has some knowledge about Islam and yet remains distant from it. To do his task as a director, Bramantyo tried to reconcile the novel with his own secular position, which reflects his background as a part of a young generation of Indonesian filmmakers. He “deconstructed” Fahri in the novel as the ultimate role model of Muslim masculinity and presents a more imperfect character: innocent, doubtful, and insecure. By adding these characteristics to Fahri, Bramantyo follows the trend of his generation in representing new models of masculinity: “Nicholas Saputra, the protagonist in the popular film *Ada Apa dengan Cinta* (What’s Up With Love?, 2002) is not perfect either. He is lonely, cynical, harsh towards women... Perfection after the dictatorship is questionable.”²⁴ This character modification was a way for Bramantyo to pass as a Muslim filmmaker while retaining what he learned from other filmmakers of his generation, who are mostly secular.

Yet as Maria becomes enlightened at the end of the film, Bramantyo claims that he discovers his own enlightenment and realizes his past mistakes. He seems to draw a distinction between himself and the typical religious passers – the celebrities who perform their Muslimness only during Ramadan – by

totally embracing Islam. He reveals that his personal discovery is inseparable from the process of making the film: “This film has changed my perspectives on religion, loyalty, hard work, commitment, and love. I thank Kang Abik [the novel writer’s nickname] for trusting me to direct this film. It has made me feel close again to Islam that is beautiful, modest, and tolerant.”²⁵ Bramantyo reaffirms his status as a Muslim filmmaker with his other religious films after *Ayat-Ayat Cinta: Doa yang Mengancam* (The Threatening Prayer, 2008) and *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (The Scarfed Woman, 2009). *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, he writes, has changed him “from a man who is blind about religion to someone who feels the warm light from the Almighty.”²⁶

The actors’ stories are also presented as conversion stories that begin with the discrepancy between their real life and the characters they play. Bramantyo describes his frustration because Rianti Cartwright, who is an MTV VJ, is disconnected from the profound character of veiled Aisha: “My dream to visualize the beauty and depth of Islam is confronted by (Rianti’s) reality: light, cheerful, hedonistic, pop.”²⁷ Similarly, many people doubt the casting of actor Fedi Nuril as Fahri. Nuril’s behavior is considered as not “Islamic” because he kissed an actress in his previous film. Bramantyo recalled how Nuril could not even pray (*sholat*) correctly during the audition, emphasizing that his passing as a Muslim was not believable. Yet *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* has transformed Nuril into someone more willing to learn about Islam: “Because of this film, Fedi learns again about Islam. He even realizes that his behavior is not Islamic after he played Fahri.”²⁸



Fig. 3. Rianti Cartwright (from www.kapanlagi.com).



Fig. 4. Rianti Cartwright as Aisha (from www.fotoartisindonesia.net).

The narrative of Rianti Cartwright also progresses from inauthenticity to a more convincing persona. Born from an Indonesian mother and a British father, Cartwright was chosen to play the Turkish-German Aisha for her Caucasian looks. Her ethnicity and foreignness are emphasized to show how different she is as a Eurasian “hedonistic” MTV VJ from the spiritual Aisha. The conversion narrative uses her implausible passing as a starting point but ends up with a conclusion that the film is capable of changing the perspectives of the people in the production process. After *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, Cartwright took another role as a Muslim woman, wearing a jilbab, in an Islamic TV melodrama series called *Munajat Cinta* (The Love Prayer, 2008), claiming that the series “portrays goodness and truth” (*menampilkan nilai-nilai kebaikan dan kebenaran*).²⁹ In an interview, Cartwright’s boyfriend confirms that she understands more about Islam after playing Aisha, “Actually from the beginning Rianti is more pious than me. But there’s a change after she played Aisha. She has a greater understanding of Islam.”³⁰

The meaning of whiteness, often associated with the west and loose morality, is transformed within the discourse of the film. Aisha’s stereotypical Muslim feminine behavior (gentleness and submissiveness) and Cartwright’s decision to learn more about Islam regardless of her whiteness indicate that, in conversion narratives, race is not an obstacle to achieve Islamic authenticity. As people are expected to claim authenticity after they declare their religiousness, Cartwright never dons the jilbab but maintains a certain degree of Muslimness in her public identity. For instance, she claims that she will never play in a film in which she has to kiss another actor.³¹

A lot of negotiations were made during the production of the film to appeal to a Muslim audience. *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* does not only reflect the interest

of the Punjabis as the producers to make profit. To conform to the dominant Muslim culture, Bramantyo asked the Head of Muhammadiyah Din Syamsudin to give the film greater authenticity and approval from official Islamic bodies. It is therefore not only Bramantyo and the producers who shaped the film but also the novel writer and Syamsudin as a Muslim leader. El Shirazy and Syamsudin wanted the characters to be played by pious Muslim actors. They did not want a Christian actress playing a Muslim or vice versa, because it might evoke religious tension in the society. Commercial, religious, and political factors all function together to shore up Muslim performativity, but eventually, Muslimness, like gender, always requires work to maintain and therefore a stable meaning is implausible.

Since I focus more on the text and its cultural producers, it will take another essay to discuss the reception of this film. What is noticeable is that not everyone believes in the coherent public identities that the cultural producers project. For instance, although Rianti Cartwright tries to maintain her Muslim authenticity, the media keep pointing out the shakiness of her more pious image and continually question whether Rianti is really authentic. Similarly, Evi Mariani from *The Jakarta Post* critiques Hanung Bramantyo’s inconsistency in his image-making. She reminds the reader of his performativity before *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* as a pro-communist, which inspired him to make the film *Lentera Merah*. Mariani writes that Bramantyo, “who wears a necklace with a pendant showing the hammer and sickle,” has in fact never made it to the left but instead, is “steering to the right.”³² One blogger writes in Bramantyo’s blog, expressing his doubt about the authenticity of the filmmaker’s Muslimness, “It’s hard to make an Islamic film, especially if those who make it are not Islamic at all.”³³ In these responses, people are aware of the slippage of Muslim performativity, yet at the same time, the framework that Muslim authenticity exists operates within the effort to measure the piety of the cultural producers.

A year after the hype of *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, another Islamic-themed film by Bramantyo, *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, was screened in theaters. Much affected by the criticism of many women viewers who accused him of supporting polygamy, Bramantyo added a “feminist” perspective by adapting a novel by Muslim feminist writer Abidah El Khalieqy. Perhaps because the “radical” nature of the novel poses a sharp critique of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school), the film garnered significant protest for portraying Islam negatively. Film critic Ekky Imanjaya laments Bramantyo’s new direction by comparing it to the past:

Hanung has a certain idealism - both in the issues of Islam and gender - while making this film. There is no intention to spoil the image of Islam, I have good faith in him. I witnessed the *syukuran* [a celebration to express gratitude to God] of AAC, with trembling voice, unable to repress his emotion, he said that he had been wanting to fulfill his mother’s wish to make a film about religion.³⁴

As a critic and spectator, Imanjaya once believed in Hanung Bramantyo's corporeal performance (speech and voice), but the negative image of Islam in his new film forces him to interrogate Bramantyo's ideological position. Again, we see the desire for authenticity operating here: Imanjaya's expression of disappointment is framed within a question of whether Bramantyo had a "true" motivation to make Islamic films or he was simply one of the typical religious passers. When Bramantyo asserts that he does not stray from what he believes and that he remains "a Muslim," we see the reiterative practice of performativity at work to sustain the film's (and Bramantyo's) position in the rubric of Muslim piety. But self critique has to be incorporated in the new performance as a way to negotiate between Bramantyo's fans (the Muslim majority) and his critics (women and Muslim feminists). Arguing that the film is an effort to pay his "debt" to women, Bramantyo is of the opinion that people should not see the film as offensive. Besides, as he suggests, "many Muslims are intelligent" (*Umat Islam kan sudah pada cerdas*).³⁵ Spectatorship has driven Bramantyo to revise his performance, and the result of this is the inconsistency of appearance. This brings us back to Butler's emphasis on the iterability of performativity; while a naturalized effect is produced (in this case "Muslimness"), reiteration of norms also opens up spaces for what Butler calls "gaps and fissures" as "the constitutive instabilities in such constructions" (1993: 10).

Conclusion

Passing as a Muslim – or passing as more religious than one actually is – is a practice that is often taken for granted in Indonesia. The expression of piety among celebrities during Ramadan, which may not continue afterwards, is a common form of passing. This performance of Muslimness involves both fascination and disidentification, just like Maria wearing a headscarf without really embracing Islam, or filmmaker Hanung Bramantyo learning about Islam with resistance before he declared his Muslim identity. "Trying out" identities and taking them off, which constitute the trope of passing, are deployed in the conversion stories (of both the film and the cultural producers). I have also pointed out that the practice of passing in the public sphere coexists with the enduring discourse of Muslim authenticity.

While the various trajectories of Muslim expressions after *Reformasi* have allowed different groups to articulate their own versions of "true" Muslimness – hence, there is no monolithic standard of Islam – the desire for authenticity has shaped the conversion narratives in a way that these narratives should have a closure. Conversion narratives are thus narratives of progress: from the state of simply passing to a new level where one becomes an enlightened, "true" Muslim. Yet unlike in the film, the narratives fabricated to project public

identities do not permit a closure. Like other fictions of identity, authentic Muslimness is unstable, and the cultural producers' reiterative practice of performing is a way to conceal such instability. Hopefully this essay can inspire more exploration on the volatile and slippery nature of Muslim performativity, an area that has not been much explored when people are more preoccupied with issues of Islamicization and fundamentalism as seemingly more pressing aspects of Islam in post-authoritarian Indonesia.

Endnotes

- ¹ I would like to thank the two editors of this symposium: Khoo Gaik Cheng, for complicating the concepts of passing and Muslim performativity, and Thomas Barker, for pointing out to me the importance of global discourse over Islam in *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*.
- ² One of the most intense discussions of *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* can be found in the Medicare mailing list, which I will discuss further in this essay.
- ³ For an overview of the debates, see *Jurnal Perempuan*, vol. 47 (Jakarta: Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan, 2006).
- ⁴ For a more extensive discussion on *jilbab* and the formations of piety, see van Wichelen (2007).
- ⁵ Eric Sasono (2009) writes that *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* and *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* endorse the idea that the only aspirations for contemporary Indonesian Muslims are channeling their desire for romance and pursuing a scholarly degree.
- ⁶ *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, DVD Bonus Material, 2008.
- ⁷ Medicare mailing list, Monday, March 10, 2008, 1:33 am.
- ⁸ Ibid, Tuesday, March 11, 2008.
- ⁹ Ibid, Tuesday, March 11, 2008. 2:06 am.
- ¹⁰ Ibid, Monday, March 10, 2008.
- ¹¹ I am indebted to Chris Straayer for helping me think through the concepts of passing and performativity.
- ¹² In addition to writings by Amrih Widodo (2002), Ariel Heryanto (2008), and Sonja van Wichelen (2007) that I am referring to in this paper, there are also other important essays including Kitley (2008) and Allen (2007).
- ¹³ There are always spaces, however, for subjects to challenge the Panopticon. Khoo has shown through the films of Yasmin Ahmad that Muslims can actually pose an alternative to the hegemonic Malay subjectivity.
- ¹⁴ Hadler (2004) writes that Jewish people in Surabaya and Jakarta can avoid anti-Semitic hatred because they can pass as "orang Arab" (an Arab). They are able to blend with the larger community through mixed marriage, adopting local cultures, and proclaiming themselves as believers of one of the five legitimate religions.

- ¹⁵ These motifs seem to imply that performing Muslimness is only done by non-practicing Muslims to gain (or to avoid) something. But I would like to point out that devout Muslims (those who actually believe in Islamic teaching and practice the religion) also need to perform their Muslimness in public to spread *dakwah*. In Islam, the ideal concept of *dakwah* (religious teaching) is that it could be done not only by religious leaders but also by common people. By showing (to the community) that they commit to an Islamic way of life, devout Muslims expect that they can inspire others to do the same.
- ¹⁶ In this case, religious passing in Indonesia is similar to class passing in the U.S. in the way that both are common, almost banal practices. Class passing, according to Gwendolyn Foster, is perceived as natural in the U.S. within the context of the American Dream, where class mobility is portrayed as achievable and individual efforts are rewarded. Everyone seems to class-pass, affirming Foster's argument that class passing and "whiteness" have been "dangerously adopted as a norm" (2005: 3). Within the discourse of the American dream, people accept and even celebrate the act of social climbing, or behaving according to upper-class norms, as common social practices that need not to be questioned.
- ¹⁷ The controversy over false religion was dramatized in the film *Mengaku Rasul* (2008). I thank Thomas Barker for pointing this out to me.
- ¹⁸ I am using the term "veil" in a broad sense. The women in Fahri's life cover themselves differently: Nurul and Noura wear jilbab, like most women in Southeast Asia; Maria wears a headscarf, and Aisha wears a full *hijab* with only her eyes visible.
- ¹⁹ In the welcoming speech before the special screening, the president's spokesperson Dino Patti Djalal declared that through *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, Indonesia "is reclaiming its voice in the world."
- ²⁰ El Shirazy (2004: 25).
- ²¹ The beginning of sura *Al Baqarah* in the Quran.
- ²² Bramantyo (2008).
- ²³ "Jagankan film agama, film yang didalamnya memuat pesan moral, buatku sangat mengada-ada." (Bramantyo, 2008).
- ²⁴ "Film paling laris Indonesia *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta* yang melahirkan idola Nikolas Saputra, juga bukan seorang yang sempurna. Lelaki tanpa teman, sinis, terkesan kasar sama perempuan... Kesempurnaan di era paska reformasi justru menjadi pertanyaan." (Bramantyo, 2007a). Bramantyo also compares these new models of masculinity with the perfect male character of *Catatan Si Boy* (Boy's Diary), produced in the New Order period.
- ²⁵ "Film ini mampu dan sudah merubah pandangan hidupku: tentang agama, kesetiaan, kerjakeras, komitmen, dan ... cinta... Berkali-kali aku berucap terima kasih kepada Kang Abik yang sudah secara tak langsung mempercayaiiku menyutradarai film ini, dimana telah membuatku kembali merasa dekat dengan

- Islam yang indah, bersahaja dan penuh dengan toleransi." (Bramantyo, 2007b).
- ²⁶ "... dari mulai seorang lelaki yang 'gelap' agama, sampai merasakan cahaya hangat dari sang Khalik." (Bramantyo, 2008).
- ²⁷ "Impianku mewujudkan keindahan dan kedalaman Islam terbentur oleh kenyataan sebaliknya: Ringan, Riang, Hedonistik dan Pop." (Bramantyo, 2007b).
- ²⁸ "Karena film ini, Fedi jadi rajin membuka-buka lagi buku tentang Islam. Bahkan Fedi menyadari segala tingkah lakunya yang tidak Islami selama ini setelah memerankan Fahri." (Bramantyo, 2007b).
- ²⁹ "Rianti Cartwright, Anti Ciuman" (Rianti Cartwright, Against Kissing). www.rileks.com (May 7, 2008). <<http://www.rileks.com/entertainment/seleb/truestory/10259-rianti-cartwright-anti-ciumah.html>>.
- ³⁰ "Sebenarnya dari dulu sampai sekarang, Rianti orang yang lebih alim dari saya. Tapi ada perubahan ketika ia mendalami peran itu [Aisha] dia jadi lebih mengetahui kehidupan Islam seperti apa. Jadi saya asumsikan Rianti lebih mengerti Islam." "Rianti Pahami Islam Berkat Ayat-Ayat Cinta" (Rianti Understands Islam After Ayat-Ayat Cinta). www.detikhot.com (March 18, 2008). <<http://www.detikhot.com/read/2008/03/19/080558/910491/230/rianti-pahami-islam-berkat-ayat-ayat-cinta->>>.
- ³¹ "Rianti Cartwright, Anti Ciuman" (Rianti Cartwright, Against Kissing). www.rileks.com (May 7, 2008). <<http://www.rileks.com/entertainment/seleb/truestory/10259-rianti-cartwright-anti-ciuman.html>>.
- ³² Mariani (2008).
- ³³ "Memang mbuat film islami itu sulit, apalagi kalo yang bikin emang udah gak islami duluan." (Bramantyo, 2007b).
- ³⁴ "Saya menjadi saksi mata saat syukuran AAC, Hanung dengan suara bergetar menahan haru menyatakan bahwa sudah lama ia ingin memenuhi wasiat ibunya yang mengharapkannya membuat film tentang agama." (Imanjaya, 2009).
- ³⁵ Imanjaya (2009).

References

- Allen, Pam. 2007. "Challenging Diversity?: Indonesia's Anti-Pornography Bill." *Asian Studies Review*. 31.2: 101-115.
- Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, Judith. 1993. *Bodies that Matter*. New York: Routledge.
- Bramantyo, Hanung. 2007a. "Ayat-ayat Cinta." Aug. 20. <http://hanungbramantyo.multiply.com/journal/item/3/AYAT-AYAT_CINTA>.
- Bramantyo, Hanung. 2007b. "Kisah di Balik *Ayat-ayat Cinta* 1" (The Story Behind *Ayat-ayat Cinta* 1). Nov. 29. <<http://hanungbramantyo.multiply.com/journal/item/8/>>

KISAH DI BALIK LAYAR AAC I>.

- Bramantyo, Hanung. 2008. "Ayat-ayat Pribadi seorang Sutradara" ("The Personal Verses of a Filmmaker"). April 22. <http://hanungbramantyo.multiply.com/journal/item/13/AYAT-AYAT-PRIBADI_SEORANG_SUTRADARA>.
- Caughie, Pamela L. 1999. *Passing and Pedagogy: The Dynamics of Responsibility*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Dyer, Richard. 1986. *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- El Shirazy, Habiburrahman. 2004. *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*. Jakarta: Penerbit Republika.
- Foster, Gwendolyn Audrey. 2005. *Class-Passing: Social Mobility in Film and Popular Culture*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Ginsberg, Elaine-K. 1996. *Passing and the Fictions of Identity*. New Americanists. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Hadler, Jeffrey. 2004. "Translations of Antisemitism: Jews, the Chinese, and Violence in Colonial and Post-Colonial Indonesia." *Indonesia and the Malay World*. 32.94: 291-313.
- Heryanto, Ariel. 2008. *Popular Culture in Indonesia: Fluid Identities in Post-Authoritarian Politics*. London: Routledge.
- Imanjaya, Ekky. 2009. "Posisi Ideologi dan Representasi: Perempuan Berkalung Sorban, Membela atau Merusak Nama Islam?" (Ideological Position and Representation: Perempuan Berkalung Sorban, Fighting for or Offending Islam?). *Rumahfilm*. <http://old.rumahfilm.org/resensi/resensi_perempuanberkalungsorban.htm>.
- Jurnal Perempuan*, 2006. Vol 47. Jakarta: Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan.
- Khoo, Gaik Cheng. 2009. "Reading the Films of Independent Filmmaker Yasmin Ahmad: Cosmopolitan, Sufi Islam and Malay Subjectivity." In *Race and Multiculturalism in Malaysia and Singapore*, edited by Daniel Goh, Matilda Gabrielpillai, Philip Holden, and Khoo Gaik Cheng, pp. 107-203. London: Routledge.
- Kitley, Philip. 2008. "Playboy Indonesia and the Media: Commerce and the Islamic Public Sphere on Trial in Indonesia." *South East Asia Research*. 16.1: 85-116.
- Lacy, Karyn R. 2007. *Blue-Chip Black: Race, Class and Status in the New Black Middle Class*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Mariani, Evi. 2008. "Hanung Bramantyo: Hitting the Right Marks." *The Jakarta Post*. March 23.
- Munoz, Jose Esteban. 1999. *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Riddell, Peter G. 2002. "The Diverse Voices of Political Islam in Post-Suharto Indonesia." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*. 13.1: 65-83.
- Robinson, Amy. 1996. "Forms of Appearance of Value." In *Performance and*

- Cultural Politics*, edited by Elin Diamond, pp. 237-261. New York: Routledge.
- Sasono, Eric. 2009. "Aspirasi Muslim Baru dalam Film" (New Muslim Aspirations in Films). *Koran Tempo*. July 2.
- Van Wichelen, Sonja. 2007. "Embodied Contestations: Muslim Politics and Democratization in Indonesia Through the Prism of Gender." Dissertation. Amsterdam, Universiteit van Amsterdam.
- Widodo, Amrih. 2008. "Writing for God: Piety and Consumption in Popular Islam." *Inside Indonesia*. 93. Aug.-Oct.

Intan Paramaditha is a Ph.D candidate at the Department of Cinema Studies, New York University, writing her dissertation on film culture and sexual politics in post-Suharto Indonesia. Her writings on Indonesian cinema appear in *Jump Cut*, *Asian Cinema*, *Criticine*, and *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures*. She also writes fiction and has published two collections of short stories in Indonesia.