Pintu terlarang

A disconcerting spatial interpretation of urban dystopia

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"Is there anything more dystopian than the corrupted mind of a brutally beaten child?"(Anonymous)

ABSTRACT

The main character of the film *Pintu terlarang* (The forbidden door), Gambir, attains success in the art world by making statues of pregnant women. Part of his creative process is to insert dead foetuses into the wombs of the statues. His troubled soul meets a written request for help by a child he encounters in various places. The journey to find the child leads him to a secret door, revealing a terrifying reality of a dehumanized world. The city, commonly characterized by a sense of vastness, is set in opposition to small, enclosed spaces where individuals converse with their utmost self. The questions explored are: What is the role of space in engendering urban dystopia? In what ways does the selection of different space settings help create a dehumanized world? I argue that urban dystopia is created when the inhabitants of a city return to enclosed spaces in an effort to find an existence. When individuals prefer enclosed spaces and fail to reconstruct existing meanings, tendencies toward dystopia will come forward and city life will degenerate.

KEYWORDS

Utopia, dystopia, space, urban, existence, deconstruct, enclosed, violence.

Gambir walks in the corridor of a place that at a glance looks like a clinic. We have no idea what kind of clinic it is. What we know for sure is that he has something in his hand that looks like a black plastic bag. He heads toward his car that is parked outside and starts to drive home. Gambir walks toward his art studio, opens the door, and is now right in the centre of the room. He

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comes closer to a half-finished statue, and starts working, resuming what he has half-accomplished. Obviously, it is a statue of a pregnant woman. Curiously enough, her womb is open, and Gambir is now working exactly at this part of the statue. He takes something out of the black plastic bag with intense carefulness. What he is holding in his right hand is now more than obvious: it is a small red lump of flesh – a dead foetus, fresh from the illegal abortion clinic. Slowly he puts it inside the womb of the statue, and slowly he closes the hole with cement and plaster. The statue is now *alive*; it does carry a human being – or a grisly remnant of it – inside its body. No wonder this statue of a woman becomes especially beautiful: it now carries something that previously belonged to life and that that thing is now alive in its body.

This is one of the fascinating scenes from the movie *Pintu terlarang* (The forbidden door).[1] The movie was directed by Joko Anwar, one of Indonesia's young leading film directors, and produced by Sheila Timothy from the Lifelike Pictures. Prominent Indonesian actors and actresses star in the movie, such as Fachri Albar (playing as Gambir, the main character), Marsha Timothy (Talyda, Gambir's wife), Ario Bayu (Dandung, Gambir's best friend), Otto Djauhari (Rio, another close friend of Gambir's), Tio Pakusodewo (Koh Jimmy, Gambir's curator), and Henidar Amroe (Menik Sasongko, Talyda's mother). Produced by Lifelike Pictures as its first film, and categorized as a horror and thriller film, the movie is an adaptation of Sekar Ayu Asmara's novel of the same title.[2] In fact, it is Joko Anwar's cinematic rendition of Asmara's *Pintu terlarang*. He wrote a screenplay based on the novel and directed the movie himself. The shooting took place in Jakarta and Bogor for 30 days, starting on 27 July 2008. With the running time of 115 minutes, the movie was released on 22 January 2009, and shown in the cinemas of 21 Cineplex and Bliztmegaplex.[3]

Although considered not very successful in Indonesia, it was declared the Best Film at 2009 Puchon International Fantastic Film Festival in Korea. It was one of the films nominated for the Golden Kinnaree Award Southeast Asian Competition during the Bangkok International Film Festival 2009. International film critics from *TIME*, *Hollywood Reporter*, and *Twitch* have

[1] Critics categorize this movie as a *film noir*. One of these critics is Leila S. Chudori from the *Tempo Magazine* with her article "Menguak pintu di dalam jiwa" (Revealing the door inside our souls, which can be found at http://www.tempo.co/read/news/2009/01/06/111153944/Menguak-Pintu-di-Dalam-Jiwa). Chudori argues that although the film may seem like pure entertainment, it possesses the characteristics of a film noir, such as the setting that resembles a place in some unknown country in the 1960s, the perspectives of the camera, the face shots, the low light shots, a powerless protagonist who is fighting against the existing hostile conditions, and a femme-fatale character that is both stunningly, beautiful, and utterly malicious. Douglas E. Williams (1988: 387) in his essay contends that "the underlying ethos of film noir characteristically has been that of the irredeemably 'corrupt society', a society of amoral, cynical and resigned human beings. The co-presence and simultaneous play of these two cinematic forms within the same film thus provides us with a paradigm of the sort of disturbing creativity our time demands – a work, to recall Adorno again, that embodies the contradictions of our lives, 'pure, uncompromised, in [their] innermost structure'".

[2] Sekar Ayu Asmara's novel *Pintu terlarang* (2005; first published in 2004).

[3] This information was taken from the movie's official website: http://www.pintuterlarang.com/.

expressed praises for *Pintu terlarang*,[4] which was screened in twenty film festivals around the world including those in London, Rotterdam, Sitges (Spain), Vancouver, and Udine (Italy).

QUESTIONS OF SPACE AND URBAN DYSTOPIA

In this article, I would like to explore various intriguing questions: How is a new significance of space in urban settings created? What is the role of space in engendering urban dystopia? In what ways does the selection of different space settings help create a dehumanized world? I argue that urban dystopia is created when city inhabitants take advantage of space as something to deny human emotions. Dystopia emerges when meanings are created in enclosed spaces and when open spaces, referring to freedom and the absence of restraint, are left without any signification. The preference for enclosed spaces over open spaces negates the necessity for negotiations where human conflicts are acknowledged and dealt with in constructive ways instead of being suppressed and buried without healthy resolutions.

THEORIZING SPACE, URBAN DYSTOPIA, AND THE WALKER

An individual's notion of identity derives from different sources, one of which is the crucial meanings formed by the place and context where one exists. Cultural geography centres its analysis on how contexts produce the connotations involved in shaping one's identity.[5] Peter Jackson (1989) observes the importance of place in shaping culture and considers cultural geography the study that analyzes how cultures are made up of social practices which take place in certain contexts where historical and geographical factors play a crucial role in this formation process.[6] The significance of place is most obvious in the idea that "places are products of specific cultural conditions and as such not simply arenas for action but actually always a part of the action and its meanings".[7] Thus, we should not consider place as a separate entity which is irrelevant to cultural analysis. Instead, place should be at the core of all cultural analyses.

Yi-Fu Tuan (1976: 266) uses a different name which, in my opinion, refers to more or less the same thing: humanistic geography, which is a geography that tries to comprehend the human world by analysing the ways men relate to their surroundings and their "geographical behaviour as well as their feelings and ideas in regard to space and place". His main concern is how "human awareness" is brought to the surface when we scrutinize "geographical activities and phenomena" (Tuan 1976: 267). The geographer is at the same time a humanist, who is called to discover how the depth of human feelings

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[4]   For a list of reviewers who have written about the movie, please read Michael Guillen 2010.
[5]   Judi Giles and Tim Middleton (1999: 104).
[6]   Peter Jackson, *Maps of meaning; An introduction to cultural geography* (London: Routledge, 1989) on page 23; quoted by Giles and Middleton 1999.
[7]   Giles and Middleton (1999: 105).

and imagination renders place a network of meanings that belongs exclusively to human beings (Tuan 1976: 269). Humanists or cultural geographers never limit their view to the activity of "objective forces" in their observation of phenomena. Instead, they see human will in all kinds of operations (Tuan 1976: 273). Thus, their main task is "to clarify the meaning of concepts, symbols, and aspirations as they pertain to space and place" (Tuan 1976: 275).

For a humanist geographer, human experience composes meanings, and place is the nucleus for these meanings. Place can be understood not by human senses but "through more passive and direct modes of experience", which cannot be objectified. It should be approached as we relate with one another as fellow humans (Tuan 1975: 152). Therefore, for cultural geographers, studying places is as important as understanding human beings, as it connotes understanding human beings in their deepest sense.

Therefore, in analysing the movie *Pintu terlarang*, I take the role of a cultural or humanist geographer. The general audience may see that the movie's significance lies in its highlighting of child abuse, love, and betrayal. After watching the movie, the audience may be persuaded not to act as abusive parents or unfaithful marriage partners. However, I would like to take a different approach. For me, place plays a crucial role in shaping the meanings and connotations of the movie. In addition, I see in the movie that human emotions and awareness are shaped by the characters' use and (mis)understanding of place, whether they perceive it consciously or subconsciously. In addition, the ways all of the movie characters deal with space and place signify something larger, which is the notion of the city and how it relates and shapes human consciousness. The reason is that the film's setting of place is the city, and it takes advantage of the features of the city, such as the market, the plaza, the museum, and the old buildings, although we cannot identify the exact name of the city from the movie.

Thus, it is important to have a clear understanding of the city. At the same time, it is substantial to understand the city in the light of the tension between utopia and dystopia. Many analysts have come up with different notions of the city. It was Thomas More who introduced the idea of Utopia as a "construction of space", in which utopia became the centre of the literary works of the utopian genre. He formulated utopia as something pivotally spatial, which is a mixture of *ou-topia* (no place) and *eu-topia* (good place). While it is glorified as a realm of perfection, utopia is not meant to be real. It is an ideal, an "imagined space", which is present whenever human beings come up with the wish for a perfect world.[8]

More interestingly, early utopia was manifested as the city. Cities were thought to be occupied by most utopian societies, and cities signified men's conquest of nature. Human ratio's power managed to subdue the forces of nature and imposed order and organization upon it, including on the social and political life of the city. The city, thus, becomes the expression of the

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[8]   Guy Baeten (2002: 144).

power of human mind.[9] The city is utopia made real and objective; at the core of utopia is human rational power.[10]

Furthermore, the city can be considered, from a Marxist perspective, as something that needs to be redeemed: it is a "progressive evil".[11] It may be bad in the beginning, but it becomes necessary in the later stages. The city is "disintegrative and disruptive", but it is also able to unite all the masses and make them realize that they have one goal in their common struggle: the liberation of all citizens from capitalist oppression. Thus, the city is transitional; it leads the populace toward something good at the end of their journey.[12]

Jane Jacobs argues that the city's core significance is its ability to endorse "spontaneous diversity", which is replete with numerous forms of activities and movements. She contends that it is in the occasion where people encounter each other in various places in the city that the city will thrive, developing its social and economic aspects.[13] A city that can no longer sustain the life of its citizens is a "dystopian city", which may find its end in a short time. However, this is not an indication of total destruction or "anarchy"; rather, it sheds light on a bright future: a liberated life.[14] Furthermore, Dostoevsky also discovers something quite optimistic in the city. He longs for what life can truly give him, which is the "intensity of experience"; curiously, however, he is interested in the gloomy dimension of mankind, which he can find by delving deeper into the city, the Russian city of St. Petersburg, its underground life of shadows and obscurity.[15]

A less positive view of the city, borrowing from Michel Foucault, considers it an area of "fortified spaces" where individuals are confined on account of or against their will. The city and its inhabitants are constantly supervised by "the public and private power" in its "restructured forms".[16] It is a dystopian city, marked by perfection in its material aspect, but its reasoning power is

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[9]   For a positive outlook of utopia, especially for the field of urban planning, see David Pinder 2002. A provoking argument of utopian city as urban natural environment can be found in Ecko Garrett 1985.

[10]   R. Eaton, "The city as an intellectual exercise", in: R. Schaer, G. Claeys, and L.T. Sargent (eds), *Utopia: the search for the ideal society in the western world* (New York and Oxford: New York Public Library/Oxford University Press, 2000); quoted by Baeten (2002: 144).

[11]   Andy Merrifield (2000: 475). According to Merrifield, by calling the city "a progressive evil", Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels consider the city unfavourable, but it is the city that can unite the people together so that they realize their "common grievances" and afterward launch a revolution. Thus, they call the city "transitional" since at the outset it is bad or evil, but it is a "transitional stage to something more virtuous," that is the creation of a "community of citizens" that is more "permanent" and "solid".

[12]   For a discussion of totalitarianism as dystopia as pictured in George Orwell's 1984, see Robert Paul Resch 1997. For an elaboration of dystopia in Sierra Leone using a postcolonial perspective, see Richard Phillips 2002.

[13]   Jane Jacobs, *The death and life of great American cities* (New York: Random Hourse, 1961) on page 27; quoted by Merrifield (2000: 483).

[14]   Merrifield (2000: 483).

[15]   Merrifield (2000: 476).

[16]   Gordon MacLeod and Kevin Ward (2002: 165).

"inhuman".[17] Raymond Williams (1978: 204) points out that there are several manifestations of dystopia, as he describes in the following:

> One kind of clarification is possible by considering the negative of each type: the negative which is now commonly expressed as "dystopia". We then get: (a) the hell, in which a more wretched kind of life is described as existing elsewhere; (b) the extremely altered world, in which a new but less happy kind of life has been brought about by an unlooked-for or uncontrollable natural event; (c) the willed transformation, in which a new but less happy kind of life has been brought about by social degeneration, by the emergence or re-emergence of harmful kinds of social order, or by the unforeseen yet disastrous consequences of an effort at social improvement; (d) the technological transformation, in which the conditions of life have been worsened by technical development.

Williams' dystopia embraces both the outer world and the contemporary world of here and now. Hell is a dystopia that lies beyond the current world which is characterized by migration: human beings have to move from the earth here to hell over there, and it is deemed irreversible and beyond human intervention. The altered world emerges out of powers beyond human power, and mankind can only accept it when it comes to them. The willed transformation arises because of human agency: the social order that humans try to create results in its negation; a utopia turns into a dystopia. The last type of dystopia exists primarily in this postmodern world: technology replaces reality and changes it into representations, which humans can no longer deal with.[18]

Apart from, or perhaps as a continuation of, the panoptic monitoring in a dystopian world, Foucault formulates a curious notion of utopia and dystopia.[19] For Foucault, utopias are places of perfection that do not exist. These are not actual places. Despite being places that "have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of Society",[20] Foucault emphasizes that these spaces are not real. More interesting still is his discussion of heterotopia, or the other places. Below is Foucault's description of heterotopias (Foucault 1986: 24), worth reading in its original form:

> There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places – places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopia, <u>heterotopias</u>. [Emphasis added.]

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[17]   Martin Schäfer (1979: 292).
[18]   For an interesting discussion of postmodernism as dystopia, read William Rose's rigorous review of Stanford Lyman's book *Roads to dystopia* (2002) in Rose 2003.
[19]   See Ken Hillis 1999 for a discussion of disciplinary gaze in surveillance and simulation technology.
[20]   Foucault (1986: 24).

Interestingly enough, Foucault considers heterotopias, or dystopias, as "real places". Once a society is formed and established, heterotopias emerge. This place is actually an accumulation of all real places, only that something different is added to it: all the real sites are "represented, contested, and inverted", which means that what the society holds as something normal, usual, natural, acceptable, and common is turned upside down to its opposite, and this opposite remains real. We should not forget, however, that although this place is real, it resides beyond all places. It is real, but it is not here. We can embrace it, but it does not belong here. It is not part of us here and now, but it truly exists, and we should accept it for its undoubted actuality.

In addition to heterotopia, Foucault also came up with the notion of the mirror. The mirror is precisely the intersection between utopia and heterotopia. However, it has no place. It is a place of reflection, where the subject sees himself in a place where he does not exactly exist. It is a "virtual space that opens up behind the surface". The subject is able to see himself as a "shadow", so it is himself who is unreal who he sees in the mirror. Foucault calls it "the utopia of the mirror". At the same time, it is a heterotopia since the mirror is actually present. Interestingly, this heterotopia functions as a kind of "counteraction" toward his current existence. Thus, the mirror functions as both utopia and heterotopia: it enables the subject to see himself as an unreal entity, merely a shadow, but it enables him to return to the realization that the place where he is totally real. The place becomes "at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there […]".[21] It is interesting to note that Foucault does not make utopia and heterotopia separate realms. In fact, there is a sort of middle area, or a bridge, where the subject can experience both the real and the unreal simultaneously.

Paula J. Massood, in analysing two movies that depict the culture of black neighbourhoods in the United States, observes that the hood film takes as its setting the city that has been imagined as both utopia and dystopia. It is a utopia because it "promise[s] freedom and economic mobility", but it is also dystopia as it becomes the site of poverty and marginalization. The city plays this double role; this role is both "real and imaginary".[22] Simultaneously, as it were, the city is both utopian and dystopian, both real and as imaginary. Thus, urban thinking in the twentieth century can be seen as the nexus for utopian-dystopian dialectic. Critiquing utopia will engender dystopia, and there is utopia behind the observation of dystopia.[23] Therefore, we should imagine utopia and dystopia as "two sides of the same coin"; where the big isms in the world serve as utopia to some, but as dystopias to others. The future of utopia is unpredictable, but it all depends on this dialectic tension between utopia and dystopia, or anti-utopia, or heterotopia.[24]

[21] Foucault (1986: 24).
[22] Massood (1996: 88).
[23] Baeten (2002: 150).
[24] Baeten (2002: 151).

In whatever form it appears, understanding and coping with the city stimulates a certain attitude. It is an attitude in which the subject is the agent; he/she is not submerged in the city. The subject is not under the domination and subjugation of the city. The subject is an active agent, who carefully evaluates and measures his reactions and responses toward the city. Michel de Certeau (1984) comes up with the notion of the *flaneur*, or the walker. He compares the act of walking to the system of language. Walking in the city is similar to the process of "appropriat[ing]" structure and meaning as given by language. Making use of speech acts is equal to taking advantage of the urban system to create new meanings. Whenever the walker walks in the city, he generates new possibilities: he does not go straight; instead, he takes turns as he wishes to. He takes a shortcut when he is supposed to walk along a straight path. He avoids going through places that are taken for granted and that the system forces him to take. He signifies the city by selecting the places he journeys to and the manners in which he performs the journey. This active agent "manipulat[es]" the existing order; his movements are "deviations" that contradict the domination of the "urbanistic system", which presents to him only "literal meanings" as found in language. He is more interested in connotations than denotations. In this way, the walker copes with the challenges of utopia and dystopia; they become irrelevant as now new meanings arise from himself, his act, and his attitude, not from some obscure order imposed by utopian and dystopian forces beyond himself.

Certeau (1984: 103) also postulates an interesting concept related the city and the act of walking. For him, walking indicates an absence, which is "a lack of place":

> To walk is to lack a place. It is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper. The moving about that the city multiplies and concentrates makes the city itself an immense social experience of lacking a place – an experience that is, to be sure, broken up into countless tiny deportations (displacements and walks), compensated for by the relationships and intersections of these exoduses that intertwine and create an urban fabric, and placed under the sign of what ought to be, ultimately, the place but is only a name.

By providing enormous possibilities for the city, the walker demonstrates that the city lacks a fixed and stable pattern. Rather, the city is marked by impermanence and fluidity, which the walker affirms by his act of walking. By being displaced and rejecting to be placed in a certain locality, the walker creates a new order: it is an order that is founded on place but is marked by the absence of place. Curiously, the absence of place is the arrival of significations.

Yi-Fu Tuan (1988: 318) opts to comprehend the city as a moral universe. City citizens can have a developed sense of self and the universe when observing that what is deemed "impersonal" such as the "transportation system" and "the public places" are replete with "colourful human types and things". We need to act as cultural geographers where we can see human agency and influence in objective realities. Moreover, he sees that human

beings relate to one another in the city in a manner that is "cool" rather than "cold" (Tuan 1988: 320). Nonetheless, this should not be considered as a lack. Coolness should not be taken as unimportant or irrelevant. Instead, it is "a distinctive attribute of such public virtues as tolerance, competence, and even-handed goodwill" (Tuan 1988: 320). Thus, Certeau's walker may assume a similar attitude: moral meanings may arise in a place that may seem at first bland and lacks significance. The walker negotiates the stable order with the call to introduce a new order: it is a moral order that sees the city and its citizens as creators of meanings. In his eyes, the city is "a model of the cosmos", which encompasses the overall aspects of human beings. In this perspective, diversity or "heterogeneity" does not preclude harmony. Instead, it is a cosmos that is open to all possibilities. In the past, places of worships enabled worshippers and visitors alike to relish in the sense of glory. Nowadays, museums and art galleries open our eyes to things from far-away places, which mean that it enables us to see the world in its extension (Tuan 1988: 323).

Pintu terlarang: artistic violence and the role of imagination

Gambir, the main character, is a young, successful sculptor. The opening scene of the movie shows Gambir surrounded by his wife, close friends, and his curator, Koh Jimmy, a Chinese Indonesian whose business is to promote and sell Gambir's works at various art exhibitions. Everyone congratulates Gambir for succeeding in having all his statues sold out, purchased by art collectors, surely at high prices. However, only Gambir, his wife, Talyda, and Koh Jimmy know that inside each of his statues, there is a dead foetus. It is Talyda who came up with the idea of inserting a dead foetus into each of his statues, and Gambir never disobeys what Talyda insists on him doing. Meanwhile, Gambir's mother wants them to give her a grandchild; thus, she suggests various ways for them to have a baby. What she does not know is that Talyda never wants to have a baby. After she had her first baby aborted before they got married, Talyda decided she never wants to have a baby. She named her dead baby Arjasa, and she had Gambir put the foetus inside the first statue of a pregnant woman he made.

After this first experiment, Gambir continues to insert dead fetuses into each statue of a pregnant woman he makes. He regularly obtains foetuses from the same illegal abortion clinic that aborted his own baby. People say that all the statues that Gambir created look real and alive, as if they really had souls. All of his exhibitions are great successes, and all statues are sold out just during the first days. Nonetheless, Gambir can never eliminate the guilt that he feels every time he makes a new statue and puts a dead foetus inside its womb.

All of a sudden, he receives a phone call from a child, uttering only two words: *Tolong saya* or "Help me". He sees the same request suddenly appear, written in various places, without him knowing who wrote it. Furthermore, he finds a red closed door in his studio, which Talyda forbids him to open as

it will ruin their life. It is the forbidden door.

Everyone Gambir knows thinks that he is a weak man, but Gambir never wants to acknowledge that he really is one. He rapes his own wife and hits Dandung, his close friend, on the face to prove that he is not weak. Next to one of the sentence's appearances, Gambir finds the word "Herosase", which turns out to be the name of a club that provides a peculiar service: members can see from various channels on television people having sexual intercourse in unusual circumstances, or people being abused, tortured, raped, or hurting themselves in various unimaginable ways. These are live shows, captured by cameras placed inside the rooms where the sexual and violent activities take place, without the rooms' inhabitants realizing that what they do is captured by cameras for commercial purposes. Gambir meets the child that pleads "Help me" on one of the channels. It is a boy who is severely abused on a regular basis by his parents. He comes to the club frequently, concerned with the safety of the boy. Until, in his last visit to the club, he watches the boy cut his father and mother's throats, and then his own. Gambir cannot contain his grief watching the boy kill his own parents and himself. Then he discovers something that intensely shocks him: on one of the channels, he sees Talyda conspiring with his own mother to become pregnant by having sexual intercourse with Gambir's close friends. Right in front of his eyes, on a television live show, he watches Talyda having sexual intercourses with Roy and Dandung, his best friends, and makes a deal with Koh Jimmy to force Gambir to keep on making statues, inserting dead foetuses, holding exhibitions, and making a lot of profits.

Gambir decides to hold a Christmas party for all these people, and during this party, he murders each one of them in the most gruesome fashions: throat slitting, eye piercing, drowning, and point-blank shooting using a revolver, which give him profound satisfaction. Then he decides to open the Forbidden Door, only to find behind it the kitchen where the abusive parents beat the boy, and the bedroom where the three dead bodies lie on the floor.

Suddenly the scene shifts to a young person in a cell, whose name is Gambir. The whole story actually takes place in the imagined world of a mentally troubled young man, who has occupied a cell in a mental institution for eighteen years. The little boy that Gambir sees is actually himself; he had been abused by his parents, and he murdered them in cold blood before being confined to the institution. Talyda, Roy, and Dandung turn out to be fake characters he created in his imagination. In this story, he plays the role of an artist. In the next imagined world, he plays a priest.

How the city is doomed: enclosed spaces and the creation of utopia-dystopia

The first place that appears in the movie is an art gallery named *Gallery Jingga* (the Orange Gallery). In this gallery, Gambir's statues are on display, and people closest to him praise him for holding a successful art exhibition. We can see statues of pregnant women in different poses, all in black. The

gallery is white-washed and looks clean and luxurious. It seems obvious that this is a meeting place for people from the upper class. Among them are art collectors who come with thousands of dollars in their pockets to buy statues. This is a place where human interaction happens, but it is not an ordinary interaction. It is an interaction among specific groups of people: artists, art collectors, art critics, and mostly people from the upper class who have a keen interest in art. The white, clean, spacious place represents establishment and freedom. It represents the world of art, a realm where human beings can express themselves freely. Moreover, it is a place that seems devoid of human defects; the art gallery is a place of perfection. However, there is a tension between this place of freedom and the sense of confinement and death that resides in little spaces inside the statues' wombs. This conforms to Schäfer's opinion that a dystopian city is characterized by both material perfection and the "inhuman" state of reason all at once.

These little spaces are dystopias; they are defined as hell, "in which a more wretched kind of life is described as existing elsewhere", as Raymond Williams puts it. It does not exist in this real world; it is *detached* from the real world as it is hidden from human eyes. It belongs to another world, which poignantly is the world of the dead. Thus, the art gallery represents the utopian world, but the wombs of the statues symbolize dystopia, as manifest in the form of death. The characteristics of these opposite worlds are quite extreme. Clean, white, spacious, and luxurious refer to the gallery, but dark, black, bloody, confined, and dirty belong to the wombs. Thus, we can see that there is a tension of utopia and dystopia in this first place of the movie. Interestingly, utopia is sustained by dystopia. The art exhibition is successful in so far as it stands upon a dystopian world of stored, hidden, confined dead foetuses.

The abortion clinic is similarly clean; everything is in order, and it is kept free from any form of disturbance from the outside world. At the same time, it is a cold place, in the sense that it lacks human interaction. The human interaction that does happen is limited to welcoming and letting go of clients by doctors and nurses. There is almost no communication since each client is usually occupied with her own feelings of guilt, confusion, awkwardness, and uneasiness. In this place, there is an interesting dialogue between Gambir, while he is waiting for his wife under operation inside one of the clinic rooms, and a middle-aged man, who seems to be waiting for his wife being treated in another room. This man claims that he has taken his wife to the clinic seven times, and every time they came to the clinic they had their new baby aborted. Later he tells Gambir that his wife has actually already passed away after aborting their seventh baby. He informs Gambir that both he and his wife aborted their babies because they never wanted children. They even aborted their first baby after they had gotten married, not before it, which is the opposite of what Gambir and Talyda are doing in that clinic.

Thus, the abortion clinic functions as another place of dystopia. In this place, life is denied, but death is *revisited* repeatedly. This clinic becomes the bridge between utopia and dystopia. In the imagination of the middle-aged man, utopia would mean a life without children. For them, the current world

is a place of dystopia; it is a world filled only with problems that human beings can neither avoid nor solve. This is what the middle-aged man actually tells Gambir:

> We [he and his wife] were not ashamed. We were already married before we aborted our first baby. We just don't want to have children. We believe that those children do not want to be born. The world offers nothing but problems. […] She [Talyda] is not ashamed. She just doesn't want to have children from you. She is your enemy.[25]

Refusing to have children is the act of avoiding this dystopian life. This kind of life is shunned for the sake of a new utopia. As we can see, this new utopia is only imaginary and unreal. We may infer that both the husband and the wife never really felt the joy of truly experiencing a new utopia. The real world is a dystopian world that is dealt with by rejecting children (by committing abortion). This abortion clinic becomes a dystopian place that is aimed at avoiding a dystopian life. The act of killing babies before they are born is a strategy to create utopia (a world without suffering children), which now means that there is a tension between utopia and dystopia, unfortunately resulting in another dystopia (a world full of aborted babies or dead foetuses). When Gambir comes regularly to pick up new dead foetuses, he walks right at the heart of this tension.

Another place under scrutiny is Gambir's art studio. It is a dark place, and the lighting is only minimal. It is a solitary place, separated from the outside world of society. At the same time, the art studio is a place of freedom since in this place Gambir can exercise his artistic skills. Consequently, there is another tension here, similar to the one in the gallery, which is one between artistic freedom and a sense of confinement in the wombs of the statues that Gambir produces. The process that takes place here is one of turning wombs as a place of nurture (life sustaining) into a place of death (life-destroying). Gambir's creative activity is one that deals with death, a form of life denial.

In a dystopian world, life is denied from art. In this kind of world, art becomes acceptable and successful when it embraces death and incorporates it as part of its core element. This place becomes significant because this process of creating art from death is only possible when it is separated from the outside world, from the eye of the community. This is the place where human awareness of life is turned into an awareness of death and shaped into works of art that would be part of a utopian world.

The kitchen where the child abuse happens is worth analysing. The kitchen is simple as it consists of a dining table surrounded by chairs, a refrigerator, and a stove. In this kitchen, the abusive parents are dressed in plain clothes. The scenes from this kitchen, watched by the people in Herosase and taken from hidden cameras, look blurred and distant. There is also a sense of detachment between the kitchen and the outside world (there is never any picturing of the

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[25]   Joko Anwar, *Pintu terlarang*, minutes 16.41 to 17.53.

outside world in any of the scenes shown in Herosase's television channels as it may endanger their practice). A kitchen or a dining room is supposed to be a place of warmth, care, love, sharing, and laughter. With this abuse, it turns into a place of pain and sufferings which signify the absence of freedom and love.

Then, how is this dystopian world created by space? It is by denying utopia (the ideal of a happy family), creating a sense of enclosure or the absence of contact with the outside world, and by the suppression of communication. In this place, the encounter that happens among human beings is not a real encounter. It is an encounter among human beings that have "enclosed spaces" within their hearts and minds, which is subsequently projected in the form of violence to the weakest (the boy).[26] Thus, this enclosed kitchen is a representation of an "enclosed" human mind and feeling. Dystopia is created and sustained by the denial or avoidance of contact or communication.

The garden where Gambir and Koh Jimmy discuss the next art exhibition to be held is another interesting point of analysis. This place is located in open air, fresh, and marked by red flowers and green foliage. People in this place are undisturbed, and the garden also indicates a lack of intrusion and interference from unwanted subjects. There is a sense of freedom, openness, and freshness to this place, but a sense of detachment also prevails as they crave for privacy by being in it. The place's location on a separate place symbolizes a disconnection from the real world in the society.

Furthermore, what Gambir and Koh Jimmy are discussing is also in contradiction with any positive sense that the place provides. In their discussion, Koh Jimmy emphasizes the fact that the public must not know what Gambir has done to his statues, that is inserting dead foetuses. This open, limitless space is utilized to hide an unfavourable fact, which means that it is a form of hiddenness that hides in the open. Thus, what truly happens in this place is openness that is taken advantage by ill intentions, which signifies the presence of a strain of good and evil, or utopia and dystopia.

One question arises: Does openness play any role in eliminating a sense of dystopia? The answer seems to be that it does not. Even open spaces that are wrongly signified can be an instrument for the emergence of dystopia. It shows how space may enhance, contradict, or be used to negate human awareness.

In contrast to the garden that offers a sense of openness and freshness, there is the dark place where Gambir chases the little boy after the boy shows himself to him in the gymnasium. This place is dominated by darkness and resembles a labyrinth: there seems to be only an entrance but no exit. The boy is in fact Gambir when he was a boy and abused by his parents. Thus, when he is pursuing the boy, he is actually pursuing himself, but he can never find

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[26]   The abusive father hardly speaks to his wife, and so does the wife hardly talk to her husband. It turns out that the father dislikes his wife and has intended to divorce her before the boy was born. When the boy was indeed born, he hates the boy as he now becomes an obstacle in his plan to divorce his wife, which makes him unceasingly beat the boy. The wife is only a mistress who deeply hates her husband for making her only a mistress, but she needs him to survive as he is the breadwinner of the family. Her dislike toward her own husband is projected to her own son in the form of abusive violence.

this boy. Gambir is trying to find himself who constantly runs away from him. The place, then, represents the subject's break from his own self. He becomes indeed a *fractured* self. The individual is at a loss: he lives in reality (which will be negated in the last part of the film), but his real (or true) self exists in an unreal, unreachable place. His dystopia (the fractured self) is real, but his true self (utopia) is imaginary and unattainable. Gambir's struggle is one against the loss of self, and this is indicated by the scene when he almost gets lost and cannot find the way out in that labyrinthine site. He does find the way out, but he does not find the child, namely himself.

The dark place represents this search for one's self and the failure of this endeavour. Thus, this is what a dystopian city offers to individuals, that is to say a separation, a break from one's own self, or self-disintegration. In the next scene, Gambir enters a traditional market. For him, the people he sees there are invisible as he is occupied by the search of his own self. In search of one's true self in a dystopian world, the subject becomes oblivious to his surroundings, that is to say other human beings. He becomes detached from other people and the community with whom he is supposed to exist and interact. The market is no longer a dark place – he can see everything clearly, but he is still in "darkness" that is to say in detachment from other people. Finally, an elderly lady suddenly grasps his left hand and asks an intriguing question: "Why do you never shut the door?" We realize that even this single question is concerned with space (the door, the room behind the door, the room behind the forbidden door). She manages to see that Gambir is in a constant search of his own self, but for him it becomes a desperate search since she knows full well that Gambir will never find his self in a dystopian world. (At the end of the movie, we discover that she is in fact his neighbour, living in a cell next to his in the mental institution.) Therefore, what she suggests is practical and beneficial: human beings *pursue* their own selves in a dystopian world, but they *affirm* them in a utopian one. Endless self-searching is a characteristic of the dystopian world, but self-affirmation is the icon of the utopian world. Certainly, once the subject is able to affirm his own self, he will be able to affirm the selves of others. If this happens, the sense of detachment can most probably be eliminated.

Furthermore, one place which should not escape our examination is the Herosase building. It is an old, big, imposing colonial building with many rooms and windows. This is normally a spacious place where people can take advantage of the abundance of rooms to engage in various activities. The presence of many windows signifies that there should be contact with the outside world. In addition, it has certain parts that belong to places where people engage in formal and decent activities, that is a well-dressed receptionist, her tall neat desk, a stairwell to the next floor, and security guards. However, this place represents the culmination of the utilization of enclosed spaces in a dystopian world. The sense of utopia that it projects to the world turns out to be a sham. It is precisely the place where people rejoice in watching the real-life violent scenes from television channels the club provides. This space of enclosure represents the utmost manifestation and representation

of a dystopian world where meanings and senses are inverted as people derive pleasure from observing other human beings' pervert sufferings, both voluntary and involuntary. In addition, people see others being involved in defective relationships, for example, a prison inmate brutally raping another inmate, a child being cruelly beaten by his own parents, and a love couple conducting sado-masochistic practices before lovemaking. In a dystopian world, human beings' sources of entertainment are overturned. They may not be able to enjoy common ways of seeking pleasure. They can only consume and relish the types of pleasure that are opposite to those in a real world.

Again, this type of pleasure absolutely requires the use of enclosed spaces and a total detachment from the real world. Interestingly, this pleasure can be gotten only by *separate* individuals. To enjoy the show, they have to be in total detachment from other individuals as each room can only be occupied by a single member. No interaction with other members is possible once each of them occupies a room. A healthy city, Jane Jacobs (1961) argues, should encourage "spontaneous diversity" where citizens can meet others in diverse urban spots, and the city will progress.[27] What happens in Herosase is clearly in contrast with Jacobs' contention. Individuals are disconnected from other individuals so that the city never improves. This is a dystopian city as the healthy life of its inhabitants can no longer be nurtured.

Moreover, this place shows that only utopia sustain dystopia: only rich people (imagined to be living in a utopian world by the less fortunate portion in society) can join this club and watch the show, and they watch the show in clean, exquisitely-furnished, highly private rooms. Moreover, we can also say that in these rooms they find their true selves, which are the darkest human souls that ever existed in a world turned dystopia.

This is also the reason why Gambir has to come to this place and become a member of the club in the first place: in search of himself, he needs to see the visual appearance of his true self that is the abused boy. From Foucault's perspective, perhaps this is what he means by the mirror: Gambir sees himself on the television channel. He realizes that he is in this (supposedly) real world, but his reflection exists there in an imaginary, inaccessible place. Herosase becomes the bridge between Gambir's utopian and dystopian worlds. He sees himself (or his reflection) in the other room (where the boy is beaten), but he knows he is not there. However, at the same time, the mirror (Herosase) is a real place for Gambir; his access goes as far as this real place. He can only approach its reflection (on the television channel). This is the closest he can get to his true self, which is imaginary that constantly escapes him.

We can see clearly that a dystopian city creates enclosed spaces that individuals cannot penetrate so that they can recognize and communicate with their innermost (perverted) souls. In line with Foucault's notion of heterotopia, this place is *outside* of all places, where real sites (moral and ethical sites, for instance) are contested and finally inverted. Furthermore,

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[27]   J. Jacobs, *The death and life of great American cities* (New York: Random House, 1961) on page 27; quoted in Merrifield 2000: 483.

this place can never exist without the silent authority of government officials or (illegal) private companies who have the power to install hidden cameras in the rooms where sexual and violent activities take place. Thus, the notion of dystopia is significantly enhanced by the role of power and authority. It is the city, represented by government officials and corporate executives that enable this kind of place to exist.

Herosase also fulfils Foucault's third principle of heterotopia, which is that "the heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible".[28] This club combines several conflicting sites into one single space: the site of entertainment (imagine some examples: watching movies in cinemas, watching films at the convenience of home) and the commercial site (club members have to pay membership fees to be allowed to enjoy the show), and the psychological site of moral perversion (child abuse, abnormal sexual practices, sexual crime).

In addition, it also conforms to Foucault's fifth principle, which is that "heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable". Herosase is open for a certain kind of people, and it closes itself to those who are not members. Without a recommendation from an existing member, a new individual cannot join the club, which makes it both "isolated" but also "penetrable". According to this principle, the site of heterotopia is the opposite of a public space where entry and exit are devoid of any limitation. In the case of Herosase, individuals have to "submit to rites and purification".[29] Club members have to abide by certain non-negotiable rules, such as no-questions-asked by members, and they can never intervene with what happens in the scenes. They have to be "purified" from common norms that apply in the normal world outside.

It is also interesting to note that the abused child on television knows that there are cameras that capture the treatments he receives from his parents. He wants to communicate with Gambir, and when he puts his hand on the camera's lens, Gambir does the same thing on the television screen. However, no real communication takes place. Both individuals (or two fractured selves that should be united) remain separated. Thus, place in this dystopian world (Herosase's rooms, television, kitchen, the dark place, art gallery, studio) never makes self-discovery and self-affirmation possible. Instead of becoming the centre of meanings and a generator of new significations, place obstructs meanings and human awareness. The city loses its role as moral universe, one suggested by Yi-Fu Tuan. The meticulous, carefully organized space in a dystopian world creates a world without moral significance. In Raymond Williams' categorization, this kind of city emerges as a result of "willed transformation", in which social degeneration, or moral perversion, engenders a new but less happy kind of life, although the element of attempts to social improvement is lacking. This transformation is "willed" as individuals choose to indulge in abnormal forms of entertainment and pleasure.

[28]   Foucault (1986: 25).
[29]   Foucault (1986: 26).

Furthermore, individuals take advantage of a panoptic gaze. However, it is the gaze – though Panoptic (in the sense that the people captured by the hidden cameras can never see that they are under their gaze (except for the boy) and/or they are totally within the dominance of this gaze) – that conducts the process of gazing for perverted self-pleasure, but not for disciplinary purposes, as Foucault imagined. However, in Foucault's perspective, the spaces where the watchers enjoy the show and those where the actors perform the show are both "fortified spaces", which means that there is a subliminal power that keeps the spaces separated and "protected" from the real world. This is the power that keeps all processes of violence and pleasure under a secure order. It is a totalizing order, spatializing and very powerful.

The open space in front of the café is another space that should draw our attention. It is spacious, free, limitless, and public, and belongs to everybody. This is a place in open air without any enclosure; people can come and go as they please. In this place, everybody is in control; there is no one single power that dominates the whole area. In such an open place, human beings cannot act as they please (as they do in enclosed spaces); thus, there is no sense of detachment. It is a positive place, and it can also be a place for self-expression (street artists and musicians like using such a place to express themselves.) This is precisely a place where everyone has to negotiate his/her interests with those of others'.

Unfortunately, Gambir is in that place once, but he is not imbued with this sense of freedom, openness, and equality. Rather, he continues to engage in self-searching: he is seriously thinking about where he can find the boy himself. He does not find pleasure in such an open space of self-expression. Instead, he goes even deeper into his own (split) self and focuses on self-discovery. Then, the self appears in the form of the same sentence "Help me", which he finds written on a wall post located in the middle of the space. We can interpret this scene as his self revealing itself in an open space. Unfortunately, this open space becomes merely an instrument; the characteristics of that place remain irrelevant to Gambir. This open space fails to encourage openness and freedom. Alternatively, perhaps the subject himself chooses not to appropriate these characteristics for his benefit.

Thus, we see, for the second time, that open or public spaces do not necessarily discourage dystopian tendencies. Utopian characteristics may become irrelevant when the fractured subject is occupied with the endless, futile self-searching that is dominant in a dystopian world.

There are still several other spaces that are marked by the sense of enclosure and the negative effects that it generates. First of all, there is the public restroom in the café where Gambir overhears the conversation about the abused child. A woman is asking over her cell phone how the boy can still survive despite the brutality of the beatings. This is a small enclosed space that is divided into even smaller spaces for separate individuals. In Hollywood movies, this place is often used as a hiding place from criminals or psychopathic killers. In one of the scenes, inside the restroom Gambir is searching for what he believes to be the truth (how he can find more information about the boy in order to save

him). He is unfortunate since the woman has exited the café and he cannot find her. In this dystopian world, truth remains hidden from view, which is made possible with the existence of places of enclosure.

Another intriguing place is the hotel room where Talyda is having sexual intercourse with Gambir's best friends, which represents the notion that inverted human relationships necessitate the establishment of hidden, enclosed spaces. Curiously, in Herosase's rooms, perverted human connections are both *hidden* (from the public's eye) and *shown* (on television) at the same time. But why are they hidden and shown? They are hidden because they are in contradiction with accepted morality. They are shown because in a dystopian world, individuals glorify perverted morality.

The next enclosed space is the dining room in Gambir's house where his final act of murder happens. The dining room is a place of respect, human relationship, happiness, enjoyment, and warmth. This place can actually represent utopia. However, a grisly murder is carried out and takes place here, that is to say, a dystopian action is performed in a utopian place. A dystopian city takes advantage of utopian conditions to establish dystopia, which is also represented by the boy's room where his bed (associated with rest, peacefulness, rejuvenation) is brutally destroyed by his father with a short axe and where he is beaten by his mother.

Furthermore, the room behind the forbidden door is exactly the place where Gambir almost finds himself. His fractured self is almost integrated and assembled again. Nonetheless, he finds the boy (himself) already dead, next to his own father whose throat he has just slit, and his mother lying in a blood puddle at the opposite side of the bed, the result of the boy's throat-slitting. The boy suddenly appears, uttering his final sentence to him: "Gambir, you just failed to save all of us again." His true self escapes him again, sliding away from his grasp.

Therefore, the search for true self in a dystopian world will never reach its goal. Rather, the subject will be in a constant search for it. He will start the journey all over again, and this journey will take him to enclosed spaces while taking advantage of open spaces without finding new meanings from them. Interestingly, in the final scene of the movie, we see that Gambir's next quest for self-discovery gives him the role of a Catholic priest. Notice that the traditional Catholic Church in which he serves as priest is an enormous, delicately-designed building, representing an even limitless space that is the Heaven, the Palace (place) of God, the ideal of all utopias. Nonetheless, for Gambir, this sense of vastness, extension, and the near-absence of limits, remains irrelevant as his self-searching happens in the confession booth, namely an extremely small, enclosed space. Clearly, the same vicious cycle recurs. "The forbidden" door will be opened again.

The walker: to grasp and embrace the unseen

The subjugation of the subject by the dystopian city parallels Michel Certeau's notion of the city as possessing "urbanistic systematicity", which would be

deconstructed by the walker. This urbanistic system is similar to the linguistic system: the city is organized and sustained by the "proper meaning" or denotations that can guarantee the survival and well-functioning of all its elements. City officials are like "grammarians and linguists" who safeguard a language so that they can always contrast literal (that is essential) meanings with "figurative" (in other words secondary, less essential) meanings.[30] In the movie *Pintu terlarang*, the subject, or the main character, has to cope with the urbanistic system or this fixed, permanent linguistic system. It imposes on him a certain order which he is unable to negotiate. This system manages to dominate him and paralyze his active agency.[31] He does nothing that can "elude" this urbanistic, yet fatalistic, systematicity.[32]

Gambir and all the other characters in the movie surrender, as it were, to the system without using the strategy of the walker. They are unable to engender new possibilities in the spaces that tend to enclose and confine them. They seem to be more interested and engaged in denotations than connotations; thus, they give in to the denotative values of the city without attempting to forge new connotative meanings. When Gambir is chasing the boy in the dark labyrinthine place, he does not manage to take control of the space. Being in the dark, he almost gets lost before finally choosing a way which fortunately leads him to an exit. Furthermore, when told by Herosase's chairperson that he must not ask any questions and that there is nothing he can do about what happens on the screen, Gambir gives in to this rule without questioning it and reacting in a way that does not conform to the imposed regulation. In fact, he becomes so absorbed with the system of Herosase that he visits the place regularly only to see the boy being brutally abused by his parents. The peak of his surrender is when he has to see the boy murder his own parents and commit suicide.

With his ability to generate new meanings and possibilities, the walker renders utopia and dystopia irrelevant as new significations constantly arise from himself. The walker has the courage to displace himself and to reject being displaced, and in this way, he creates a new order, something Gambir is incapable of doing. The walker is also capable of manipulating spatial organizations, welcoming the arrival of significations with the absence of place. The walker "selects and fragments the space traversed,"[33] and he has the ability to turn enclosed, confined spaces into "liberated spaces that can be

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[30]   Certeau (1984: 100).

[31]   Gambir's failure to negotiate with the urbanistic system may also be seen as a dominant response to a message. In media studies, there are three possible responses to a text, that is, dominant, negotiated, or oppositional. A reader applying negotiated reading poses questions to portions of the text, but he/she does not engage critically with the underlying ideology on which the text is founded. Those using oppositional reading fully realize that they cannot accept the text's message in its totality. Gambir seems to use the first kind of reading: he accepts the "literal meaning" imposed by the city without any questions (D. Morley 1989, "Changing paradigms in audience studies", in: Ellen Seiter (ed.), *Rethinking television audiences*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press; quoted by Judy Giles and Tim Middleton (1999: 64)).

[32]   Certeau (1984: 105).

[33]   Certeau (1984: 101).

occupied".[34] Furthermore, the walker can create "a second, poetic geography on top of the geography of the literal, forbidden, or permitted meaning".[35] The walker is an active agent who can negotiate the imposed order and create a new order that will change the urban fabric. He understands the city not as a fixed, unchangeable space; instead, he is aware of the basic characters of the city namely impermanence and fluidity.

CONCLUSION

Gambir tends to appropriate the city as something permanent, stable, and non-negotiable. Both the enclosed and open spaces in which he fails to create new meanings represent the dominance of space on a non-walker and his disability to intelligently respond to it. His failure lies in rigidly sticking to the stable construct of meanings while not understanding that it is deviations which will enable city citizens to reverse dystopian tendencies. The walker is competent enough to observe the city as full of "colourful human types and things", as Yi-Fu Tuan suggests, despite its impersonal outlook. By doing that, city citizens can develop a sense of self and the world. Gambir, on the other hand, only sees blackness in dark places and enclosures as a reinforcement of the dystopian world. His self is forever lost, and he has to be in a constant, desperate search for it. He does not see that moral meanings – in this case: deviations and denotations – may arise in places that seem bland and devoid of significance.

The film *Pintu terlarang* inspires us to think that the dystopian city thrives through misunderstanding of and fallacious response to spaces. By deconstructing the fixed meanings that the city imposes, that is by taking up the strategy of the walker and finding a moral universe in an impersonal-looking city, citizens can take advantage of both enclosed and open spaces and exult in deviations and connotations. Then, they will not have to change shoes with Gambir, who has to stay in his cell for the remainder of his life, incessantly imagining open spaces in a strictly enclosed place.

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