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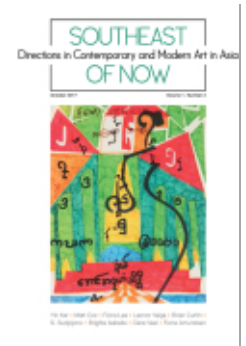
## The Painting of Prostitutes in Indonesian Modern Art

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# The Painting of Prostitutes in Indonesian Modern Art

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MATT COX

In addressing the issues of class and gender within the Indonesian modern canon, the comfort found in the postcolonial mythology of the heroic and authentic anti-colonial modern artist is disrupted. In the cracks, a discomfiting matrix of relationships between modern painters and the women they painted is revealed. In Heidi Arbuckle's terms, the modern project as pursued by Sudjojono and cohort was a deeply sexualised activity and can be likened to the male fantasy of sexual conquest.<sup>1</sup>

However, it might be asked if their acts of sexual fantasy carried out through painterly gesture are to be perceived exclusively as asserting dominance, or might they also be imagined as desperate acts to restabilise a fragile male self.<sup>2</sup> This article argues that Indonesian modern artists were reclaiming a sense of self not only through myths of indigeneity but also through myths of masculinity found in European modernism. In Europe, one of the ways that modernists explored their masculinity was through paintings that teased out contemporaneous ideas about the relationship between sexuality and "other" or "primitive" states of being.<sup>3</sup> Their art, like Freud's analysis of the subconscious, was built on an assumption of difference that confirmed as much as it challenged contemporaneous ideas about race, gender and sexuality.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless they set out to make art that was challenging and uncomfortable

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rather than merely representational and visually pleasurable.<sup>5</sup> Their models, very frequently the classless prostitute, perceived as a threat to public health and morality, were the perfect anti-heroines for the avant-garde who sought to disrupt polite bourgeois sensibilities.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, the eroticised paintings of “base” women have been interpreted as not only an attempt to cause discomfort among bourgeois viewers but an act of desire to indulge in the untamed.<sup>7</sup> According to Freudian psychoanalysis, the prostitute, as an embodiment of base sexuality and base instinct, was located in the domain of the primitive.<sup>8</sup> As such, the primitive subject was both an object of desire and a subjectivity that appealed to modern artists as a possible alternative subjectivity for themselves. The painting of prostitutes can thereby be seen to host a combination of desires to indulge in sexual fantasy and to establish oneself as differentiated or disassociated from bourgeois society.<sup>9</sup>

In the Indonesian context, the painting of prostitutes might be understood as part of modern painters’ ambition to, at first, unhinge themselves from polite society and then imagine themselves as occupying a gendered alternative subjectivity in confrontation to the colonial.<sup>10</sup> Sindoedarsono Sudjojono is Indonesia’s mostly highly acclaimed modern painter. In postcolonial Indonesia, his career as a painter has often been conflated with his political views, and his position in the canon of pre-independence nationalist painters has been well established.<sup>11</sup> The painting *Di Depan Kelamboe Terboeka* (*Before the Open Mosquito Net*) (1939) is one of Sudjojono’s most celebrated works. The painting, of Adhesi, a prostitute and acquaintance of Sudjojono, has until today been largely camouflaged within a pantheon of wholesome images of Indonesian nationhood pitted against the hardships of famine, war and colonialism.<sup>12</sup> Besides Sudjojono’s portrait of Adhesi, there are a number of other paintings by colleagues of Sudjojono that follow a similar theme, including Otto Djaya’s *Pertemuan*, also known as *Rendezvous*, painted in 1947 and Mohammed Hadi’s *Djalang*, also titled *Prostitute*, painted in August 1947. All three paintings frame the prostitute within the myths of European modernism that sought to re-establish male subjectivities in the face of modern anxieties regarding societal change. In doing so, these three Indonesian artists used painting as a method for asserting a new sense of Indonesian masculinity within the context of global modern art practices.<sup>13</sup>

This article argues that the painting of prostitutes was a way to interrogate gender and its relation to class distinctions, in order to disturb the psychological spaces of Javanese society. The painting of prostitutes became a site of self-primitivising that linked the artists’ desire to engage in base sexuality with the creation of new male subjectivities. In this way, depictions of

prostitutes were tied to the sexual politics of male-female relationships, sites of sexual conquest and a new ideological position towards the function of art in Indonesian society.<sup>14</sup>

In 19th-century Europe, masculinity was aligned with culture and seen to embody the attributes of reason, knowledge and intellect. Femininity, on the other hand, was associated with nature and the characteristics of irrationality, emotion and desire. In the discourses of colonialism, these same notions of masculinity and femininity were used to describe the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the colonial thinking that aligned masculinity with the perceived cultural progress of Europe and femininity with the perceived sexualised allure of Asia was clearly expressed by artists travelling and working in the colonies.<sup>16</sup>

In colonised countries, the gendering of country was an important issue for colonial and local artists and writers, who frequently positioned the image of the local woman at the centre of their work as a symbol of culture, tradition and sovereignty.<sup>17</sup>

Govinda Purushottam Deshpande's analysis of the "dialectics of defeat" or how Indian nationalists expressed and stated their newly formed selves in negotiation with the colonial apparatus calls upon Partha Chatterjee's idea of women as markers between the material and spiritual worlds.<sup>18</sup> According to Chatterjee, the "defeated society" recovers a sense of self in terms of its colonial occupier by making clear distinctions between the material and spiritual worlds. The material world is established as being of the "outside". It is associated with all things western and is represented by the economy, science and technology. The spiritual, on the other hand, is established as being on the "inside". The woman is located in the inner world as a bastion of tradition and a marker between the two worlds.<sup>19</sup>

Some modern Indian artists, in particular those of the Bengal school of art, keen to establish a non-western Indian modern art, turned their attention to reinvigorating traditional folk art. They undertook a metaphoric journey to retrieve the self by abandoning the material world of the city and focusing their attention on the village, or the motherland.<sup>20</sup> The sexualised images of Santhal village women, for example, were tied to a myth of their innocent "vitality" as a riposte against the severing of masculinity enacted by the colonial occupation.<sup>21</sup>

In colonial Java, Dutch authors frequently employed the analogy of the Dutch father guarding and directing his native children, and itinerant European artists and photographers made images of local women that fuelled the colonial imagination of an ideal and eroticised femininity.<sup>22</sup> During the period of heightened colonial interference in court life, the masculinity of

both Javanese and European men was expressed in relational terms to the subjugation of the “native” feminine.<sup>23</sup> The Javanese nobility expressed their frustration in terms of class domination over working women. Outside of the courts, Javanese women had long been visible in the open paddy fields and their contribution to the economy was well acknowledged.<sup>24</sup> However, their other domain, the marketplace, had always been regarded with some degree of suspicion.<sup>25</sup> The equation of market vendors with *kasar* (coarse, abject) behaviour was part of a class distinction that engendered inner and outer spaces according to the roles of women within the family economy.<sup>26</sup> In the Javanese tradition, wealth should follow power; to chase money without power was a *kasar* indulgence equated with political ambition and sexual indulgence.<sup>27</sup> In fact, any kind of commercial exchange attracted a degree of stigma associated with behaviour deemed to demonstrate greed and desire, sexual or otherwise. For many Javanese, the female market vendor represented the epitome of *kasar* transactions as the embodiment of coarse mercantile, political and sexual indulgence in one location.<sup>28</sup>

Nineteenth-century court literature of this time reveals that market vendors were often the sexual target of the gentry. For example, the story of *Suluk Lonthang* describes the sexual exploits of a visiting Sufi cleric Lebe Lonthang as he takes advantage of local market vendors.<sup>29</sup> Whilst this may seem contradictory to the Javanese idea of abstinence as a method for accumulating and maintaining *kesekatan* (spiritual power), demonstrations of heightened sexual activity could paradoxically provide proof of virility. Such texts can be read in the light of an emasculated Javanese gentry reclaiming itself in the form of sexual punishment upon native women who carried out their activities in the marginal and mercantile material world.<sup>30</sup>

By the 1930s, such representations of sexualised hyper-masculinity inscribed upon the bodies of native working women were complicated by modern painters in their own hyper-masculine stance against both the Javanese elite and the colonial state. In the mid-1930s, when Sudjojono's efforts to join the Dutch art society *Bataviaschen Kunstkring* were rejected, he experienced a very real sense of humiliation and emasculation:

One afternoon I went to the house of a Dutch painter here in Jakarta. I intended to become a member of their painters' group. As an executive member he promised to send the letters for membership. I waited a long time for the letters and any other news from that painter, but he didn't send anything. I felt hurt beyond a joke. As an Indonesian, there was no way I could become a member. Not long after that I established PERSAGI. As if the humiliation

wasn't enough. At that moment, PERSAGI requested the use of the *kunstkring* building to install an exhibition of paintings by PERSAGI, they refused.<sup>31</sup>

Sudjojono's rejection from the art circle aroused in him both a sense of jealousy and anger, which he cleverly harnessed to articulate his position as a modern painter with an anti-colonial position. In order to overcome both his sense of rejection as a member of the "defeated society" and to pursue his career as a modern painter, Sudjojono immediately established PERSAGI (Persatuan Ahli Gambar Indonesia), or the Association of Indonesian Painters, as a counter-colonial art society that provided a platform for him and his contemporaries to present their paintings.

Sudjojono and the PERSAGI artists came to valorise the artist as hero and to depict Indonesian women as an allegory of masculine conquest as a way to elevate their own sense of masculinity, in confrontation with the colonial.<sup>32</sup> Although Sudjojono championed the *rakyat* (common people), he did not attempt to promote folk art or village life as the spiritual home of modern Indonesia, as was the case with Indian modern art. He did, however, begin to depict women as occupying two distinct spheres that correlated with the gendering of private (spiritual) and public (material) spaces, as was the case in Indian art. Located within the inner (spiritual) world of the home, the figure of a mother was clearly tied to ideas of belonging, spirituality and the nation, requiring protection. On the other hand, portraits of women as sexual commodities located in the outer (material) world were seen to challenge established notions of masculinity.

Sudjojono's partition of the material and spiritual worlds was not just a device for curbing the encroachment of colonial masculinity; it was also part of a class struggle that connected the role of art with Javanese societal change.<sup>33</sup> In order to achieve a new Indonesian modern art, Sudjojono based his formal experiments on a two-pronged ideological position. On one level, it sought to displace the dominant aesthetic of the earlier generation housed within the privilege of the elite—as Jim Supangkat asserts, Sudjojono's challenge "had its roots in social realities, among which was the fact that during the colonial period, painting was practiced only among the elite circles".<sup>34</sup> On another level, it sought to announce a new national form adequate to express a new Indonesian subjectivity that demonstrated a masculine anti-colonial position.<sup>35</sup>

This counter-colonial and counter-establishment position demanded, as part of its own constitution, a departure from usual Javanese *halus* behavioural norms and aesthetics.<sup>36</sup> In the words of Francis Gouda, it "mandated a

suspension, whether or not it was temporary of traditional social habits such as gentleness and courtesy”.<sup>37</sup> Modern artists, motivated by the dual desires to compete in terms of masculinity and create a new Indonesian, rather than traditionally Javanese art, adopted an aesthetic based on more aggressive and unrefined (*kasar*) modes of behaviour.<sup>38</sup> So, while late 19th-century court literature tells us that the elite expressed their sense of deflated masculinity via the conquests of market women, 20th-century modern painters like Sudjojono and his colleagues embraced the “otherness” of the prostitute as a way to express a new modern masculinity that embodied their rejection of both elite Javanese and Dutch bourgeois sensibilities. In this way, paintings of prostitutes by Sudjojono and friends advocated *kasar* as a form of class/ideological struggle. In this regard Sudjojono’s invocation of *kasar* as a rejection of elite Javanese society can be likened to the forays of modern European artists into the primitive as a way to identify with the abject and to disassociate themselves from bourgeois society.

In 20th-century Java, depictions of market vendors and prostitutes illustrate the modern artists’ desire to embrace the sexually provocative and assumingly *kasar* or “abject” politics of commercial exchange and sexual indulgence. The motif of the prostitute and the market vendor became a site of self-primitivising, linking the artists’ desire to engage in base sexuality with the creation of new male subjectivities.<sup>39</sup>

Historically, Sudjojono’s painting *Di Depan Kelamboe Terboeka* (1939) has been glossed over as an empathetic attempt to address the social reality of women’s lives in modern society. Both Holt and Wright described it as an unprecedented homage to the ordinary Indonesian woman that evokes empathy with the female subject.<sup>40</sup> Both, however, fail to acknowledge Sudjojono’s engagement with the sitter as the site of his own emotional stirrings and self-affirmation. When the painting was exhibited alongside others by the *Vrije Indonesische Jongeren* (Free Young Indonesians) in 1948, one reviewer, Henk de Vos, complimented the composition of Sudjojono’s painting and, without moral condescension, subtly alluded to the painful complexities of Sudjojono’s life.<sup>41</sup> Others have read the painting more allegorically as representing “the suffering feminised nation and victim of colonial subjugation”.<sup>42</sup>

All of the above commentaries ignore, however, the disruption of the socially endorsed marital arrangement generated by the presentation of a prostitute rather than a housebound wife. More than anything else, this is a painting of a seated prostitute engaged in a dialogue with her client, who, on this occasion, is Sudjojono, but could potentially be any other viewer. By placing the subject in direct confrontation with the viewer of the painting, Sudjojono cleverly co-opts the viewer to confront the subject in a way similar





FIGURE 1: Sindoesoedarsono Soedjojono, *Di Depan Kelamboe Terboeka* (Before the Open Mosquito net), 1939, oil on canvas, 86 × 66 cm. Courtesy the Indonesian Presidential Palace Collection

to the way he did and, in doing so, to experience the space between Adhesi and her clients.

The awkward intimacy of the moment was experienced by Sudjojono's first wife Mia Bustam years later when she was confronted by the painted image of Adhesi for the first time. As a way of consoling Bustam Sudjojono dismissed Adhesi as an unfortunate part of his earlier, darker life. Sudjojono described a life full of wanderings and visits to "immoral places" and explained that Adhesi was a prostitute whom he had met in the red-light district of Senen, Batavia. She had been involuntarily married off to a *haji* and had run away to Jakarta, where she ended up working as a prostitute. At one point, she had moved in with Sudjojono, but he was unable to provide for her financially, so she returned to Senen.<sup>43</sup> In an autobiographical way, this painting operates as a memoir to Sudjojono's early life experiences, which were, in his own words, "*kotor dan penuh kemelaratan...*" (dirty and full of misery).<sup>44</sup> This is his personal history inscribed within the narrative of Indonesian modernity. However, to suggest that this painting is a mere metaphor for the nation denies the subjectivity of the woman and negates the complexity of Sudjojono's attempt to establish a sense of masculinity within the prevailing social structures, both colonial and Javanese.



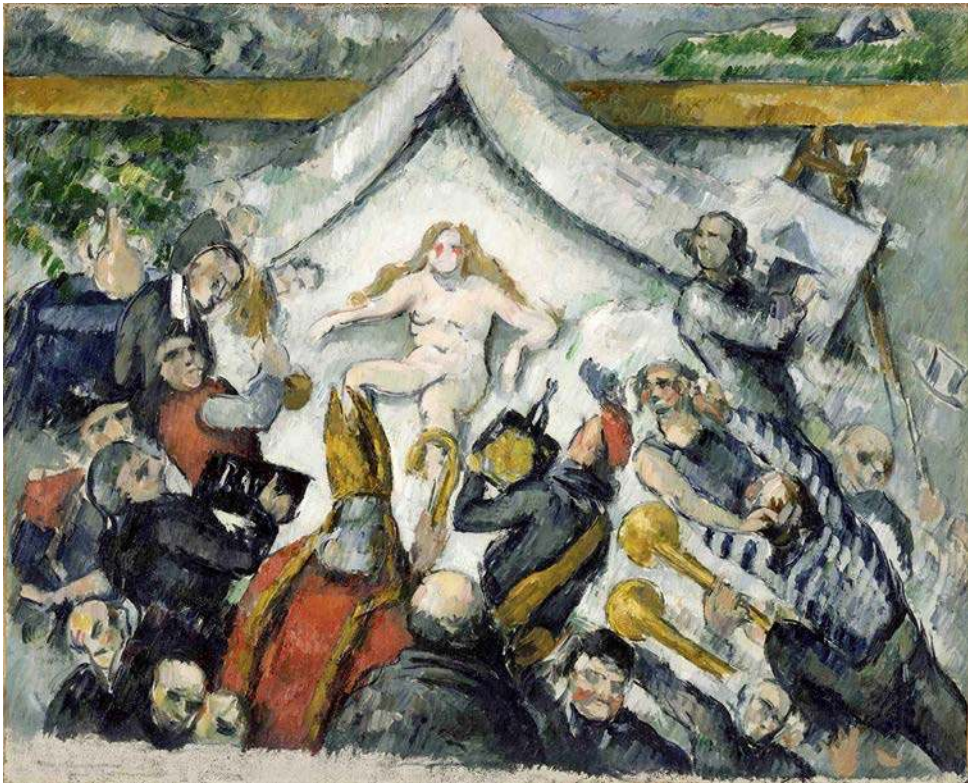


FIGURE 2: Paul Cézanne, *L'Éternel Féminin*, c. 1880, oil on canvas, 43.5 × 53.3 cm. Courtesy the J. Paul Getty Museum, California

More than an empathetic rendering of an Indonesian woman or an allegory for the nation, this painting is an exploration of the physiologically and politically charged space that arises between two (in this case) unequally empowered subjectivities as they negotiate sexual commune.<sup>45</sup>

Behind the seated Adhesi is a mosquito net that hangs from the bedposts and is separated in a way that frames the subject but leaves hidden the coveted sphere of the bed. There is no doubt, as Arbuckle has suggested, that the open mosquito net is analogous to an open sexual invitation.<sup>46</sup> But it also acts as a pictorial device to divide the picture plane that, in turn, creates a temporal and spatial division to separate the pre- and post-coital spaces of male and female sexuality. The net establishes a division between private and public space that separates the spheres of male and female subjectivity. Seated in the public space of the foreground, Adhesi controls the transaction. She is available, but on her own terms. The net, as a pictorial device, has the effect of flattening the pictorial plane and suppressing the perspective depth, which unhinges the female form from gravitational pull and heightens the dramatic intensity of the viewers' direct relationship with Adhesi. In both

subject matter and technique, Sudjojono's painting resonates with Paul Cézanne's *L'Éternel Féminin* (c. 1880).

In Cézanne's painting the subject is propped up on centre stage: surrounded by a crowd of male onlookers, she is unveiled for all to see; the parted veil framing her corporality with an inverted V seems vaguely analogous to the opening of one's legs. Sudjojono's use of an earthy blood red to darken the void beneath the curtain makes the correlation more explicit and, instead of picturing a crowd, he has brought the male viewer into such immediacy with the subject as to make him the substitute for the onlookers in Cézanne's painting. However, unlike Cézanne's eternal woman who has no eyes, Sudjojono's subject makes eye contact with the viewer, which is direct, unabashed and assertive. In many ways, Steiner's description of Edouard Manet's *Olympia* (1863) is a perfect description of Adhesi: she is "a real human being, whose unabashed ease at presenting her naked subjectivity demonstrates a level of confidence in her body that should deride both the concerned feminist and the voyeuristic male viewer alike".<sup>47</sup>

Unlike Sudjojono's direct encounter, Otto Djaya's depiction of the meeting of male sexual desire and female availability offers a similar voyeuristic component found in Pierre Bonnard's *Man and Woman* (1900), which marries the

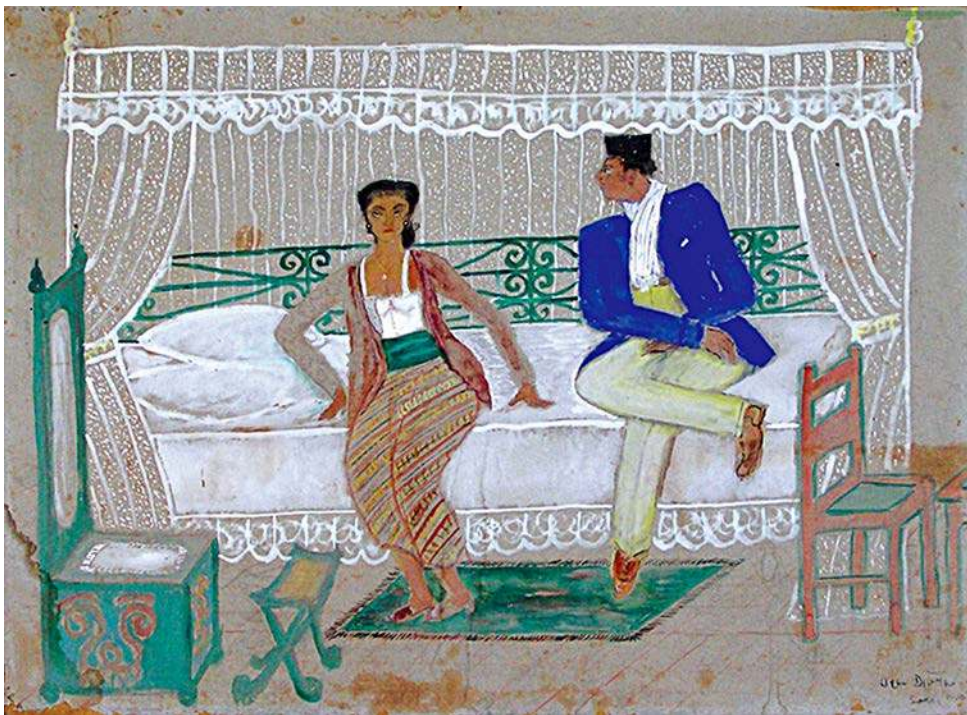


FIGURE 3: Otto Djaya, *Pertemuan/Rendezvous*, 1947, oil on canvas, 60 × 85 cm. Private collection





FIGURE 4: Pierre Bonnard, *Man and woman*, 1900, oil on canvas, 115 × 72.5 cm. Courtesy Musée d'Orsay, Paris

female nude, seated, with her standing male counterpart within the confines of an intimate Parisian apartment.<sup>48</sup>

Djaya further adds the necessary props to create the *mise en scène* of the conventional erotic nude. The chair, dressing table complete with mirror, bed and drapery furnish the sexually charged boudoir, reminiscent of Eugène Delacroix's *Le Lever* (1850), Cézanne's *Interior with Nude* (1885–90) and, to an even greater degree, Manet's *Nana* (1880), the *femme fatale* of Emile Zola's series of novels.<sup>49</sup>

In Sudjojono's *Di Depan Kelamboe Terboeka*, Djaya's *Pertemuan* and Mohammed Hadi's *Djalang (Prostitute)* we find a bed covered by a laced curtain that frames a woman, as is the case in many of Cézanne's paintings of women.<sup>50</sup> A closer comparison of Sudjojono's paintings with Djaya's reveals a similar wrought-iron structure to the bed, and if we look at the detail in the lace of Djaya's painting, the circular filigree replicates Sudjojono's. Mohammed Hadi's painting, whilst seemingly set in the street, also features a very similar wrought-iron bed with a drawn laced curtain or mosquito net.



FIGURE 5: Eugène Delacroix, *Le Lever*, 1850, oil on canvas. Courtesy Collection Maxime Citroen, Paris

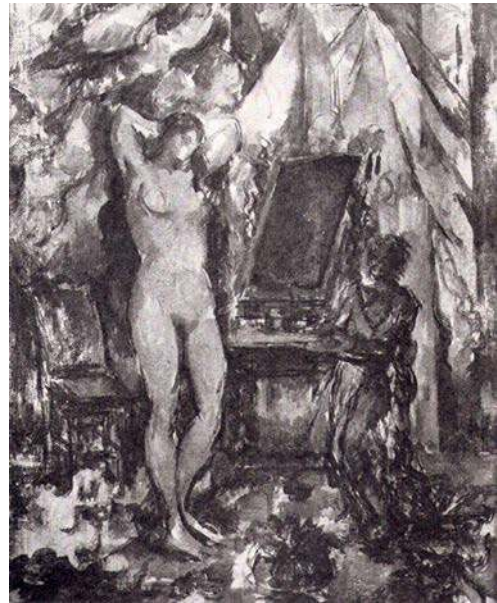


FIGURE 6: Paul Cézanne, *Interior with Nude*, c. 1885–90. Courtesy the Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia



FIGURE 7: Édouard Manet, *Nana*, 1877, oil on canvas, 264 × 115 cm. Courtesy the Kunsthalle Hamburg art museum



FIGURE 8: Mohammed Hadi, *Djalang (Prostitute)* August 1947, water colour and gouache, 22 × 18 cm. Courtesy the Claire Holt Indonesian Art Collection S0249, Cornell University Library

Are they painting the same bed or at least a similar bed in the same brothel, “a bed that would be utterly unique, a throne or alter where all Paris would come to worship her in naked, equally unique, beauty?”<sup>51</sup> The latter description of Nana’s bed by Émile Zola just as adequately describes the embodiment of the prostitute found in the three paintings by Sudjojono, Djaya and Hadi.

But why would these three Indonesian painters be interested in Cézanne, *Nana* or Zola for that matter?<sup>52</sup> Sudjojono was very familiar with the European modernists and had seen many of their works on display at a series of five exhibitions of the Regnault collection that ran from 1935–40 held at the Museum van den by the *Bataviaschen Kunstkring*.<sup>53</sup> We know that by his early twenties, Sudjojono was familiar with the works of many European writers and their connections to modern painters in Europe.<sup>54</sup> In fact, Sudjojono identified Vincent van Gogh’s relationship with Zola and the Parisian painters as marking the beginning of Van Gogh’s interest in realism, stating that “such began Vincent van Gogh’s acquaintance with Zola, with realism and with the city of Paris”.<sup>55</sup> Sudjojono’s description of Van Gogh’s life and meeting with Zola demonstrates his understanding of the connection between literature and art, as well as his enthusiasm for Zola’s writings.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, Sudjojono admired the realistic rendition of urban life and it was something he identified in the work of both Van Gogh and Zola. He goes to great lengths to describe Zola and Van Gogh in conversation over an evening meal and quotes heavily their discussion on the topic of painting the bodies of the courtesans who occupy the streets and clubs of Paris:

If you paint a woman’s goodness in the same way I describe the goodness of a woman like those I see daily. I would even describe my heldin (heroine) in the same way, that she suffered from scabies, ‘forgot’ herself that night at the *Bois de Boulogne* or frequently uttered God-verdom! I describe her not as a woman that we idealise, then embellish my description, but I describe her as a woman of everyday life, don’t I? Surely I must portray her stomach, for example, not like the stomach of an angel, but with the stomach of an ordinary woman with intestines.<sup>57</sup>

It appears Sudjojono took this advice for himself and incorporated Zola’s approach to detailing the corporeality of urban women, with all the realist intentions of faithfully presenting the modern milieu incumbent with a new sexual politics. More than a commentary about public moral decay or the struggle for existence under colonial occupation, Sudjojono’s painting is an



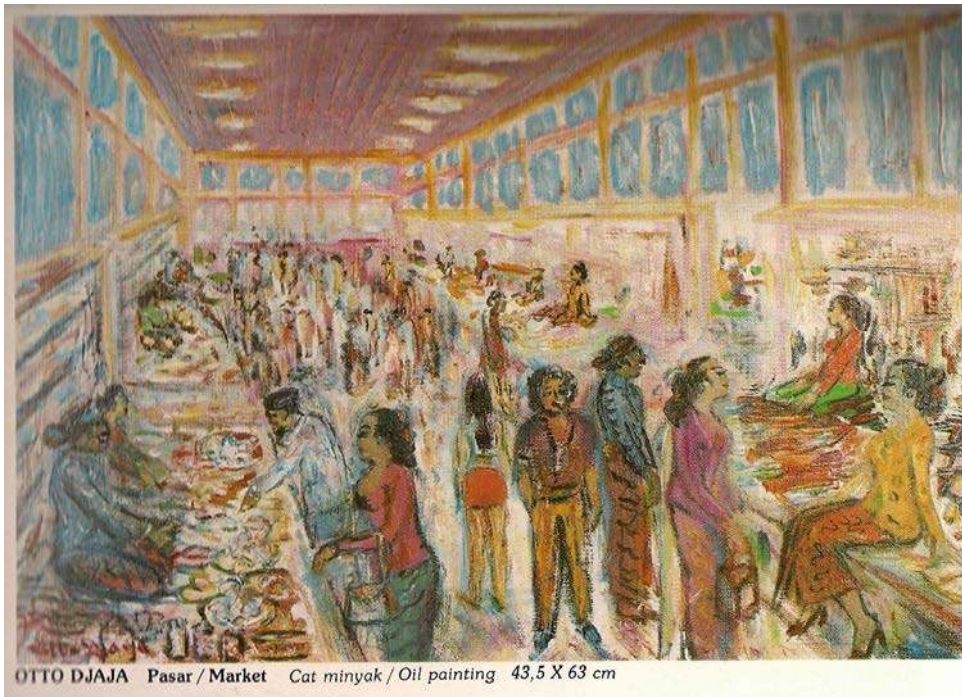


FIGURE 9: Otto Djaya, *Pasar (Market)*, c. 1947, oil on canvas, 43.5 × 63 cm. Private Collection

attempt to investigate modern male-female sexual relations tied to issues of gender and class. As Griselda Pollock asserts, the spaces of sexual exchange are the marginal spaces of modern interfaces where “the masculine and feminine intersect and structure sexuality within a classed order”.<sup>58</sup>

In colonial Java, one such marginal space was the brothel, another the marketplace.<sup>59</sup> In Otto Djaya’s painting of the marketplace, we find a young man with long hair, dressed in jeans and an open shirt. His relaxed and confident stance exerts a youthful masculinity, as opposed to the more rigid and refined posture of the older man standing nearby, who wears more traditional Javanese attire including a sarong.<sup>60</sup> Amidst the eroticised and marginalised space of the market, where mercantile and sexual exchanges were conflated, societal norms and prohibitions could be suspended.<sup>61</sup> The young man, possibly the artist himself, is surrounded by women, including a young woman dressed in a miniskirt who is right behind him. But it is the buxom vendor who sits poised awaiting her clientele that catches his eye. Both the market vendor and the prostitute held nefarious positions in Javanese society and were painted by Sudjojono and his cohort to disturb the psychological spaces of Javanese society as a means to interrogate gender in its relation to class distinctions.

This painting, like Sudjojono's earlier portrait of a prostitute, although confirming male desire, is a concession to the inseparable links between the construction of male and female identities within the gendered social spaces of the private and public worlds. Javanese men's tendency to avoid the marketplace, which scholars have often attributed to their deep concern with prestige and spiritual potency, can also be understood in terms of this alternative model of gender and self-control.<sup>62</sup> As a prime site for the accumulation of money and the acquisition of commodities, the marketplace seems to incite desire and, at the same time, advertise potential for its satisfaction. This leads to a partial breakdown of the boundaries that conventionally order and circumscribe social relations in Java.<sup>63</sup> In the terms of the Javanese elite, a breakdown in these boundaries comes at a cost. This cost is both financial (*kasar*) and spiritual (loss of power and dignity, *kesekatan*). When Sudjojono and his cohort ventured both physically and pictorially into the marginal spaces of the brothel and the marketplace, they were irreverent to the cost. Instead, they saw them as liminal spaces in which to recreate themselves as hyper-masculine modern painters, announce their participation in the projects of modernism and articulate an ideological position that differentiated them from the sensibilities of the Javanese elite and their complicity with bourgeois colonial society.

## BIOGRAPHY

**Matt Cox** completed a BA in Asian Studies with a major in Indonesian Studies (University of New South Wales) and an MA in Art History (University of Sydney), and has recently graduated with his doctoral thesis "The Javanese Self in Portraiture from 1880 to 1955" (University of Sydney). Cox has published in Australia and internationally on Asian art and architecture, and is curator of Asian Art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. As a curator, he is broadly engaged with both historical and contemporary art as brought to the fore in two recent exhibitions: *Beyond Words: Calligraphic traditions across Asia* and *Passion and Procession: Art of the Philippines*. Integral to these exhibitions and his curatorial practice, more generally, is his work with artists, curators and academics in Australia and Asia to explore relationships between art history and living communities.



## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Heidi Arbuckle, "Performing Emiria Sunassa: Reframing the Female Subject in Post/colonial Indonesia", PhD thesis (Melbourne: University of Melbourne, 2011), p. 101.
- <sup>2</sup> Hal Foster, *Prosthetic Gods* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2004), p. 8. For a discussion on the fragility of man's sense of self in early 20th-century Indonesia, see Marshall Clark, *Maskulinitas: Culture, Gender and Politics in Indonesia* (Caulfield: Monash University Press, 2010), p. 3.
- <sup>3</sup> For further discussion on the ways that modern artists explored the relationship between masculinity and painting, see Terry Smith (ed.), *In Visible Touch Modernism and Masculinity* (Sydney: Power Publications, 1997).
- <sup>4</sup> Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Arts Histories* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 1999), pp. 28–9.
- <sup>5</sup> Wendy Steiner, *Venus in Exile: The Rejection of Beauty in 20th Century Art* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 2001), p. 73 and Norbet Lynton, *The Story of Modern Art* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1989), p. 2.
- <sup>6</sup> Steiner, *Venus in Exile*, p. 73.
- <sup>7</sup> Foster, *Prosthetic Gods*, p. 5.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 8.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> For colonial anxieties regarding gender and legal title, see Ann Laura Stoler, "A Sentimental Education: Native Servants and the Cultivation of European Children in the Netherlands Indies", in *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia*, ed. Laurie J. Sears (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 71–91. For popular perceptions about gender and a discussion of literary themes and sexuality in colonial society, see Joost J. Cote, "Romancing the Indies: The Literary Construction of Tempoe Doeloe. 1880–1930", in *Recalling the Indies: Colonial Culture and Postcolonial Identities*, ed. Joost J. Cote and Loes Westerbeek (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2005). For a discussion on the othering of the Eurasian population as objects of sexual fetishization, see Rudolph Mrazek, *A Certain Age. Colonial Jakarta through the Memories of Its Intellectuals* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 106.
- <sup>11</sup> Matt Cox, "Sudjojono: Private Face and Public Persona", *The Journal of the Asian Arts Society of Australia* 212 (2012): 22–3.
- <sup>12</sup> See Sidharta, *S. Sudjojono Visible Soul* (Jakarta: Museum S. Sudjojono, 2006), p. 40.
- <sup>13</sup> In early 20th-century Java, the term "prostitute" was not a simple category. In the Indonesian context there were very nuanced differences between dancers, escorts, concubines and prostitutes who were known by different names yet who all made contractual sex available to men. I use the more generic term "prostitute" for its familiarity to a non-Indonesian readership, its compatibility with the public

perceptions of the time and its usage by Barbara Watson Andaya in her article “From Temporary Wife to Prostitute: Sexuality and Economic Exchange in Early Modern Southeast Asia”, *Journal of Women’s Studies* 9, 4 (1998): 11–34 and Rudolph Mrazek in *A Certain Age: Colonial Jakarta through the Memories of Its Intellectuals* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), fn. 114. Both use the term to describe women who sell sex consensually. Marco Kartodikromo, in “Three Early Indonesian Short Stories by Mas Marco Kartodikromo (c. 1890–1932)”, introduced and translated by Paul Tickell (Working Papers, Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1981) also uses it when talking about women who sell sex consensually and who work in brothels within the context of the modern city that is comparable both chronologically and contextually with my usage.

- <sup>14</sup> For a more exhaustive account of the complexities of sexual relations in early modern Southeast Asia, and particularly the perception of women’s sexuality as an aid or drain on men’s power, see Barbara Watson Andaya, *The Flaming Womb: Repositioning Women in Early Modern Southeast Asia* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 2006), p. 48.
- <sup>15</sup> Himani Bannerji, Shahrzad Mojab and Judith Whitehead (ed.), *Of Property and Propriety: The Role of Gender and Class in Imperialism and Nationalism (Anthropological Horizons)* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Frances Gouda, “The Gendered Rhetoric of Colonialism and Anti-Colonialism in Twentieth-Century Indonesia”, *Indonesia* 55, The East Indies and the Dutch (Apr. 1993): 6–7 and Clark, *Maskulinitas: Culture, Gender and Politics in Indonesia*, p. 24.
- <sup>16</sup> For links between sexualised images of Asian women, including the trope of the seductive “dark lady” and colonial expansion, see Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Arts Histories* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1999), p. 248 and John MacKenzie, *Orientalism, History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester and New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 58.
- <sup>17</sup> For examples of woman as symbols of nationalism in European visual culture, see Tricia Cusack and Sighle Bhreathnach Lynch (ed.), *Art, Nation and Gender: Ethnic Landscapes, Myths and Mother-Figures* (Hampshire and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003). For examples in Asian art see Kedar Vishwanathan, “Aesthetics, Nationalism, and the Image of Woman in Modern Indian Art”, *Comparative Literature and Culture* 12, 2 (2010) and Doris Croissant, “Icons of Femininity: Japanese National Painting and the Paradox of Modernity”, in *Gender and Power in the Japanese Visual Field*, ed. Joshua S. Mostow et al. (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 2003).
- <sup>18</sup> Govinda Purushottam Deshpande, “Dialectics of Defeat: Some Reflections on Literature, Theatre and Music in Colonial India”, *Economic and Political Weekly* 12 (1987): 2170–6.
- <sup>19</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 6.

- <sup>20</sup> Ashis Nandy, *An Ambiguous Journey to the City: The Village and the Other Odd Ruins of the Self in the Indian Imagination* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001).
- <sup>21</sup> Partha Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-Garde, 1922–1947* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), p. 29.
- <sup>22</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, "A Sentimental Education: Native Servants and the Cultivation of European Children in the Netherlands Indies", in *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia*, ed. Laurie Jo Sears (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 71–91. For photographic images of exoticised and eroticised local women made for European consumption, see Anneke Groeneveld et al. (ed.), *Toekang Potret: 100 Jaar Fotografie in Nederlands Indie 1839–1939* [Toekang Potret: 100 Years of Photography in the Dutch East Indies] (Amsterdam: Fragment Uitgeverij and Museum voor Volkenkunde, 1989). For examples in poetry, see Iain Campbell, "Het Indonesisch Decor: Poetry of the Dutch East Indies and Indonesia in the 20th Century", in ASAA Conference Panel Paper (Melbourne, 2000).
- <sup>23</sup> Laurie Jo Sears (ed.), "Introduction", in *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1996), p. 33 and Kuntowijoyo, "Power and Culture. The Abipraya Society of Surakarta in the Early Twentieth Century", in *Imagining Indonesia: Cultural Politics and Political Culture*, ed. Jim Schiller and Barbara Martin-Schiller (Athens, OH: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1997), p. 149.
- <sup>24</sup> For example, Tjipto Mangoenkoesomo highlighted the importance of women's activities in economic and rural areas. See Gouda, *The Gendered Rhetoric*, p. 14.
- <sup>25</sup> Clifford Geertz, *Peddlers and Princes: Social Change and Economic Modernization in Two Indonesian Towns* (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 44.
- <sup>26</sup> For a discussion on the different roles and social status of merchant women as compared to the elite, see Suzanne Brenner, "Competing Hierarchies: Javanese Merchants and the Priyayi Elite in Solo, Central Java", *Indonesia* 52 (1991): 55–83. In the early 20th century, the perception of women's roles and the politics of space were further complicated by Dutch ideas about women's domestic duties, hygiene and children's education as advanced in the numerous women's journals that emerged in the period. See Barbara Hatley and Susan Blackburn, "Representations of Women's Role in Household and Society in Indonesian Women's Writing of the 1930s", in *Women and Households in Indonesia: Cultural Notions and Social Practices*, ed. Juliette Koning et al. (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000), pp. 45–67.
- <sup>27</sup> Brenner, "Competing Hierarchies", p. 67 and Benedict Anderson, *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 50–1.

- <sup>28</sup> Suzanne Brenner, "Why Women Rule the Roost: Rethinking Javanese Ideologies of Gender and Self-Control", in *Bewitching Women, Pious Men: Gender and Body Politics in Southeast Asia*, ed. Aihwa Ong and Michael G. Peletz (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 19–50.
- <sup>29</sup> Nancy K. Florida, "Sex Wars: Writing Gender Relations in Nineteenth-Century Java", in *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia*, ed. Laurie Jo Sears (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1996), p. 210.
- <sup>30</sup> Anderson, *Language and Power*, pp. 32–3.
- <sup>31</sup> Sindoadarsono Soedjojono, Untitled Letter to Editor, 25 Dec. 1942, Jakarta, letter. p. 4. Sudjojono file, *Pusat Dokumentasi Sastra H.B. Jassin Archive*.
- <sup>32</sup> Astri Wright, *Soul, Spirit and Mountain: Preoccupations of Contemporary Indonesian Painters* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press: 1994), p. 125.
- <sup>33</sup> Sindoadarsono Soedjojono, *Seniloekis, Kesenian Dan Seniman* (Jogjakarta: Indonesia Sekarang, 1946), pp. 69–79.
- <sup>34</sup> Jim Supangkat, "The Emergence of Modernism and Its Background", *Asian Modernism: Diverse Development in Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand* (Tokyo Asia Centre, Tokyo: 1995), p. 209.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>36</sup> *Halus* behaviour might be described as the pursuit of refined action, characterised by detachment, emotional restraint and the acceptance of fate, in order to achieve profound understanding and elevated moral character. See Sartono Kartodirdjo, *Modern Indonesia Tradition & Transformation. A Socio-Historic Perspective* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1988), p. 188.
- <sup>37</sup> Francis Gouda, "Gender and 'Hyper-Masculinity' as Post-Colonial Modernity during Indonesia's Struggle for Independence, 1945 to 1949", *Gender, Sexuality and Colonial Modernities*, ed. Antoinette Burton (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 1999), p. 171.
- <sup>38</sup> While I am talking about painters specifically, Gouda remarks that Indonesians generally embraced a model of modernity that expressed more aggressive forms of behavior. See Gouda, "Gender and 'Hyper-Masculinity'", p. 163.
- <sup>39</sup> This conception of Sudjojono and his colleagues' practices is not dissimilar to Arbuckle's suggestion that Emiria Sunassa's paintings evoke the primitive and marginal as a way of disrupting the colonial and national discourse. See Arbuckle, "Performing Emiria Sunassa", pp. 167–71.
- <sup>40</sup> Claire Holt, *Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), p. 197 and Wright, *Soul, Spirit and Mountain*, p. 128.
- <sup>41</sup> Henk de Vos, "Expositie Vrije Indoeische Jongeren in Des Indes" [Exhibition of Free Young Indian People in the Indies], *Oriëntatie* 12 (Sept. 1948): 50.
- <sup>42</sup> Arbuckle, "Performing Emiria Sunassa", p. 66.
- <sup>43</sup> Mia Bustam, *Sudjojono Dan Aku* (Jakarta: Pustaka Utan Kayu, 2006), p. 48.

- <sup>44</sup> For further details, see Bustam, *Sudjojono Dan Aku*, pp. 9–10.
- <sup>45</sup> According to Takenaka, in Sidharta, S. *Sudjojono Visible Soul*, p. 189. Sudjojono considered the relations between men and women to be governed by their capacity to negotiate the trappings of morality. See Pollock on the reconstitution of masculinity and femininity as a set of socially inscribed psycho-symbolic processes in *Differencing the Canon*, p. 27.
- <sup>46</sup> Arbuckle, “Performing Emiria Sunassa”, p. 100.
- <sup>47</sup> Steiner, *Venus in Exile*, p. 87. Pollock has argued that, irrespective of the artist’s intentions to invoke the subjectivity of the sitter, the relationship between painter, sitter and viewer is always unbalanced and consistently leaves the male viewer in a privileged position. See Pollock, “Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity”, in *Art in Modern Culture*, ed. Francis Frascina and Jonathan Harris (New York, NY: Phaidon, 2006). Others have argued further that the painter Gustave Courbet, for example, deliberately left the gaze of his sitters indirect and aimless in order to collapse the object-subject divide. See Jill Beaulieu and Mary Roberts, “Courbet’s Corporeal Realism: The Phenomenological Body and the Anti-Theatrical Tradition”, in *Body*, ed. Anthony Bond (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1997), pp. 109–18.
- <sup>48</sup> The male figure is a self-portrait and the woman, Marthe de Meligny (Maria Boursin), was the artist’s companion and model whom he married in 1925.
- <sup>49</sup> The lace curtains, wooden chairs and wrought-iron beds that were depicted in the paintings of European modernists were also a part of domestic furnishings in colonial Java and were familiar to painters working in Java.
- <sup>50</sup> The draped bed canopy is a reoccurring motif in Cézanne’s oeuvre of interior nudes. See Benjamin Harvey, “Cézanne and Zola: A Reassessment of L’Éternel féminin”, *The Burlington Magazine* 140, 1142 (May 1998): 315.
- <sup>51</sup> Quoted from Zola in Harvey, “Cézanne and Zola: A Reassessment of L’Éternel féminin”, p. 315.
- <sup>52</sup> While Zola did not publish the novel *Nana* until 1880, three years after Manet’s painting, the character Nana appeared in his earlier work *L’Assommoir*, published in 1877 (the same year as Manet’s painting).
- <sup>53</sup> Pierre Alexandre Regnault was a Dutch paint manufacturer and industrialist who, from the 1920s, developed a collection of about 400 pieces of modern art. The *Bataviaschen Kunstkring* produced five catalogues that include a list of works and reproductions of key works. According to Jeanne de Loos-Haaxman, every Indonesian painter who visited the Regnault exhibitions was significantly influenced by the works they saw. See Jeanne de Loos-Haaxman, *Dagwerk in Indië: Homage aan een verstild verleden* [Dagwerk in India: Homage to a Destroyed Past] (Uitgever: T. Wever, 1972), p. 93.

- <sup>54</sup> Sudjojono is known to have read Douwes Dekker's *Max Havelaar* while living with the Joedokosoemo family in Batavia, and it is possible that he came across Zola's work in the library of the *Bataviaschen Kunstkring*, where Mia Bustam says she read many of the classics of English, Dutch, German, Russian and French literature. See Bustam, *Sudjojono Dan Aku*, p. 7.
- <sup>55</sup> Soedjojono, *Seniloekis*, p. 36.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34–6.
- <sup>57</sup> Author's translation: *Kalau toen menggambar kebagoesan seorang perempoean sama dengan saja mentjeritakan kebagoesan siperempoen tadi sebagai jg saja lihat sehari-hari. Heldin saja itoe akan saja tjeriterakan djoega oempamanja, bahwa dia pernah sakit koedis [scabies], pernah "loepa" dimalam di Bois de Boulogne atau sering mengatakan; God-verdom! Saja tjeritakan dia tidak sebagai perempoean jang kita kenang-kenangkan, laloe tjerita tadi saja bogoes-bagoeskan, akan tetapi saja tjeritakan dia sebagaimana perempoean tadi hidoep biasa, boekan? Memang, mesti saja Gambar peroetnja oempamanja tidak seperti peroet bidadari, akan tetapi sebagai peroet orang perempoean biasa jang beroesoes.* See Soedjojono, *Seniloekis*, pp. 35–6.
- <sup>58</sup> Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity", p. 131.
- <sup>59</sup> Clark poses the market (*pasar*) as the dialogical other to the courts (*kraton*). See Clark, *Maskulinitas: Culture, Gender and Politics in Indonesia*, pp. 28–9.
- <sup>60</sup> The perception that trousers expressed masculinity, in contrast to sarongs that expressed femininity, was common to both Dutch and Indonesian men as they contested their masculinity in public spaces. See Clark, *Maskulinitas: Culture, Gender and Politics in Indonesia*, p. 24. For further discussion on the politics of dress in colonial Indonesia, see Henk Schulte Nordholt (ed.), *Outward Appearances: Dressing State and Society in Indonesia* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1997).
- <sup>61</sup> Again, Clark proposes the market (*pasar*) as the dialogical other to the courts (*kraton*), where tradition and hierarchy can be suspended. See Clark, *Maskulinitas: Culture, Gender and Politics in Indonesia*, pp. 10–31.
- <sup>62</sup> Brenner, "Competing Hierarchies", p. 78.
- <sup>63</sup> Brenner, "Why Women Rule the Roost", p. 36.

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