

## The Development of Indonesian Horror Film Narratives “SI MANIS JEMBATAN ANCOL” in 1994 and 2019

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores the evolution of Indonesian horror film narratives by comparing *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* (1994) and its 2019 remake. The 1994 version employs a lighter, entertainment-focused approach, emphasizing traditional supernatural elements with a straightforward storyline. In contrast, the 2019 film presents a complex narrative, incorporating social and psychological themes with nuanced characters. This transformation mirrors shifting audience preferences toward more emotional and realistic storytelling. The study also examines the impact of social, cultural, and technological factors on these narratives. The 1994 film reflects local traditions and beliefs, while the 2019 version integrates advanced CGI and contemporary social issues, influenced by global trends. Technological advancements in the remake enhance its visual and emotional depth, creating a more immersive horror experience. Ultimately, the study highlights how Indonesian horror films evolve in response to technological progress, cultural shifts, and the changing tastes of audiences over time.

**Keywords:** audience preferences, Indonesian horror films, narrative evolution, *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol*, social and cultural dynamics, technological advancements

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesian horror films have evolved from mystical horror focusing on ghosts (e.g., *Sundel Bolong*, *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol*) to psychological and social horror (e.g., *Pengabdian Setan*, *KKN di Desa Penari*), reflecting changes in society's beliefs, culture, and social issues. Subgenres like supernatural horror, psychological horror, and slasher have emerged, often drawing from local folklore and mythology. The narrative structure has shifted from formulaic patterns to more complex, non-linear plots. Gender representation has also evolved, with female characters now depicted as active agents, not just victims. Indonesian horror films increasingly incorporate psychological, social elements, and moral messages, addressing issues like social injustice and corruption.

Horror films have been popular in Indonesia since 1934, during the Dutch Colonial Era (Heeren, 2007). The genre remains a favorite among Indonesians, with both local and foreign films capturing audiences' attention. Indonesian horror films continue to evolve, attracting viewers who enjoy the adrenaline rush of scary movies, which has driven production companies to improve the quality of these films. Horror films reflect societal fears, anxieties, and values, shaped by cultural, political, and social contexts. Over time, they have evolved in filmmaking techniques, themes, and audience responses. Using strong symbolism and universal themes like death and the supernatural, horror films convey messages and social criticism. Despite being considered risky or controversial, they remain popular and influential in the film industry. These films often feature disturbing content, exploring taboo themes and triggering intense emotional reactions, which can spark debates about their worth and impact on viewers.

Indonesian horror films blend local culture, mystical beliefs, and social experiences, often drawing from legends and myths like *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* and *Sundel Bolong*. They include religious elements and reflect supernatural beliefs that resonate with local audiences. Set in familiar, eerie locations, these films explore social and historical trauma through metaphors. The genre has

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evolved over time: the Classical Era (1970-1980) focused on folklore, the 2000s emphasized sensuality, and modern films like *Pengabdian Setan* (2017) and *KKN di Desa Penari* (2022) prioritize strong narratives, quality cinematography, and tension.

The popularity of horror films has led to the rise of horror literature, which serves as new material for film adaptations (Fadhilah, 2022). The 2019 remake of *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* references earlier versions from 1973 and 1994, incorporating updated techniques in effects, sound, and narrative to engage modern audiences. This study compares the 1994 version by Soraya Intercine Film and the 2019 version by MVP Pictures, both based on the same folklore. The research explores how local culture and folklore remain relevant or evolve in modern contexts, analyzing changes in storytelling, visuals, and social values over two decades.

This research aims to identify the key differences in the narratives of *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* (1994) and *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* (2019). Despite sharing the same title, the two films have distinct storylines. The 1994 version has a weaker narrative, while the 2019 version features a more coherent and well-developed storyline, reflecting advancements in technology, equipment, and filmmaking knowledge. The research focuses on analyzing how these changes in narrative and technology impact the films' storytelling and character development.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Indonesian horror films have evolved, showcasing improvements in story, acting, and visual effects, while integrating local culture and myths.

### Narrative Structure Theory

Todorov's theory (Adipati & Samanik, 2018) outlines five narrative stages: equilibrium, disruption, recognition, repair, and new equilibrium, widely used in storytelling.

### Temporal Narrative Theory

Genette (1980) examines narrative time, focusing on sequence, duration, and event frequency.

### Focalization and Cognitive Narrative Theory

Bal (1985) introduced focalization, emphasizing narrative perspective. Herman (2013) connects narrative to human understanding, framing stories as tools for processing experiences.

### Horror Genre

Noël Carroll (1990) explains that horror evokes fear and disgust through emotional tension and narratives threatening human safety. He also introduces the "horror paradox," where audiences enjoy fear despite knowing its unreality. Robin Wood (2003) sees horror as reflecting societal fears, such as gender, class, and cultural change, serving as social criticism. Stephen King (1981) highlights horror's exploration of universal fears like death and loss of control, transforming them into visceral experiences. Linda Williams (1991) describes horror as "excessive," focusing on threats to the human body, fear, and sexuality, often challenging social norms. Carol Clover (1992) emphasizes gender roles in horror, introducing the "final girl" as a key trope in modern slasher films.

### Cultural Representation

Hall (1997) explains that cultural representation shapes meaning in media, art, and popular culture, constructing individual and group identities while reflecting or shaping societal views and ideologies. Dyer (1993) highlights how media representation influences perceptions of race, gender, and class, often reinforcing stereotypes and social norms. Mulvey (1975) introduces the "male gaze" theory, where films position women as objects for male viewers, reflecting broader cultural views on

identity. Bhabha (1994) proposes the "third space," emphasizing cultural ambiguity and the exchange of identities in colonial and postcolonial contexts. Foucault (1972) argues that cultural representations, shaped by discourse, construct societal knowledge and influence how we understand the world.

### Mise-en-scène

Mise-en-scène refers to the aesthetic coherence of all components within a film scene, including background, lighting, costumes, makeup, and acting. Gibbs (2022) defines it as the content within the camera frame and its arrangement. Bordwell and Thompson (2008) explain how mise-en-scène elements like production design, lighting, and costumes work together to create meaning, directing the audience's attention to themes and characters. Boggs and Petrie (2008) highlight how these elements create atmosphere and emotional engagement. Propp (1968) applies narrative structures to visual elements like settings and costumes. Dyer (1993) discusses how lighting and costumes shape character identities and cultural representations. Chion (1994) explores how sound and image interact to enhance cinematic meaning through "audio-vision."

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### Si Manis Jembatan Ancol (1994)

*Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* (1994) is an Indonesian horror film that blends horror with comedy, making it stand out from other films of its time. The character Maryam, a haunting ghost, is both scary and occasionally humorous, especially through Ozzy's character, played by Ozy Syahputra. Ozzy's exaggerated reactions to supernatural events create a comedic contrast, providing moments of laughter amid the horror. The film's spontaneous and cheerful dialogue enhances the comedy aspect.



In *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* (1994), characters like Bang Jali and Mrs. Bariyah provide humor, balancing the horror and making the film more accessible to a wide audience. This blend of horror and comedy reflects Altman's (1999) theory of genre hybridization, where genres combine to meet diverse audience expectations. The film's approach aligns with Indonesian preferences for light entertainment, showing how genre is shaped by cultural and social contexts. It targets a broad audience, including families, with a mix of horror and comedy, making it accessible to all ages. The film incorporates local culture and folklore, such as the Si Manis Jembatan Ancol ghost story, and features traditional elements like Maryam's kebaya, creating a nostalgic and culturally resonant atmosphere. The setting, Ancol Bridge, adds emotional connection, reflecting Jakarta's cultural and historical significance. It blends horror with humor and drama, making it accessible and entertaining for a broad audience, especially families. The film's light tone and simple narrative align with

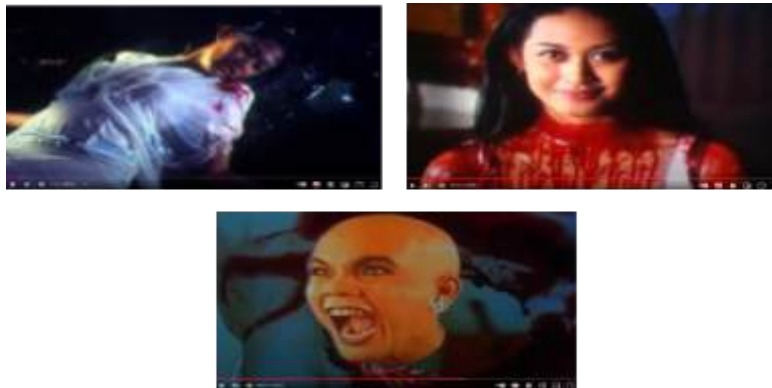
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McQuail's audience segmentation theory and Bordwell & Thompson's storytelling principles. The humor, rooted in Indonesian culture, balances supernatural elements, while Maryam's graceful portrayal adds depth to her character. This approach appeals to a wide range of viewers, offering both mild horror and light entertainment.



Maryam in *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* (1994), portrayed by Diah Permatasari, symbolizes beauty trapped in death, blending elegance with tragedy. This creates emotional depth, making her an iconic figure in Indonesian culture. Her character aligns with David Edgar's (2007) theory that horror characters combine attraction and threat, enhancing emotional tension. The film integrates Indonesian folklore and urban legends, reflecting cultural beliefs and mystical elements, particularly the haunting of the Ancol Bridge. This blend of tradition and modernity enriches the narrative and connects with local cultural themes.

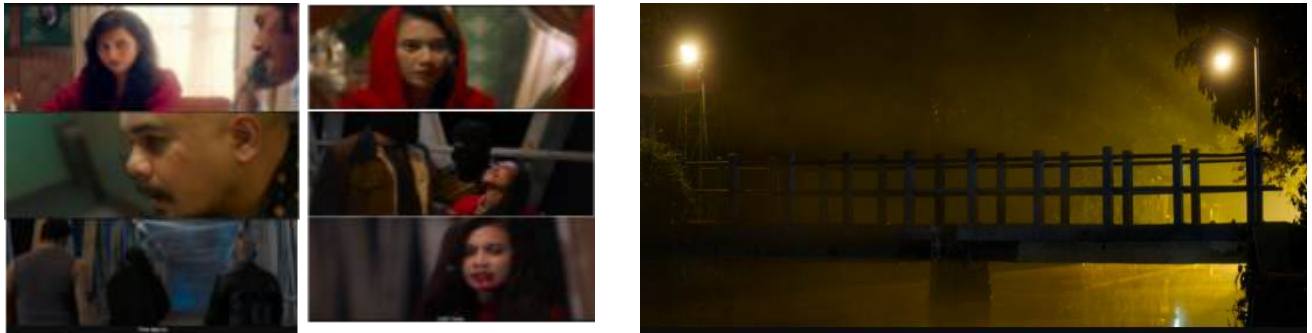
*Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* (1994) uses folklore to not only create horror but also represent local cultural values, reflecting society's beliefs and traditions. This aligns with Stuart Hall's theory of cultural representation, where media shapes and reflects cultural identity. The film incorporates local myths and urban legends, making its narrative more relevant and relatable to Indonesian audiences. It relies on simple practical effects, focusing on story development and acting rather than advanced technology. The horror is created through makeup, costumes, and physical elements, making the film feel more immediate and realistic. Special effects are minimal, with blood effects used to emphasize death or cruelty.



*Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* (1994) uses basic CGI for effects like flying ghosts, but focuses primarily on character development and a clear storyline. The film emphasizes acting and human emotion, aligning with Bordwell and Thompson's (2013) theory that early horror films prioritized story and character over advanced visual effects, creating a more emotional horror experience despite limited technology.

### Si Manis Jembatan Ancol (2019)

*Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* (2019) presents a darker, more modern horror experience, focusing on psychological tension and a gloomy atmosphere. The film uses advanced cinematography and visual effects to create a more terrifying version of Maryam's ghost. The tone is darker, with themes of death, revenge, and violence, enhanced by dim lighting, a haunted bridge, and blood, intensifying the horror. Even Ozzy's character adopts a serious, evil role, contrasting with the lighter tone of the 1994 version.



It aligns with Noel Carroll's horror theory, emphasizing psychological fear, atmosphere, and character development over shock or visual effects. The film uses dark lighting, suspenseful music, and complex characters to evoke deep fear, marking a shift in Indonesian horror towards exploring emotional trauma and psychological tension rather than relying solely on physical shock. *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* (2019) adopts a darker, more psychological horror approach, contrasting with the lighter tone of the 1994 version. It emphasizes psychological tension, emotional trauma, and a gloomy atmosphere, utilizing sophisticated cinematography, dark lighting, and eerie sound effects. This aligns with Stephen King's theory, which links fear to uncertainty and psychological tension, creating a more relevant and deep sense of horror. The film presents a darker, more complex story, exploring real social and emotional issues, and evoking fears relatable to modern audiences.

It targets adult audiences with a darker, more complex horror narrative. It focuses on psychological tension and the emotional struggles of its characters, exploring themes such as domestic violence, debt, bribery, violence, greed, and revenge. The film delves into the mental and emotional states of the characters, creating fear not just through supernatural elements but also through inner conflict and personal trauma. This approach adds depth to the story, encouraging the audience to reflect on moral and social issues.

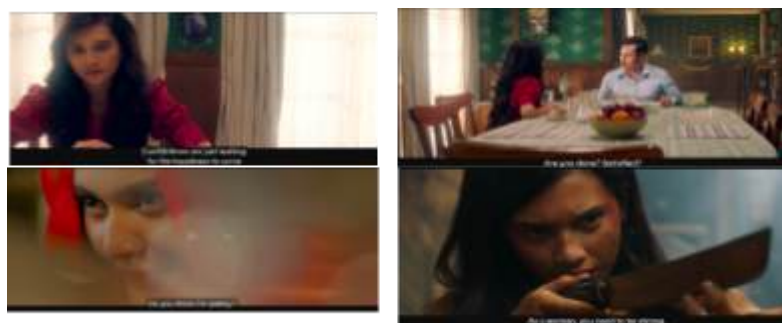


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*Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* (2019) aligns with Thomas Schatz's (1981) theory, which states that horror films for adult audiences focus on complex fears tied to real-life experiences and psychological issues. This film combines horror with deeper themes like trauma and the search for justice, offering a more emotionally moving and complex horror experience. It appeals to mature audiences by addressing social and psychological elements, creating a more relatable and thought-provoking narrative. It delves into the tragic backstory of Maryam, exploring her complex motivations and social context. The film not only focuses on horror but also highlights her emotional struggles, including her husband's financial troubles and her resulting death at the hands of a loan shark. Maryam's transformation into a vengeful ghost is driven by social injustice, neglect, and exploitation, portraying her as a victim of oppression. This deeper narrative gives the character emotional depth, making her more than just a ghost, but a symbol of trauma and revenge.



It integrates social issues into its horror narrative, focusing on truth-telling and justice. The film explores Maryam's tragic backstory, depicting her as a victim of social injustice, which adds emotional depth to the horror. This approach aligns with David Bordwell's (1985) narrative theory, emphasizing complex character backgrounds to engage the audience emotionally and enhance the horror experience. It delves into dark themes like betrayal, violence, and revenge, focusing on Maryam's quest for justice after her tragic death. The film portrays her as a vengeful ghost haunting society, targeting those responsible for her death. The narrative challenges typical horror tropes, as even a shaman fails to resolve the haunting, adding a unique twist to the genre. The film explores intense emotions and moral conflicts, making it a deeper and more complex horror experience. It presents a complex narrative where Maryam survives after being raped and attempted murder, later seeking revenge. The film explains her ability to carry out her vengeance by revealing her training as a special forces member. This storytelling approach aligns with Robert McKee's (1997) theory, emphasizing dark themes like betrayal and revenge. The film's structure enhances emotional engagement, exploring the social and psychological effects of violence and revenge, adding depth to the horror experience. In *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* (2019), the character Maryam is played by Indah Permatasari with a more emotional and tragic approach. Maryam is depicted as a figure who is not only a victim of cruelty, but also as a complex character with a deep social background.



In *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* (2019), Maryam's tragic background and emotional depth create a strong connection with the audience. Her desire for revenge and inner conflict make her more relatable, aligning with David Edgar's (2009) character theory, which states that emotionally complex characters engage audiences more deeply. Maryam is not just a ghost, but a figure of emotional depth, evoking sympathy and understanding from viewers. Sophisticated visual effects and CGI enhance the intense horror atmosphere. Modern cinematography, dramatic lighting, and dark colors create a tense, serious ambiance, aligning with the film's darker and more contemporary horror themes.



In *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* (2019), advanced visual effects and cinematography enhance the emotional experience and strengthen the narrative. Bordwell and Thompson (2013) argue that such techniques create a deeper atmosphere, and in this film, they amplify the horror elements, making the experience more intense and disturbing for the audience. CGI and modern cinematography create a tense horror atmosphere. CGI enhances supernatural elements, while dramatic lighting and sharper shots intensify the horror. Bordwell and Thompson (2013) argue that these techniques strengthen the film's atmosphere, deepen emotional engagement, and improve the overall quality of the film.

### **The Development of Horror Narratives in Indonesia**

The 1994 *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* is lighter and more entertaining, with simple supernatural events and some comedic elements. In contrast, the 2019 version adopts a more serious and complex approach, using modern cinematography and CGI to create a tense atmosphere. The 2019 film delves deeper into social and psychological themes, focusing on internal conflicts and character motivations, making it more emotionally impactful and relevant to contemporary issues.

The shift from the 1994 to the 2019 *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* reflects changes in Indonesian audiences' horror preferences. The 1994 version focused on simple entertainment with light suspense and supernatural elements. In contrast, the 2019 version offers a more complex narrative with deeper characters and social themes, exploring internal conflicts and trauma. This change indicates that modern audiences value horror stories that are not only scary but also emotionally engaging and reflective of real-life issues.

### **Social, Cultural, and Technological Influences**

The comparison between the 1994 and 2019 *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* highlights the influence of social, cultural, and technological changes on Indonesian horror narratives. The 1994 version emphasizes traditional elements and local folklore, reflecting strong supernatural beliefs in Indonesian society. In contrast, the 2019 version adopts a modern approach, with advanced CGI and cinematography, and integrates contemporary social issues like psychological trauma and social conflict. This shift demonstrates how Indonesian horror films have evolved, influenced by both local traditions and global cinematic trends.

The 2019 *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* stands out from the 1994 version due to the significant role of advanced technology. CGI and modern cinematography allow for more realistic and detailed visual effects, creating a sharper and more intense horror atmosphere. Sophisticated lighting, image composition, and sound effects further enhance the suspense. In contrast, the 1994 version relied on practical effects and simpler techniques due to technological limitations, resulting in a less immersive

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visual experience. The 2019 film’s technological advancements not only improve visual quality but also intensify the emotional impact on the audience.

## CONCLUSION

The 1994 *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* blends supernatural elements with humor, creating a family-friendly film that reflects local cultural identity. Iconic characters like Maryam, portrayed by Diah Permatasari, combine elegance and supernatural allure, while comedic characters like Ozzy and Bang Jali add levity to the narrative, making it both entertaining and nostalgic.

The 2019 version of *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* adopts a darker tone, focusing on Maryam's tragic backstory and themes like class disparity and cultural conflict. Advanced CGI and cinematography enhance the atmospheric tension, aligning with modern horror conventions.

The *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* franchise adapts to changing audience expectations by balancing horror, humor, and cultural elements. This reflects genre storytelling flexibility, as described by Altman and Bordwell, blending folklore with modern cinematic trends to remain relevant and engaging.

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