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**"Indonesian
Art Spirit:
Cultural Ecosystem
and Diversity"**

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Cultural Ecosystem and Diversity**

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ANXIETY AND THE OTHER'S DESIRES IN *QUARANTINE TALES*

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a great impact on the arts and culture sector, including film. On the other hand, the pandemic has also resulted in films with narratives that dwell on conditions during the pandemic as embodiments of the filmmakers' sublimation. The omnibus film, Quarantine Tales (2020), comprises five short films with narratives representing situations felt by members of the community in Indonesia during the pandemic. The film describes anxieties as experienced by different people. This is a study on Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis through observation of cinematic text. The characters in the omnibus film suffer anxiety resulting from the Symbolic order in their quest to fulfil their desire of The Other.

Keywords: anxiety, desire, psychoanalysis, Quarantine Tales film, COVID-19 pandemic

Abstrak

Pandemi COVID-19 memiliki pengaruh besar dalam sektor seni-budaya, termasuk film. Di sisi lain, pandemi ini juga menghasilkan karya film dengan naratif yang mengisahkan situasi pandemi, sebagai perwujudan sublimasi pembuatnya. Film omnibus Quarantine Tales (2020) berisi lima film pendek dengan kisah yang merepresentasikan kondisi masyarakat Indonesia selama pandemi. Film ini menggambarkan kecemasan yang dialami berbagai kalangan masyarakat. Kajian film dilakukan dengan menggunakan pendekatan psikoanalisis Freud dan Lacan melalui observasi tekstual sinema. Para tokoh di dalam film omnibus ini mengalami kecemasan akibat tatanan Simbolik demi memenuhi hasrat Yang Lain.

Kata kunci: kecemasan, hasrat, psikoanalisis, film Quarantine Tales, pandemi COVID-19

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed society's entire global order. The pandemic has impacted every sector of life all over the world. People have been forced to adapt by making changes in their daily habits and behaviours. In Indonesia, the government enforced adherence to health protocols, which included staying at home and donning a face mask when going to public places.

The COVID-19 pandemic also had a great impact on the arts and culture sector, including film. Social restriction of movement resulted in the clo-

sure of cinemas for a significant length of time, making the movie-going habit of people shift to that of media streaming. Thus also, procedures in film production became restricted. In every shoot, members of the crew and the actors are required to undergo swab tests before production can begin. Pre-production steps such as script reading have been forced to be conducted online.

The Researcher had an opportunity to talk through telephone conversation on July 12th, 2021, with Indonesian film director Aco Tennyagelli. The young director had made a short

film, *Happy Girls Don't Cry*, with the Base Entertainment production house in 2020. The short film project was incorporated as one of the five episodes in the *Quarantine Tales* (2020) omnibus film released on the Bioskop Online and Netflix platforms. According to Aco Tenriyagelli, the fine thematic threads running through the five shorts making up the omnibus are quarantine and the use of technology in the pandemic.

Quarantine Tales at first glance looks as if it has certain similarities to the Spanish omnibus film, *Wild Tales* (2014), which narrates various 'crazy' behaviours of people. In *Quarantine Tales*, the audience can see various types of character anxiety projections while they go through quarantine in the COVID-19 pandemic. Aco Tenriyagelli himself feels the pandemic instead had a positive impact because it brought him the idea of making a short movie narrating a unique tale. In other words, the short film was the director's sublimation of his anxiety into an art form.

According to Hopkins (2008), a film can be a representation of life in a society. *Quarantine Tales* tells five different narratives, representations of Indonesian society as it faced the COVID-19 pandemic. The Researcher found this omnibus film engaging to study, employing a psychoanalytic approach with a particular focus on anxiety symptoms as they emerged in the characters. This study borrowed the thinking of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan in psychoanalysis as described in the following section.

THE PSYCHOANALYSIS CONCEPTS OF FREUD AND LACAN

Psychoanalysis is a major concept in psychology first established by Sigmund Freud in 1895 for psychotherapy purposes (Feist, Feist, & Roberts, 2017). Sigmund Freud hypothesized that all mental disorders are an expression of unconscious sexual symptoms which have been repressed

based on social-moral considerations. In its progression, the concept became a method to study art including cinema, because it was well-suited to delve into human character. Psychoanalysis in cinema became the form of representations that made connections between important character relationships, their mental activity, and emotional experiences (Sabbadini, 2016).

Sigmund Freud used the analogy of the iceberg to illustrate human consciousness and unconsciousness. The realm of the conscious, which remains on the surface, makes up only a very small part of the human psyche. The realm of the unconscious, submerged deep down, is far larger and drives the desires and actions of the individual. This consciousness and unconsciousness are made up of three main functions, namely the Id, the Ego, and the Superego.

The Id is the function of the personality containing inherited psychic energy, in particular the sexual instinct and aggression (Wade & Tavis, 2016). According to Freud, human instinct is divided into two parts, the life instinct called the Eros and the death instinct called Thanatos. The Id is governed by the principle of pleasure which drives the individual to only seek out gratification.

The Superego is the internalisation of norms that represents conscience, morality, and social standards (Wade & Tavis, 2016). An individual can be in an environment with certain religious and social norms, yet if the person has not internalized the norms of that environment, it does not become part of their Superego. The Superego is governed by moralistic/idealistic principles which function to determine what is wrong and what is right.

The Ego is the part of the personality representing thinking, common sense, and rational self-control (Wade & Tavis, 2016). The Ego is governed by the principles of reality that work to channel urges in ways acceptable to the social en-

vironment. The Ego is driven by a never-ending dynamic between Id and Superego.

In other words, the Ego acts as the mediator between the Id's urges and the Superego's demands. The conflicts produced by Id and Superego can be extremely high and result in anxiety, creating a defence mechanism in Ego (Feist, Feist, & Roberts, 2017). This defence mechanism according to Freud comes in many forms, the most well-known being repression and sublimation. Repression occurs when an individual buries their anxiety in the unconscious. Repression is often considered the worst mechanism because what one buries in the unconsciousness can emerge sometime in the future in uglier and more unpleasant forms.

Adversely, sublimation is a type of defence mechanism considered the noblest because the individual transforms his or her anxieties in forms productive to society. The sublimation of instincts is an outstanding characteristic in cultural progress because it enables elevated psychic, scientific, artistic, and ideological activities, playing an important role in civilization (Freud in Goebel, 2012). All human cultural expression, including the arts, are products of sublimation. Failure to repress the Id produces criminal behaviour and all manner of neurosis, while successful sublimation of the Id produces 'crazy' behaviours acceptable to society, such as creating works of art.

Feist, Feist, & Roberts (2017) also describe three types of anxiety according to Freud, namely realistic anxiety, moral anxiety, and neurotic anxiety. Realistic anxiety is connected to the Ego and clear physical stimuli, for example, the human fear of the dark. Moral anxiety is produced by the Superego, for instance, the guilty feeling someone has after enacting a crime. Neurotic anxiety is related to pressure from the Id without knowing what is causing it, such as the feeling of panic when someone is about to enter a meeting.

Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis

was further developed by the French follower of Freudian thought, Jacques Lacan, who generalized psychoanalysis as the concept of analysis for interpreting socio-cultural phenomenon. Jacques Lacan's equivalent to Sigmund Freud's Id-Ego-Superego concept is apparent in his triad or the three psychoanalytic orders. Lacan's three orders are The Real, The Imaginary, and The Symbolic (Ali, 2009).

In the beginning, The Real is enjoyed by people as a condition of no need, no loss, and no separation. This state of nature is, according to Lacan, a state of fullness or completeness. This order usually occurs at the age of 0-6 months.

The Imaginary is the process of imaginary identification when a child sees a narcissistic mirror image of themselves, usually occurring around the age of 6-18 months. When the infants begin to know that physically they are separated from their mother and the world, they become anxious as they feel they have lost something. People are forever trying to unify this fractured self. This order is marked by a process called the mirror phase.

Lacan considers the mirror phase a major part of his theory, which is a paradigm to maintain his worthwhile explanation of the subject's consciousness of the self, aggression, competition, narcissism, envy, and attraction to the image in general (Homer, 2005). The formation of the self's Ego is established in the mirror phase. When an infant sees their own reflection in the mirror, they experience a 'body that is fragmented' and at the same time discover their ideal self.

The Symbolic is the realm of reality revealed through language or the impersonal which applies in society. This order usually occurs at the age between 18 months to 4 years, or sometimes right up to the end of the subject's life. This order's main function, along with its laws and compulsions, is to create coexistence with others, in other words, the function that intervenes every aspect of our lives.

The infant's imaginary unification with the mother has been torn apart even more with the influences of social and cultural symbolism. Social meaning, logic, and differentiation are now accepted, making the infant begin to show the desires that are shaping him or her into a human subject.

The Symbolic represents the self in The Other. The entire Symbolic order is supported by someone called The Big Other, who is what underlies and governs the total mechanism of meaning in the Symbolic universe (Suryajaya, 2016). According to Lacan, human desire is not the individual's own desire, instead, it is a desire in the context of the otherness. And so, we desire through The Other. The Symbolic is the ultimate curse that imprisons the subject. A person is forever seeking and fulfilling the lack by always fulfilling the desire of The Other.

The Other is a Symbolic construct making the subject chained in his or her relationships, making the subject feel the need to respond or fill the empty space between themselves and The Other (Setiawan, 2018). In his Seminar IX in 1962, Lacan stated that anxiety is a sensation from the desire of The Other. This is caused by the non-knowledge of the subject of their self as the object for The Other. He also said anxiety is a feeling too close to the desire of The Other. Later, in Seminar X, Lacan (2014) said that desire is lack and anxiety occurs as a lack happens to be lacking.

In its progression, psychoanalysis began to embrace popular culture including film. According to Mulvey (1989), the cinema offers a number of possible pleasures, including scopophilia, which is derived from Sigmund Freud's concept of pleasure in looking. Slovenian scholar of psychoanalysis, Slavoj Žižek, developed a psychoanalytic approach in his analysis of ideology and popular culture. Slavoj Žižek also further developed Lacanian thinking regarding the gaze concept. The pleasure of gazing had already occurred since the

mirror phase. The gaze itself is rooted not on the subject, but in The Other, thus imprisoning the subject to perpetual subjugation (Setiawan, 2018). Lacan (in Homer, 2005) also said in the gaze concept that we are not the main subject who become aware by gazing at the world, but instead we are beings forever being gazed at.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

ANALYSIS OF THE OMNIBUS FILM *QUARANTINE TALES*

Omnibus is a type of film in the form of an anthology, consisting of a series of short films with the similar theme. The *Quarantine Tales* omnibus comprises five short films. These five shorts are studied using a psychoanalytic approach. The study was conducted using qualitative methodology through analysis of literature and cinematic text, observing audio-visual elements in the films. Follows are synopsis summaries of each short film and an analysis using a psychoanalytic lens.

1. First Tale: *Protocol*

Protocol is directed by Sidharta Tata. The movie opens with a newscast voiceover reporting how inmates are being released from prison as the COVID-19 pandemic spreads throughout Indonesia. A Burglar (no name is given) and IcuK have only just robbed a bank. In their getaway, IcuK dies in the car from a bout of coughing and shortness of breath. The Burglar suspects his partner in crime died from the COVID-19. The Burglar calls up someone as he panics looking at IcuK's dead body. The person on the other end instead tells the Burglar to quickly dump IcuK's corpse.

Initially, the Burglar leaves IcuK's body on the side of some paddy-fields. But he feels he 'hears' IcuK's voice making a plea to not be dumped so unceremoniously. The Burglar then takes back IcuK's body while also trying to comply to health protocols by dousing himself repeatedly with water from the river. The Burglar digs a grave for the corpse on the edge of a lonely woods. Afterwards,

tired out, he falls asleep in the vehicle. The Burglar has a nightmare of Icuik haunting him for not giving him his share of the robbery. The Burglar goes back to Icuik's grave-pit and throws some cash onto his dead colleague's body. The film ends with the Burglar yelling at somebody on the phone, saying next time he wants something done to first take a swab test before they do anything.

Using Freudian psychoanalytic concepts, conflict has emerged between the Id and the Super-ego creating anxiety for the Burglar. Seeing Icuik die from a coughing bout, the Burglar's instinct is to get rid of his colleague's body as quickly as possible. But his conscience in the form of Icuik's 'voice', asking him to treat him humanely, makes the Burglar have a change of heart. His Ego acts by having him care for Icuik's dead body, wrapping it first in a sheet of black plastic. As he does this, the Burglar also covers his face and body with garments taken from a scarecrow in the paddy-field, and he quickly washes himself with some water.



Fig. 1. The Burglar's anxiety of contracting the virus after handling Icuik's corpse.
(Source: Tata, 2020)

This he does to waylay his growing anxiety. The Burglar character suffers from neurotic anxiety thinking he has contracted the deadly disease. The Burglar also undergoes moral anxiety. Conversely, this moral anxiety emerges not from

guilt for robbing a bank, but rather from a sense of responsibility towards the body of his friend who has just died. The anxiety arising from the conflict between the Id and the Superego also emerges as a repressive defence mechanism that appears in the form of a nightmare.



Fig. 2. The Burglar dreams the dead Icuik is haunting him.
(Source: Tata, 2020)

Second Tale: *Happy Girls Don't Cry*

The short film *Happy Girls Don't Cry* is directed by Aco Tenriyagelli. The film tells the story of a hard-up family who needs to survive in face of the economic crisis wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic. The family comprises the Father, the Mother, and their eldest daughter, Adin. Their youngest, Dede, very recently died of COVID-19.



Fig. 3. The small betta fish aquarium as metaphor for Adin's family's living conditions as they are confined in quarantine
(Source: Tenriyagelli, 2020)

The film opens with a scene of Father negotiating with a Debt Collector because he cannot pay his debts. Adin fills her days by watching YouTube on her smartphone and chatting with a betta fish. Next to the small aquarium, the home of the betta fish, is a picture of Dede. Adin imagines the betta fish talks in a voice much like Dede's, her brother, who just died. The betta fish swims around in the very limited aquarium, as if to describe the living conditions of Adin's family imprisoned in a tiny house during quarantine.

Adin suspects a conspiracy theory in motion on the YouTube channel during the pandemic. Yet through her conversation with the betta fish, Adin is inspired by an idea to take part in a giveaway competition held by a YouTuber. Adin makes a recording of the stricken conditions of her family and unexpectedly wins an iMac.

A family conflict erupts as Father thinks they should sell Adin's iMac to pay off the family's debts. Adin decides to run away from home taking her iMac with her. But, Father threatens to kill her pet, the betta fish. Adin starts to imagine seeing the fish as her brother (Figure 4).



Fig. 4. Adin's imagination of an ideal family with her brother still alive
(Source: Tenriyagelli, 2020)

Adin does run away from home and just as quickly is smashed into by a motorbike. Mother quickly helps Adin, who is badly bruised, while Father instead embraces the iMac which box is damaged. The film ends with Father becoming a YouTuber by exposing the tragedy suffered by his daughter.

The protagonist of this short film is the Adin character. Adin's Id drives her to fulfil her need to retain the thing that gives her much pleasure, that is her iMac. But her Superego demands that Adin give up the iMac for selling. This can be heard as a voiceover by Dede asking his sister to help their parents. Unfortunately, Adin was already disgruntled by Father's uncaring attitude as Dede lay sick. Adin's Ego sides up with Id and is manifested in the scene where Adin runs away from home taking with her the betta fish and the iMac.

Sublimation as a defence mechanism of Ego when facing anxiety caused by the pandemic is apparent in the scene where the Adin and Father characters make recordings of their family's dismal conditions. Through this act, the characters vent their anxieties into a spectacle for others to watch.



Fig. 5. Adin and Father create videos about their family's dire conditions
(Source: Tenriyagelli, 2020)

This short film very aptly illustrates Lacan's concept of desire. Freud's Superego is often seen as equivalent to Lacan's Symbolic order. In this order, the subject desires through The Other. The Father character is The Big Other for Adin. Indeed, Father also influences the desire of the Mother character to defend him. Enforcing a desire for Adin by both parents can be clearly heard in the following dialogue:

- Father : You certainly do not realize things, is that it, Adin? That if we have no money, we cannot dream too high. So, you think we mean to torture you?
- Adin : I don't think of it that way.
- Father : Yes. I'm pretty sure that is what you are thinking. I realize that I am a poor man, not like the other fathers on the Internet, I cannot give you the happiness you want. *O Allah*, please forgive Your poor, distressed servant, *O Allah*. I'm such a bad father, it pains me so much!
- Adin : Say, I do want to sell the iMac, how much would I get?
- Mother : *Astagfiru-llah!*
- Adin : If it's only for rent, debts, and other expenses, I will be losing out on the money!
- Father : How could you make such calculations like a guava fruit-seller!
- Mother : Adin, have I ever bothered you with how much pain I had to endure when I gave birth to you?
- Father : You are committing a huge sin.
- Adin : So, is that the extent of your calculations about me?
- Father : Yup!



Fig. 6. Father and Mother forcing Adin to sell her iMac
(Source: Tenriyagelli, 2020)

Lacan's concept about 'in the name of the Father' in the Symbolic order comes through in the Father character of this story. In this scene, it is clearly shown how strongly the Father character is playing his role, trying to internalize in Adin, his own desire to sell the iMac. The law and power of father in the Symbolic is so strong, if anyone breaches it, they can be deemed as having committed sin. This is apparent in the scene when Adin decides to go against Father's desire and she is immediately struck down by a motorbike, as if hit by bad karma for the sin she committed.

Third Tale: *Nougat*

The story of *Nougat* is actress Dian Sastrowardoyo's directorial debut. The short film, in fact, does not strictly take up the theme of the pandemic. The temporal setting of the narrative is in a relatively long period, from 2010 to 2020. The entire film uses the concept of video conference calls, which has become the behaviour pattern of most people in the COVID-19 pandemic.

The film narrates the story of three sisters—Ubay, Ajeng, and Deno—who lost their father in 2010, while their mother had died much earlier. Ajeng, as the middle sibling, is the only offspring living in the house bequeathed by the parents. Ubay is married to Aji, while Deno has taken up a rented room as she finishes her studies. Conflict often erupts as Ajeng is incapable of caring for the house by herself. Ubay tells them they should sell the house as suggested by her husband, Aji. The sibling relations is fractured because Ajeng cannot stand Ubay always bowing to whatever her husband demands. Meanwhile, Aji is a violent and unfaithful husband.

Ajeng eventually agrees in 2020 to sell the house. She holds a video conference call with Deno, but without warning Ubay joins in. Deno sends her two sisters nougat ice cream, a sweet their mother often bought them when she was

alive. Ubay, suddenly emotional, asks that they instead do not sell the house, and invites her two younger siblings to physically meet in the near future.

The most elevated conflict between the Id and the Superego is apparent in the Ubay character, the eldest sibling. Ubay's Id, in fact, wishes to maintain the house bequeathed by their parents, because it held so many happy childhood memories. Ubay's Superego tells her to sell the house to avoid conflict with her husband. Ubay's Ego veers towards domination of the Superego, the result of living so many years under the abusive Aji. Ubay employs a defence mechanism in the form of repression mixed with denial, namely pretending not to know the awful facts about her husband.

Aji in this narrative is The Big Other in the Symbolic order of Ubay's life. Ubay's desire to sell the house originates from a demand of her husband. This desire of Ubay is projected to her two sisters, while neither Ajeng nor Deno wish to have the house sold. In the end, Ajeng and Deno are forced to comply to their eldest sister's wish to sell their parents' inheritance.



Fig. 7. Ubay projecting Aji's desire on Ajeng and Deno
(Source: Sastrowardoyo, 2020)

Fourth Tale: Cookbook

The film *Cookbook* is directed by Ifa Isfansyah. The short film narrates the story of Chef Halim who feels lonely while staying home by himself. The COVID-19 pandemic had a positive impact, though, because Chef Halim succeeded in producing a cookbook he had long desired to write.

Chef Halim holds an online meeting with Pak Naryo, who advises him to find someone to love as soon as possible. Chef Halim states his disinterest because it has been 20 years since he had a love relationship. Yet, Chef Halim begins to fantasize about meeting a woman of Chinese descent in an online meeting. The woman, Li, at first only speaks Mandarin and says the world will soon come to an end and that they should do something about life.

As the story unfolds, Chef Halim and Li become close as two people in love. They cook and have dinner together from their separate houses using the online meeting facility. One day, Li, wearing the uniform of a schoolgirl, seduces Chef Halim to make love to her, but he refuses. As it ends, the film reveals that Li was Chef Halim's sweetheart in high school and died after being raped in the 1998 May Tragedy.

The Eros instinct in Chef Halim is apparent in his longing for a partner in a love relationship. But, the traumatic past runs so deep, that he is forced to repress all his desire for love. This causes neurotic anxiety in Chef Halim. Chef Halim develops fantasy as his mechanism to chase away anxiety. Li, the Chinese woman he imagines interacting with him, often feels like she appears in real life.



Fig. 8. Chef Halim fantasizes he is touching Li's cheek
(Source: Isfansyah, 2020)

Another defence mechanism employed by Chef Halim is sublimation. Chef Halim is grateful for the pandemic because it inspired him to write a book he had long planned to write. Not only cre-

ating a cookbook, the pandemic gave Chef Halim time for reflection. He comes to peace with his past trauma and sublimates it in the form of a novel about the end of the world.

The Chef Halim character at the beginning of the film says he is disinterested in relationships. But because *Pak Naryo* suggests he look for a life partner during the pandemic, Chef Halim begins a desire to commit to loving another person. Here, we see Chef Halim's desire to find love was influenced by *Pak Naryo* as The Big Other.

Fifth Tale: *Prankster*

The film *Prankster* was directed by Jason Iskandar. The film tells the story of a content creator named Didit who likes doing video pranks. In the pandemic, Didit contacts Aurel, an influencer who loves making cakes. Aurel was once victim to a prank by Didit. Didit slipped in chemicals in the flour for a cake being baked and later consumed by Aurel.

The COVID-19 pandemic prevents them from meeting in person, so Didit invites Aurel for a live meeting on social media. Apparently prior, Didit, as a prank, places a demon doll in Aurel's room, making the young woman scream hysterically. After the live online event concludes, Aurel sends Didit a cake. Didit praises the delicious cake Aurel made. But, Aurel claims her tastebuds were damaged by Didit's former prank. Aurel's suffering emulates that of COVID-19 patients who lose their sense of taste. Didit apologizes profusely and says it was all the idea of his assistant, John. John apparently died after eating cake made by Aurel. Not long after, Aurel witnesses Didit dying after consuming the poisoned cake she baked for him.

'The Aurel character is driven by the Thanatos instinct to seek revenge for Didit's cruel joke on her. The Id is so dominant, the Superego which should have become a moral compass instead is ineffective in the Aurel character. Despite this, Au-

rel realizes she cannot murder Didit full-frontally, so she employs a mechanism, namely by sending Didit and John a cake laced with poison.

The desire concept in this depiction of the lives of content creators can be seen in the number of requests by followers of Didit and Aurel as they go live. To the right of the screen appear many comments by their followers, requesting the two content creators act out several things (Figure 9). These followers play the role of The Other, placing their desires on the two content creators. Indirectly, the desires of the two creators producing entertaining content are in fact placement of the desires of their followers.



Fig. 9. Comments by followers as the desire of The Other
(Source: Iskandar, 2020)

Another aspect interesting to analyze in this short film is the concept of the gaze employed in the final shot. The Aurel character is depicted as a *femme fatal*, a beautiful but dangerous woman. The final shot shows Aurel gazing back at the audience with a chilling look. The shot creates discomfort for anyone watching. This intersects with Slavoj Žižek theory in the film *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema* (2006). When the object gazes back at the subject, it can convey a certain feeling of horror. In this closing shot, Aurel's position suddenly shifts from object to subject, namely, the one who at the beginning has position as victim, but at the end is the perpetrator of murder.



Fig. 10. The Aurel character gazing back at the audience
(Source: Iskandar, 2020)

CONCLUSION

Film is sublimation of the anxieties of their makers. Sublimation of anxieties resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic is also depicted in the narratives found in *Quarantine Tales*. The Adin and Father characters (*Happy Girls Don't Cry*) make vlogs or documentary videos of the dismal conditions of their family post-Dede's death. The Chef Halim character (*Cookbook*) makes a recipe book to fill in his time during the quarantine. So, too, with Aurel (*Prankster*), who insists in making a cake to vent her anger and for revenge.

The pandemic did not only threaten the physical wellbeing of the community, but also their mental health. Three of the five narratives in *Quarantine Tales* describe how the characters imagine, hallucinate, and even have nightmares, the result of anxiety repression they undergo. One of the short films also depicts extreme behaviour, of a character murdering a friend.

Aside from these points, the narratives in *Quarantine Tales* also pick at economic straits. On the one hand, the community needs to seek income to survive, yet on the other hand, social restrictions by the government curbed their capability to earn. Despite the fact the government's restrictions are in the community's best interests, still they put a big strain on the community's ability to cope. Here we can observe the dynamics of the conflict between the Id and the Superego felt by people during the pandemic. The Id drives us

to survive biologically, while the Superego helps us to adapt in our social environment. The task of the Ego becomes acute for having to seek the perfect balance between the biologic urge and societal demands. It is no wonder during the pandemic increasing numbers of people are burdened by anxiety and stress.

On the surface, the cause of anxiety for the characters in the omnibus is the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet digging deeper, the anxieties in fact emerge because of the desire of The Other, which contain imperative to be fulfilled by the characters. These narratives become representation, or a portrait of current Indonesian society. The anxieties we experience may be caused by the desire of The Big Other, in the form of the Government of Indonesia, who is forcing the community to comply to their directives.

The short film *Protocol* depicts the anxiety felt by the Burglar character as a result of his friend's suggestion to quickly dump Icu's dead body. *Happy Girls Don't Cry* relates the demands of the Father character to sell the iMac belonging to Adin for the family to survive. *Nougat* tells the story of Ubay fulfilling her husband's desire to sell the sisters' inheritance from their parents, placing the desire on her two younger siblings. The *Cookbook* episode depicts Chef Halim's anxiety because someone tells him to look for a life partner, while he is still smarting from deep trauma from the past. The *Prankster* story is an extreme manifestation of repression of the Aurel character who cannot withstand the demands put upon her by the Didit character.

Of interest to discuss is the use of technology in the omnibus movie. Almost all the short films depict people doing video conference calls or recording themselves with frontal camera. Sigmund Freud once said people have a tendency for scopophilia, or attaining pleasure by looking at something. If connected to the Lacanian concept of the

mirror phase, this narcissistic sense of self appears after a person sees a mirror image of themselves. The escalating use of video conference calls in this pandemic era may well have increased the narcissistic tendency in the individual and their awareness of the self. Further study in future can be carried out to prove this hypothesis.

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