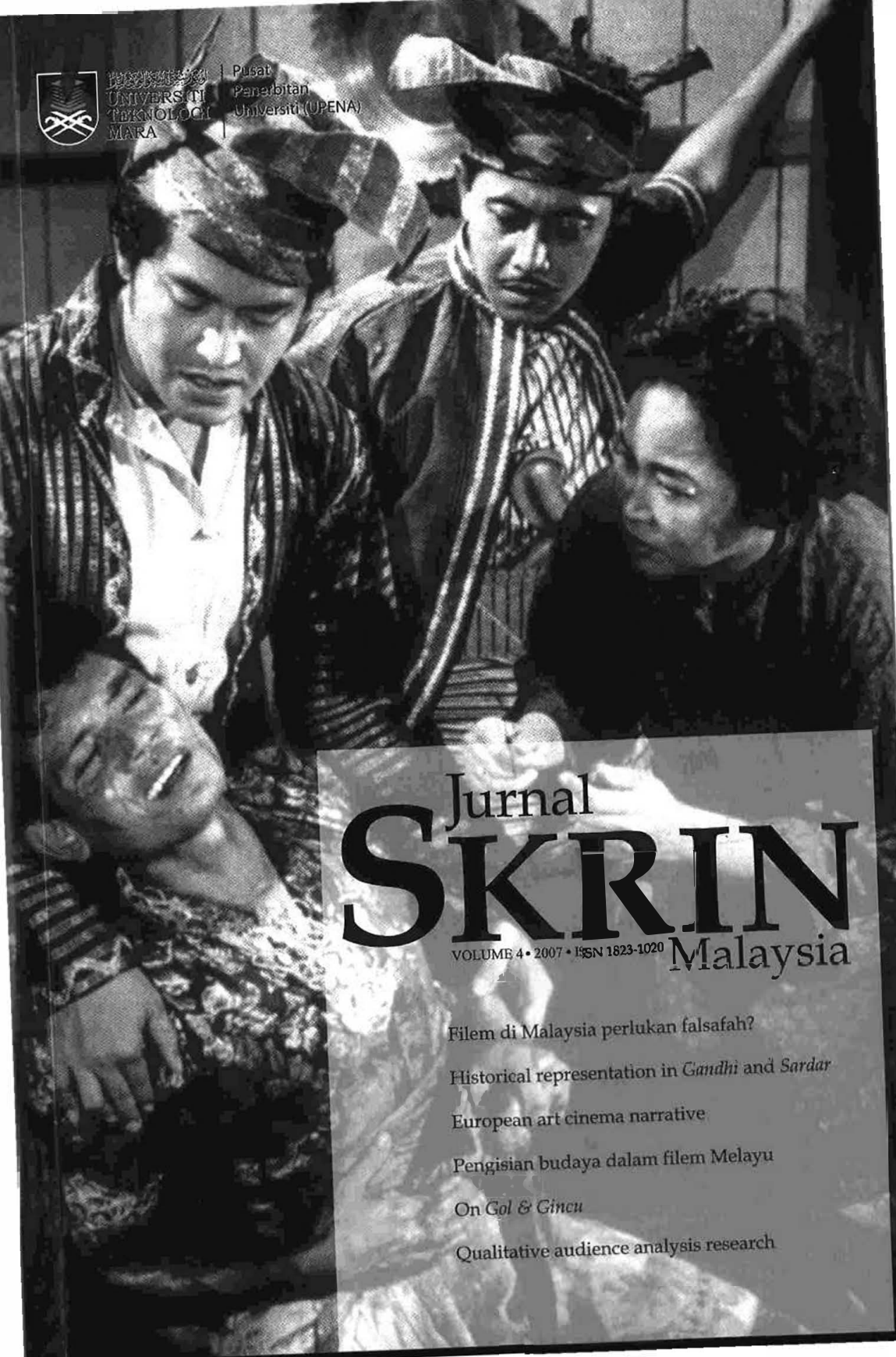

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Norman Yusoff

Does Film Obey the Laws of the Mind? – Munsterberg, Cognitivism and the Films of Hussain Haniff

This essay attempts at exposing Munsterberg's argument for the unique properties of cinema by focusing on the psychological responses of the viewer and on the aesthetic properties of film as a mental creation. The discussion seeks to examine the persuasiveness of Munsterberg's argument that "the photoplay obeys the laws of the mind rather than those of the outer world," for Munsterberg attempted at analogizing the cinematic devices to mental processes. In alignment with the paradigm shift in contemporary film theory (and academic film studies, in general), the essay will draw in connections with other film theorists in a manner that complements Munsterberg's arguments, as well as cognitive film theory. The second strand of my discussion entails analysis of Hussain Haniff's stylistic approaches to which Munsterberg's arguments are applied. This is to ascertain the relevance of Munsterberg's arguments which were put forth during the silent film era in relation to the study of Malay films directed by Hussain Haniff. Indeed, the films of Hussain Haniff have been widely acknowledged for accentuating cinematic styles which distinguish themselves from most films of the (studio) era.

> ... films have the appeal of a presence and of a proximity that strikes the masses and fills the movie theatres. This phenomenon, which is related to the impression of reality, is naturally of great aesthetic significance, but its basis is first of all psychological.
>
> Christian Metz (1974, p. 5)

David Bordwell and Noel Carroll (1996), two of the most prominent figures in the contemporary field of film studies, contest the prevailing practices of film scholarship. Since the 1970s, film scholars have been searching for a unified theory that will explain all sorts of films, their

production, and their reception. Thus far, the field of film studies (since its emergence in the late 1960s) has been dominated by theories influenced by Continental philosophy, with such names as Lacan, Nietzsche, Althusser, Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze, and Saussure, among others. Bordwell and Carroll repudiate the idea of searching for a unified theory, and offer, instead, ways in which many theories can be tailored to specific goals. As Cynthia Freeland (1997) observes, cognitive science (or "cognitivism") is gaining ground in film theory (and film studies in general), for cognitivists reject dominant views in films studies, as mentioned above. In a similar fashion, Joseph D. Anderson (1996) praises cognitivists from the mid-80s (such as Bordwell and Carroll), stating that they "freed film theory from the chokehold of the psychoanalytic/Marxist paradigm in the eighties and replaced it with the perspective of cognitive science, which though not yet universally accepted by film scholars is now firmly in place" (p. 18).

It cannot be denied that the influence of Lacanian psychoanalysis upon film theory (and film studies) has been tremendous. Its development has been in alignment with the institutionalization of film studies as a formal, academic discipline. Its development can be traced through several phases of the development of other pertinent theories and discourses: the role of Karl Marx and Louis Althusser; the contributions of semiotics; the debates surrounding apparatus theory and the gaze; and eventually the input of feminism. Concurrently, the sub-field of "film spectatorship" with which psychoanalytic film theory has been imbricated has emerged. With cognitivism or cognitive film theory, more critical inquiries with regard to film and spectatorship can be probed into: What goes on when spectators perceive a film? How do movies create illusions? How does a film arouse emotion? As Gregory Currie (1995) states: "Psychoanalysis is false. If we use psychology to study film, we should use cognitive science" (p. 67). As an alternative, cognitivists posit fairly universal psychological structures that humans have evolved that are relevant to viewing films, and they rely upon recent empirical approaches to describing the relevant psychological structures. Some of these abilities concern visual information processing and others concern emotional response. Though many theories seek to assimilate film to notions of reality and realism, there is another tradition that attempts to conceptualize cinema as an analog to the human mind. In the course of "cognitive turn" of film studies, the name of Hugo Munsterberg (1863-1916) has been revitalized and given a new reputation as an early predecessor of cognitive and scientific approaches to film

theory and spectators' psychological processes (Nyyssonen, 1998). His seminal work, *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* (1916), is the first theoretical text on cinema which proclaimed the essence of the new medium lies in its ability to reproduce, or "objectify" various mental functions on the screen. According to Munsterberg, "the photoplay obeys the laws of the mind rather than those of the outer world" (cited in Langdale, 2002, p. 91). Thus, in this essay, I shall examine the persuasiveness of this argument and go on to investigate as to whether film can be profitably studied by analogizing it to mental processes.

Although Munsterberg's theory emerged during the silent film era, it remains interesting for several reasons. It is, by all means, of paradigmatic historical value for, albeit its early appearance, it serves as a critical inquiry to the aesthetics of silent film that was barely challenged during the period. On the other hand, it is also of contemporary interest. Munsterberg's most valuable contribution lies in his application of psychological principles to the film phenomenon. By using cognitive analogies to expound both the particular power and the conventions of film, Munsterberg precedes recent psychoanalytic film theory such as those of Christian Metz and Jean-Louis Baudry.[1] Freudian dream psychology, for example, was a useful tool for many theories of cinema from the 1920s.[2] Munsterberg's approach, however, is non-Freudian; in the meantime he is an important precursor of Gestalt psychology, which makes his approach seem surprisingly contemporary. Thus, Munsterberg's writings can be discussed within the realm of the contemporary debate about whether the mind / film paradigm is a useful one. Inevitably, this will lead to the other strand of my discussion as I also wish to examine how relevant Munsterberg's theory is in relation to the study of Malay cinema, particularly Malay films of the '60s directed by notable director Hussain Haniff; and thus my discussion will be accompanied by illustrations from three films directed by Hussain Haniff – *Hang Jebat* (1961), *Dang Anom* (1962) and *Dua Pendekar* (1964).

Hang Jebat, Hussain Haniff's directorial debut has been widely regarded as his best work, focuses upon Hang Jebat, with his unconditional love for Hang Tuah, who seeks revenge on the Sultan of Malacca for the unjust execution of his blood brother. In a twist of fate, Hang Tuah who escapes execution kills Hang Jebat under the Sultan's order. The film was controversial at the time for its heroic depiction of Hang Jebat defying the Sultan. *Dang Anom* tells of the story of Dang Anom, the beautiful daughter of Sang Rajuna Tapa, who is engaged to Panglima Malang. However, the Sultan, who is obsessed with women, soon falls

in love with her and forces her to become one of his numerous concubines. Panglima Malang is helpless but manages to sneak into the palace for a secret meeting with Dang Anom. Unfortunately, they are caught and the Sultan sentences the lovers to be killed in a cruel manner. In order to save his daughter, Sang Rajuna Tapa opens the gates of the palace and lets in the Majapahit army. *Dua Pendekar* revolves around Awang Lekiu who appoints himself to become *Datuk Bendahara* after the demise of his adoptive father, Datuk Bendahara Muthalib. Awang abuses his own people, takes advantage of them, and seemingly turns them into slaves. Only Adam is willing to stand up and fight, leading to his incarceration. In the meantime, Awang proposes to Kenanga, Adam's lover. He then makes a pact that he will free Adam if Kenanga agrees to marry him.

I would contend that the rationale for locating Hussain Haniff's films through Munsterberg's explication has much to do with the claims made by critics and scholars about his cinematic style. Johan Jaafar (1983), writing of *Hang Jebat,* associates Hussain's stylistic approaches with the emotion they evoke. Johan asserts that Hussain helps reinforce the development of his character by means of photography and editing. For example, by deploying a tight close-up, the director is able to elicit emotions, as evinced by Nordin Ahmad (the actor who plays Hang Jebat). In amplifying such effect, as Johan adds, the use of jump cut and the score by Wandi Yazid invariably complements each other. A. Wahab Hamzah (1993), in his review of *Hang Jebat,* praises Hussain's visual style by asserting that the frames in *Hang Jebat* are invariably infused with images pregnant with meanings which appear very suggestive. Wahab adds that every shot is well-planned by considering the distance of object with the camera, thus alluding to his camera being *un*-static and mobile, with its object composition in control. William van der Heide (2002), comparing Hussain's *Hang Jebat* with Phani Majumdar's *Hang Tuah,* writes that Hussain succeeds in exalting Hang Jebat to the status of a hero – an anguished soul who sets to avenge the terrible wrong inflicted upon his beloved friend, Hang Tuah. Heide further states that "frequent close-ups, tracking shots into his face and voice-overs provide perspectival and emotional identification with Jebat" (p. 193).

Hamsan Mohamed (2004), in his in-depth, detailed analysis of both P.Ramlee's and Hussain Haniff's works from the perspective of authorship, concludes that Hussain is a director who possesses a visual vision which exudes sense of ambiguities, certainly departing from the normative practice of his era. According to Hamsan, Hussain's sense of disillusionment which can be sensed through his robust and aggressive

work further indicates his control over the medium (film) by utilizing the mobility of both characters and camerawork within the space-time continuum. Hamsan adds that the medium (film) for Hussain is no more a stationary *bangsawan* proscenium embedded with dialogues but an orientation and manipulation of space and time. Raphael Millet (2006), who researches on Singapore cinema, states that Hussain Haniff "made his directorial debut with *Hang Jebat,* a very ambitious period drama renowned for its cinematic qualities and for the way it revisited Malay classical history. It immediately positioned him as a first-rate filmmaker" (p. 51). Millet further enthuses: "*Hang Jebat* and *Dang Anom,* his first two films, were instant box-office hits. *Dua Pendekar* (lit. Two Warriors), in 1964, earned him great respect, due to its high contrast photography, its audacious angles, and its pace. The movie certainly remains one of the best made in Singapore during that era" (p. 51).

Munsterberg's book is divided into three sections. The Introduction presents a short history of film's "outer" (technical) and "inner" (aesthetical) development. The following two sections concentrate on the psychological aspects related to film and its viewing, and film's aesthetic essence an its potential as an art form. The former features theory that conceives of film as an active process – a strongly mental activity – in which the spectator is a partner with the filmmaker; while the latter investigates some of the ramifications of this view of the process. My discussion, however, will focus on the psychological section which explores the major psychological functions such as perception of depth and movement, attention, memory and imagination, and emotion, all of which are involved whilst experiencing movies. In other words, Munsterberg sets out to understand the cognitive means by which moving pictures impress us and appeal to us. Munsterberg pursues these demonstrations through an ingenious discussion of a series of cinematic devices – such as close-up, parallel editing, and flashbacks – that were being refined and popularized during the period from 1908 to 1915.[3] His examination throughout leads him to make a clear demarcation between film ("flat still pictures" of the photoplay) and theatre (the three-dimensional "plastic objects of the real world which surrounds us").

First, Munsterberg examines the impression of depth and movement in film, stating that in comparison with theatre, film depth and film movement are created through our mental mechanism (Langdale, 2002). Since knowledge of the flat character of pictures in no way excludes the actual perception of depth, "the question arises whether the moving pictures of the photoplay, in spite of our knowledge concerning the flatness

of our screen, do not give us after all the impression of actual depth" (p. 66). Arguing that the impression of depth is created by several factors – apparent size, perspective relations, shadows and movements – Munsterberg compares the screen to a glass plate in front of an area of real space (Langdale, 2002). Just as, looking through such a plate we would have the impression of depth continuing beyond it, so do we, as we gaze at the screen. According to Gestalt theory in general, the perception of the world is a process of organization, of ordering given sensory data to make them conform to a certain number of basic categories and innate "laws" of the brain's functioning. Munsterberg, therefore, believes that the primary stimulus for mental activity comes from perception. When the spectator sees or hears something, *then* the mind responds to and manipulates it.

Whilst discussing movement, Munsterberg has demonstrated that the phenomenon of the production of apparent movement may be explained by a characteristic of the brain (the phi-phenomenon) rather than by the so-called retinal persistence of vision. "A film," as Francis Sparshott (1985) writes, "is a series of motionless images projected onto a screen so fast as to create in the mind of anyone watching the screen an impression of continuous motion" (p. 284). Jacques Aumont and his co-authors (1992) speak of "the simple illusion of movement," concluding that "psychologically speaking, a film does not exist on film stock or on the screen, but only within the mind" (p. 184). The phi-phenomenon,[4] as I mentioned earlier, involves our perception of apparent movement in certain instances when there is no actual motion. The phi-phenomenon may be illustrated by setting up a system of lightbulbs in a series or line and then flashing them one after the other in rapid succession. The resulting effect is perceived as one continuously moving spot or streak of light rather than a succession of individual flashes. Hence, as Aumont (1992) writes:

> The spectator has mentally established a continuity and movement where there was technically only discontinuity and stasis. This same effect is produced in the cinema between two still frames when a spectator covers over the gap existing between two successive images of two successive positions by a character. (p. 122)

The antithesis with theatre and the concern with the relation of cinematic processes to the mind continue throughout Munsterberg's discussion of cinematic devices.[5] In theatre, as he stresses, attention is directed by means of word and gesture. But in film, attention can be

directed by camera positioning. The close-up, for instance, selects crucial dramatic elements – objects, faces, hands, etc. – and enlarges them, whilst eliminating surrounding details. As Munsterberg puts it:

> The close-up has objectified in our world of perception our mental act of attention and by it has furnished art with a means which far transcends the power of any theatre stage ... Whenever our attention becomes focused on a special feature, the surrounding adjusts itself, eliminates everything in which we are not interested, and by the close-up heightens the vividness of that on which our mind is concentrated. It is as if that outer world were woven into our mind and were shaped not through its own laws but by the acts of our attention. (p. 87)

The close-up, as we know it, fills the frame with a tight view of the subject. Though Munsterberg's discussion of close-up is circumscribed due to the relative technological paucity of the medium during his time, I would argue that his account of this cinematic device is still relevant in the course of sound film or contemporary films. For example, in the sound film era, the close-up can still be analogized with the spectator's attention; it is commonly used to reveal details or for emphasis, as in the practice of cutting to a close-up when a character is about to utter a particularly important line. Thus, a close-up means, "Pay attention to *this*." What we do on our own in theatre, it, might be said, is done for us automatically in film. Thus, the film close-up is somehow equivalent to the psychological process of attention; it is an "objectification" or externalization of the process.

In the films of Hussain Haniff, as I shall show, the close-up can still exemplify the capacity for the medium to objectify mental processes by being an analog for attention. Without a doubt, *Hang Jebat* employs cinematic devices such as close-up quite effectively. Take the scene in which Hang Jebat is left by those accompanying Hang Tuah, the character Jebat obliterates the camera. In this scene, Hussain Haniff does not deploy reaction shot; what is dominant is Jebat's physical presence without nuances of emotion revealed on his face. When the group moves further away from the camera, Hussain uses a close-up to focus on Jebat. When the scene is cut to a close-up of Jebat's face, it certainly indicates that he is the principal current object of (our) attention by excluding other objects from view, and suggests the character's importance by enlarging it. Furthermore, the close-up, according to Jean Epstein,[6] transforms the sense of distance, leading the spectator to extreme psychic proximity

and intimacy; and this, I would suggest, can direct the spectator's attention. Several scholars have placed emphasis on the effect of intimacy that close-ups seem to produce. In terms of the deployment of close-up on the face of Jebat, what I mean by "intimacy" here refers to the processes of psychologicalization linked to perception of character faces/bodies.[7] Jebat's face in close-up makes it possible for the spectator to generate hypotheses about the mind and feelings of the character and hence get "psychologically intimate" with him. By directing the attention, I would argue that it is not impossible for the spectator to identify with the character Jebat; in this respect, this prompts the spectator to delve into the character's state of mind. This being the case, in the context of the scene discussed earlier, the spectator may presume that what is in Jebat's mind could be his contemplation upon what would happen to Hang Tuah, or upon the possibilities and implications if he were to retaliate against the royal institution; this certainly prefigures Jebat's vengeful rebellion against the Sultan whom he serves. By placing an identification with Jebat, I would contend that the spectator will unconsciously make allegiance with him, that is, making moral evaluation towards him.[8] This enables the spectator to sympathize (and empathize) with the character, thus favouring him, regardless of his (im)moral disposition.

Throughout the film, the close-ups of Jebat's face are repeated several times, but they enunciate different intentions. For instance, during the climactic fighting scene, one of Jebat's pleas to Tuah is actually made to the audience, with Jebat moving into close-up and speaking to the camera, thereby obliterating Tuah totally from view. Though, Jebat is demanding an explanation from Tuah for being blindly loyal to the Sultan whose act is draconian, it is almost as if he seeks the viewer's intervention, without Tuah's presence complicating the issue. Here, the close-up prompts us to concentrate directly on Jebat and be engrossed in him, for we are not distracted by other elements within the frame (including, in this case, the character of Tuah). Jebat further expresses his grief and confides in Tuah that he was terribly devastated by what had happened and felt the need to avenge those who had mistreated Tuah. In the scene, the close-up of Jebat manages to reveal his physiognomy, as we can discern the facial details of the character which comprise a myriad of expressions and nuances of emotions: the quiver in his voice whilst uttering his plaintive words; his sorrowful eyes; and the furrows of a wrinkled face (particularly on the forehead). Jebat's sense of despair and anguish is augmented by Nordin Ahmad's articulate performance which is endowed a sense of dynamism.

Another scene in *Hang Jebat* in which Jebat goes to Tuah's home to inform Tuah's wife about what has happened to Tuah, we are able to discern the details of the characters' expressions (Jebat and Tuah's wife). Tuah's wife weeps and pleads to Jebat about what had actually befallen Tuah. When Tuah's wife is about to kneel down, the camera tracks to Jebat, capturing him in close-up. His solemn eyes and nuanced facial expressions tell us about his exasperation and deep frustration. We are able to hear his conscience (through his voiceovers) that he truly wants to avenge the supposed death of Tuah by revolting against the tyrant Sultan.

In *Dang Anom,* towards the end of the scene in which the Sultan confers the title *Panglima* to Malang (Nordin Ahmad), there is a close-up when the camera zooms in on Bija Sura (Mahmood June) who was just defeated by Malang in a brief fight before the Sultan. The close-up of the character Bija Sura manages to accentuate what kind of person Bija Sura is to the spectator. The close-up reveals Bija Sura who glares (perhaps at Malang) with hostility; his vicious look is amplified by the details of his facial expression with his bulging (owlish) eyes and thick moustache. I would further contend that the close-up, centering on Bija Sura's face, literally draws us into his mind and reinforces the psychological effect of the moment; this would indicate that the character Bija Sura (as well as the spectator) has concentrated his attention on Malang whom he begrudges. As we can see later in the film, Bija Sura is the antagonist, a hardened reprobate, who plans to cast aspersions on Malang. There is also a close-up of Bija Sura's face in the scene (facing the camera) in which he guffaws whilst placing both of his hands in the unlocked chains. The camera then moves slightly to reveal Malang who is shackled in fetters connected by a chain which constitute the background elements within the frame. And then, the shot is cut to another close-up of him continuously guffawing. The facial details evince Bijasura's sense of antagonism; later in the scene, we see that Bija Sura torments Malang by releasing ants all over Malang's body.

Take another scene that takes place in the palace garden in which the Sultan tries to coax Dang Anom. The first shot shows the Sultan persuading the intractable Anom who faces him, filmed in medium long shot. When Anom is about to reply, the shot is cut to a close-up of her, thus obliterating the Sultan. Anom steadfastly confesses that her heart and soul are not with the Sultan. In this case, the spectator's attention is directed to Dang Anom because Dang Anom, as the focus of the film's narrative, is affirming her stance. The function of close-up in this scene

also further facilitates the spectator in comprehending the narrative and learning about the character (such as Dang Anom) who hardly subdues her longing for Malang, although she becomes one of the Sultan's concubines.

In *Dua Pendekar,* the scene in which Awang and his people pay a visit to Kenanga's house as to propose to Kenanga, Hussain employs close-ups frequently. When Kenanga's parents and the guests are having a conversation, there is a cut to Kenanga who, distressed and miserable, is eavesdropping from her bedroom. The camera slowly zooms in on her (in medium close-up) to reveal her emotional turmoil upon discovering about Awang's intention. The close-up indicates and reveals Kenanga's steadfast refusal to yield to Awang's proposal. Later in the similar scene, when her mother persuades her to meet Awang and his assistants, Hussain employs close-up shots several times, showing Awang and Kenanga's expressions. The first close-up reveals Kenanga's sadness when she looks down; then the shot is cut to a close-up of Awang smiling; then the shot is cut back to Kenanga responding that she is not interested in Awang; and then the shot is cut to Awang whose face turns sour when Kenanga confesses her refusal to accept his proposal. In this sense, close-ups are used to show different details between Awang and Kenanga, as the spectator is able to pay attention to the characters and to discern their feelings.

In *Dua Pendekar,* let us look into the scene in which Awang's adoptive father, Muthalib is dying whilst being surrounded by his assistants (including Awang). Awang who initially sits further away from his father's bed moves closer toward him. The shot of Awang by his father's bedside is filmed in medium shot; and then the shot is cut to a close-up of the father's face (when the father is advising him); then the shot is cut back to a close-up of Awang who is staring at his father; and cut back to his father (in a closer shot which reveals facial details – the tiring expressions, wrinkles all over the face, sorrowful eyes). From time to time, he is coughing badly and stifling whilst uttering his final words. The proxemic distance between the camera and the subject (the father) forces us to identify more with the character's feelings and expressions, which we cannot ignore at this range. Towards the end of the scene when the father is about to pass away, the film employs frequent close-ups through a juxtaposition of shots (and reaction shots) between closer shot of Awang and his dying father (in medium close-up) who is about to cease speaking and finally, breathing. The closer shot of Awang's face further accentuates the detailed expressions, for Awang himself has been insincere to his

adoptive father and has desired to replace him as the *Datuk Bendahara,* by coming into power; the facial details, with his devious look and deceitful eyes, at least inform the spectator about his insincerity towards his father. This being the case, the close-up allows the actor to concentrate totally on the truth of the moment; gestures and facial expressions can be exquisitely nuanced. Furthermore, the close-up indeed isolates the human face from its surroundings and penetrates the soul.

The photoplay, according to Munsterberg, also acts as our memory and imagination, for in our minds, past, present and future are intertwined as are reality and imagination. This, I would suggest, involves narrative comprehension and interpretation. As psychologist Morton Hunt (1993) writes, humans are motivated not simply by physiological, but also cognitive needs. We have a drive to know; we also seek to mentally stimulate ourselves. Narrative film viewing, as cognitivists such as David Bordwell, Edward Branigan dan Noel Carroll claim, consists of the same sorts of *top down* (conceptualizing and inferring) and *bottom-up* (sensory, data-driven, automatic) psychological processes that perceivers use to understand events in the world around them.[9] In such a process, spectators actually construct the film; this is what Kevin Sweeney (1995) refers to as *constructivism.* In theatre, as Munsterberg suggests, later moments in a play may call to mind earlier ones. However, in film this kind of contrast can be literally visualized by means of the cut back or flashback. Discussing the flashback as "mental image," Jean Mitry (1998) says that cinema is "able to signify the immanence of reality, capturing the 'here and now' in a narrative unity within the space of time which is existence itself preserved and pursued in the continuous actuality of its development" (p. 53). Where theatre relies upon the spectator's memory, the flashback in film is an analog or functional equivalent to memory. Here, the effectiveness of the flashback is enhanced by editing which controls the time of action denoted in the film.

In *Dang Anom,* I would like to extend Munsterberg's conception of memory and flashback by discussing the song sequence which depicts Dang Anom rendering the number *Saat Demi Saat;* interestingly, the whole sequence is comprised of a series of evocative images which amalgamates the juxtapositional intercutting and superimpose.[10] In addition, the juxtaposition and superimpose in this singing montage allude to Dang Anom's "mental images," further ascribing the phantasmagorical effect to the sequence. Among images that constitute the sequence include natural and environmental images and "multiple image" of Dang Anom with Malang, as well as the montage of the Sultan. This being the case,

it is interesting to note that the juxtaposition (and superimposition) of all of these images entails the past, present and future. At the beginning and middle of the sequence, we can fathom Dang Anom's pining for Malang who has been away, and the finale of the sequence prefigures that she would become the Sultan's concubine, when the Sultan comes into the picture; thus, the whole sequence, which is ascribed with a portentous undertone, connotes Dang Anom's uneasy premonition about the predicament she will go through. Whilst we are dragged along to experience Dang Anom's hallucinatory yearning for Malang (by means of past moments), we are transposed back to the present (as depicted in the finale of the sequence when the Sultan appears). As Munsterberg argues, the past, the present, or the future only occurs in the mind of the spectator. As Jean Mitry (1998) puts it: "It all happens as though we feel we have been suddenly transported back in time ... The past ... does not exist in the cinema. All past action is a 'present' transferred into the 'life' of the drama via a logical or psychological association ..." (p. 53). Inasmuch as this is the case, Munsterberg suggests that the determinant characteristic of film is its capacity to imitate certain mental processes that free us from mere physical existence; in the case of the song sequence in *Dang Anom,* it liberates the spectator from an experience of sheer spatio-temporal succession, that is, of real space and time within the world of the film since the past only exists in, and is constructed by, our mind (as well as, in this case, Dang Anom's).

Memory is tempted, sometimes in positive and sometimes in negative ways, by another notion, that is, suggestion. In Munsterberg's work on forensic psychology, suggestion is a subtle but powerful stimulus which can severely compromise the accuracy of memory. In *The Photoplay,* Munsterberg describes the difference between an imagined and suggested thought. He notes that suggested thought is similar to imagination in that it is controlled by the play of associations. As he puts it: "A suggestion, on the other hand, is forced on us. The outer perception is not only a starting point but a controlling influence. The associated idea is not felt as our creation but as something to which we have to submit" (p. 97). Munsterberg analyzes this deeply in his other writings by giving some examples of how this can be achieved by means of editing, or what we refer to as elliptical editing, where the action is begun in a shot but is cut off before its completion, leaving the completed action as an implanted suggestion in the spectator's mind. In other words, the filmmaker can create an ellipsis by means of a cutaway: a shot of another event elsewhere that will not last as long as

the elided action. In *Hang Jebat,* the scene in which Datuk Bendahara goes to see Tuah to inform him about the Sultan's order wanting him back to kill Jebat, we are presented with several shots (including a close-up of Tuah lamenting over Jebat's despicable acts that have gone too far revolting against the Sultan). Then, the close-up slowly fades out and a back shot of Tuah kneeling down before the Sultan and asking the Sultan's forgiveness gradually fades in. By watching the transition of the shots, we *infer* that Tuah follows Datuk Bendahara to meet the Sultan and agrees to fulfill the Sultan's request. By this, the filmmaker does not show the completed action (the prior scene which involves Datuk Bendahara and Tuah) as the completed action is constructed by the spectator in a form of implanted suggestion in the spectator's mind. Such a technique presents an action in such a way that it consumes less time on the screen than it does in the story. In *Dang Anom,* the scene in which one of the dayangs goes to see Malang to inform about Anom-Malang's rendezvous may also illustrate this. On her way back, the dayang is stopped by Bija Sura who harasses and threatens her to divulge her reasons for going to see Malang. When the dayang, feeling threatened, says that she agrees to let Bija Sura know, the scene is cut off. In this case, we can simply assume what the character (the dayang) is going to say, for we get the access of narrative information due to the omniscient mode of filmic narration deployed by the film. In a way, the ellipsis used in the course of the narrative can circumvent the redundancy in terms of narrative information.

Munsterberg goes on to discuss parallel editing in film – cutting between two (or more) events that occur at the same time but in different places and which are generally related dramatically – which also differs from standard theatrical procedures where such scenes would be narrated sequentially. For Munsterberg, this proves the capacity of the mind to split its attention or to distribute its interest over a number of events simultaneously. In *Hang Jebat,* scenes with parallel streams of action are effectively cross-cut together: the finale which depicts Tuah and Jebat fighting one another in the palace is intercut with the crowd outside the palace whose mood changes, for their earlier praise for Jebat has now turned to hatred, as they seek to kill him for his betrayal – of the Sultan and, therefore, of the Sultanate. The lengthy fighting scene between Tuah and Jebat, is indeed intercut with: shots of Hang Kesturi killing some of the crowd that attempt to enter the palace to kill Jebat, the departure of the women from the palace, and the scene in which

some of the crowd run under the palace and jab their spears through the floor, almost wounding Hang Tuah. This approach also seems to function as "interruptions" that prolong the scene and function to delay the inevitable conclusion. By juxtaposing these scenes, our dramatic interest is divided between Tuah and Jebat in the palace, and the crowd outside the palace. Our mind wavers between these scenes. In *Dua Pendekar,* the scene towards the end which depicts the wedding ceremony of Awang and Kenanga as both are sitting on the *pelamin* whilst they and the guests are being entertained by a singing-and-dancing group, Hussain intercuts the scene with shots of the disillusioned Adam who is in prison. The juxtaposition of these two simultaneously events continues until the bride and the groom exit the palace and continue watching a singing-and-dancing performance outside the palace; while another event shows Adam being released from prison and in a traditional cage carried by a group of men heading to the wedding ceremony. This being the case, such a cinematic device frees the spectator from the experience of the continuum of space and time of such sheer bodily entities through his/her powers of memory and imagination.

Concluding the psychological section of his book, Munsterberg deals with the highest of the mind's operations, that is, emotion. He notes, "To picture the emotions must be the central aim of the photoplay" (p. 99). A stage actor's speech may hold our attention but screen actors, in their world of silence, must always be soliciting our emotion through facial expression, gesture and emotion. Munsterberg, while turning from the expression of emotions to their reception by the spectator, distinguishes emotions shared with characters on the screen and emotions connected to the scenes of the drama. The former, *shared emotions,* is the larger group; the spectator projects back the emotion aroused by to the character, the scenery and the background. The latter, *spectator emotions,* where the spectator reacts in terms of his/her independent affective life is exemplified in the scene discussed earlier in which Jebat moves into close-up and speaks to the camera, thereby obliterating Tuah totally from view. Here, the close-up of Jebat in the full frontal position offers us an intimate view of the character. By this, we can explore his face as spiritual landscape. In such a complex shot, we are privy to more information than the character himself. Jebat is too ashamed to look directly at his closest companion Tuah, and (by facing the camera) he recounts his sad story with his back turned – a sad story with the hope that Tuah would change his mind. In this respect, the spectator is permitted an intimate view of

Jebat's gloomy face as well as his compassionate expression. The close-up further reveals his anguish of grief, as he laments over the fact that what he did was to avenge the terrible wrong inflicted upon Tuah, his beloved friend. Indeed, the deployment of close-up on Jebat serves well to intensify the harrowingness and poignancy of the scene, amidst the tension and thrill of the fight which ensues between them.

In *Dua Pendekar,* take the scene in which Kenanga is in her bedroom after Awang Lekiu pays a visit to propose to her, the camera only focuses on her face (in close-up); the close-up communicates her sadness where the flicker of her eyes rivets our attention. Such a closer shot manages to intensify our emotional involvement and bring us into an intimate proximity with her. This would be the case of the first group of shared emotions, as discussed by Munsterberg, since our emotion is also determined in part by the perceptual experience the film creates, and by our moral and ideological evaluation of the character; whilst our feeling of hatred and menace at Awang in the prior scene due to close-up's ability to capture details would be the second group of spectator emotions. In addition, the context of the scene does permit Hussain to express emotions dramatically. Kenanga's anxiety and tenseness are expressed in purely visual terms. Her inward agitation is conveyed by the vertical lines of her bed. As we can see, her sense of entrapment is implied by the tight framing (that is, the close-up of her face) and by the obstruction of the bed itself which constitutes foreground elements.

Close-ups also have the potential to invoke the similar or the same mental processes that we execute during the world interpersonal behaviour; this refers to the communicative function of personal space. Such intimate close-ups enable the spectator to invade the character's personal space (Per Persson, 1998). It is useful to refer to the theory of personal space which might shed some light on the (spatial) intimacy effect of close-ups. Why does the close-up work as an intensifier of emotions? For instance, the cutting in (to a close-up) simulates a real world personal zone transgression. Being admitted into another person's intimate distance zone, *means* greater intimacy. By this, we can maintain that close-up triggers very similar mental processes.

By using the spectator's proxemic competence, the close-up signifier manages to evoke intimacy effects which are in their turn utilized to enhance emotional intimacy of the scene. In *Dang Anom,* for example, the scene that involves the event to commemorate the victory of Malang for defeating the nation's traitors may illustrate what has just been discussed. Whilst the dance is being performed, Dang Anom and other

concubines enter. Malang, who is watching the performance, is captured in medium shot. When Malang realizes that Dang Anom has become one of the Sultan's concubines, the shot is cut to a close-up of Dang Anom. Malang is shocked and perturbed, glaring at Dang Anom whilst Dang Anom looks utterly distressed in response to Malang's reactions. The juxtaposition between Malang and Dang Anom is repeated several times. Besides, the juxtaposition also comprises close-ups of Sultan pleasantly gazing at Anom and the Queen grimacing at Anom. The subsequent juxtapositions further affirm Malang's restlessness and anger, as well as Dang Anom's sense of wretchedness, as delineated by her facial details: her misery and reticence can be further discerned by her tearful, solemn eyes. The frame shift reflects and enhances emotional change, and thus simulates the spectator's real world movement from Malang's "shock and restlessness" zone to an intimacy distance, as manifest in Malang-Dang Anom relationship.

Research in psychology has shown that just as situation alone does not determine emotion, neither does physiology. S. Schachter and J. Singer, through a classic experiment, have proved that emotion is determined, at least, in part, by cognition.[11] It should be noted that human emotion is a complex phenomenon; the defining feature of the cognitive theory of emotion, as Morton Hunt (1993) writes, is the claim that the nature of particular emotion depends, to a great extent, on individual appraisals of a situation. Gerard F. Buckle (1926), expatiating on the psychological factors in the film, proves that, at least, there is a close relationship between attention and human emotions:

> In point of fact, predomination of one by the other, is brought about by circumstances, or a certain state of things; that is to say, either the emotions are awakened by the brain dominating the focus and causing it to be deliberate (conscious focus) from the outset ... or the subconscious focus being suddenly converted into a conscious focus, such conscious focus bringing about a state of emotion by means of a state of realization through the brain. (p. 62)

Munsterberg also speculates on ways in which cinema might externalize emotional moods – for example, by the use of rhythmical editing and camera movement – though he regards his remarks here as tentative because these developments had not yet been fully cultivated by the cinema he knew. In *Hang Jebat,* in the climactic fighting scene between Tuah and Jebat in the palace, Hussein uses rhythmic possibilities of editing to evoke the suspense by shortening the lengths of shots, thus

creating an accelerating tempo; this is witnessed whenever Tuah and Jebat are struggling as they fight each other. When the two stop fighting and alternately converse, Hussein employs lengthy takes, thereby reducing the fast pace and momentum. The spectator is able to experience Jebat's devastating emotion by means of the action (the robust fighting between Jebat and Tuah). The harshness of the action heightens in the later part when both of them adjourn to the Sultan's bedroom and continue fighting; the suspense is amplified by the fast cut or rhythmic editing. By filming a scene in an uneven, accelerating rhythm, the filmmaker can presumably lead the spectator to experience the same emotion.

In *Dang Anom,* the finale which features Malang who has to fight Bija Sura in order to determine the truth, Hussain employs rhythmic editing to heighten suspense; the fast pace and momentum continues until Malang is stabbed from behind and killed (as instructed by the Sultan who worries about Bija Sura being defeated). Similarly, in *Dua Pendekar,* the climactic fighting scene in which Adam who has been released from prison is asked to defeat a couple of Awang's assistants to prove his innocence, Hussain employs rhythmic editing; later, the same treatment is employed when Adam confronts Awang. Eisenstein and Pudovkin agreed (as many of their successors) about the *emotional* effects of cuts. Because each cut creates a momentary arousal in the pattern of responses that would occur in some emotions, cuts can lead the spectator to experience that emotion. In the context of the fighting sequence in this film, the rhythmic possibilities of the cut echo every action and movement of the two characters. The psychological effect of this editing suggests speed and tension; the greater the number of cuts within a scene, the greater its sense of speed and tension.

In *Hang Jebat,* when Jebat is swiftly ensnared in the curtains by Tuah and fatally wounded by the magical kris that Tuah had deceitfully retrieved from Jebat, the frantic pace of editing slows a little. In this respect, Hussein's direction does not mar the pathos of the scene. But his treatment of the physical (and verbal) action establishes a counterpoint of harsh irony which lifts the sequence clear of its threatened sentimentality. Also, the emphasis on Jebat's emotional frailty prepares us for a subsequent scene in which Jebat goes out and runs amok, killing many people indiscriminately. The editing intensifies the spectator's emotion again when Jebat undertakes his amok which is staged in a brief scene. The intensity of the scene is also reinforced by the camera movement (particularly when the camera tracks and pans) and camera angles (whenever several shots of Jebat attacking his victims are taken

from high angle). In this particular scene, Hussain's treatment (the cuts and camera movement) does aestheticize the horror (violence), abstracting from reality so that we receive the impression of shock and violence with a sense of unease and anxiety, as we are dragged along to share the feeling of disequilibrium that the character Jebat has at that moment.

I would contend that the deployment of camera movement and angles in several scenes in *Hang Jebat* may render some effects to the spectator emotionally and psychologically. There are times when Hussain wants to pull the spectator out and give him/her a dispassionate, omnipotent and high-angle view. The first dance scene, for example, is very significant in which it celebrates the Sultan's appointment of Jebat as the new Laksamana. When Jebat is presented with Tuah's magical kris, he goes on to kiss it, with his eyes fixated on it. In welcoming and praising the new Laksamana, the dayang then perform a dancing-and-singing act; one of the dancers is brandishing a kris, thus dramatizing the festive occasion which has just taken place. In this scene, the dancers are frequently filmed from ground level (extreme high angle), designating and shaping formal patterns set against the abstract designs of the ceiling and the floor. The mood of the dance changes, becoming solemn and ominous when the camera employs a lengthy overhead tracking shot from the dancers to the seated Sultan; there are repeated close-ups of an upset-looking Sultan and a frowning but nodding Jebat, who seems to recognize the significance of the dance as the dancers enact the tragic story of Tuah and Jebat – the dancer with the kris is now stabbed by a fellow dancer, who then holds her in her arms as she dies. In this respect, by splitting the action into a series of fragmentary shots, Hussain achieves not only a greater sense of detail, but a far greater degree of control over the spectator's reactions. In carefully selecting and juxtaposing long, medium, and close shots (together with mobility and extreme angles), Hussain constantly shifts the spectator's point-of-view within the scene – expanding here, excluding there, emphasizing, consolidating, connecting, contrasting, paralleling, and so on. This being the case, the dance sequence does not merely serve as a spectacle such as in other Malay films of the era. Here, the spectator is able to experience the sense of unease and disequilibrium that the dancers (and the character Jebat) have since the whole sequence prefigures something sinister, as signified by the performance and cinematic style.

In *Dua Pendekar,* Hussain employs extreme angles frequently. In the scene in which Kenanga surreptitiously goes to where Adam is tortured so as to release him, Hussain employs extreme angles indicating

both characters' uneasiness and apprehension. More angles are used expressively particularly in the scene in which Kenanga and her parents visit Adam who is tied to a wheel (an old instrument of torture in the form of circular frame on which the victim is stretched) and is injured. When Awang's assistant rolls the wheel, we observe the oscillation of Adam bound to the wheel. In this scene, Hussain uses oblique angles, sometimes known as "Dutch tilts" shots, to produce a sense of irresolution, of visual anxiety. There are also point-of-view shots (of Adam's point-of-view) when while being oscillated, we (the spectator) also share his upside-down vision (point-of-view) alternately. This implies his life that turns topsyturvy under the cruel and tyrannical rule of Awang Lekiu; as we have observed, Adam is going through predicaments, and thus, he is experiencing a state of uneasiness and apprehension about future bleakness and uncertainties. This is exacerbated by Awang's clamour towards the end of the scene that he must wed Kenanga; only then, will he stop tormenting Adam. With the wheel's swing, the scene's normal horizontal and vertical lines are tilted into unresolved diagonals. Hussain also employs oblique angles by focusing on Kenanga during the wedding ceremony outside the palace who seems restless and unease, waiting for Adam to be released. Such shots are meant to throw the spectator completely off balance; we (the spectator) are dragged along to a sense of irresolution, anxiety and disequilibrium. This further affirms that the intensity of the film-viewing experience can be illustrated by the fact that screen images may produce strong physiological reactions by the viewer, including increase of heartbeat rate, nausea and vertigo.[12]

By way of conclusion, I would like to stress that the application of Munsterberg's theory in studying Malay cinema (perhaps any cinema), is, by all means useful, particularly in the context of the medium's capacity to "objectify" mental (psychological) processes.[13] Considering Munsterberg's theory is of silent films, I would argue that the advent of film technology – for example, the addition of sound to films – does not really impinge on Munsterberg's articulate attempts at film theory. Perhaps this is because the basic, underlying level of the medium's philosophical (psychological) problems remain irrevocable, and this certainly corroborates that Munsterberg's theorizing is hardly an appendage to the doctrine-oriented (influenced by continental philosophy) film theory. By discussing the analogy between mental processes and cinematic articulations – for example, attention corresponds to the close-up in the cinema – I hope to have indicated the persuasiveness of Munsterberg's conception that film does not copy the outer world, but

rather "reconstitute" it in the way that the mind does. As he posits: "The photoplay tells us a human story by overcoming the forms of the outer world, namely, space, time and causality, by adjusting the events to the forms of inner world, namely attention, memory, imagination and emotion" (p. 129). This is, however, more of aesthetic concern: to bear out his explication that film is an art, he must, of course, rebut the assumption that all the film medium can do (given its photographic nature) is "slavishly" imitate. Nevertheless, my concern, in this essay, is not to consider Munsterberg's theory as the most accessible film/mind analogy-approach, particularly in virtue of the question of whether and through what means film could be conceived of as an art form. My mere intention has been, rather, to demonstrate how convincing his disquisition is in articulating the ways in which Malay films directed by Hussain Haniff operate like that of the human mind.

Notes

[1] For detailed, specific criticism of the theories of Metz and Baudry, see Noel Carroll, *Mystifying Movies: Fads and Fallacies of Contemporary Film Theory,* (Columbia University Press, 1988).

[2] For further detail of Freudian dream psychology and film theory, see Susan Hayward's entry for "psychoanalysis" in her *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts,* (London: Routledge, 2000).

[3] Munsterberg's review of these techniques – which at the time were considered innovations – put him in a position to claim not only that the filmmaker transformed what he photographed but also that he transformed it in a way that was uniquely cinematic (rather than theatrical). Furthermore, Munsterberg's discussion of the way in which these devices functioned also allowed him to connect film which Munsterberg took to be the purpose of art.

[4] Munsterberg described how our perception of movement in moving pictures depends not so much on the static phenomenon of persistence of vision as on our active mental processes of interpretation of the series of still images. Thirty years later, this active process became known as Phi-phenomenon. Munsterberg had described it (without labeling it) in 1916.

[5] Noel Carroll, in his essay, "Film/Mind Analogies: The Case of Hugo Munsterberg," in *Theorizing the Moving Image* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 293-304, noted that there is a change in the manner of Munsterberg's discussion of depth and movement, on the one hand, and the discussion of cinematic devices, on the other. For the depth and movement, Munsterberg suggests that we add something to the visual while for close-up, for example, the selecting is something that is done for us. This shift in direction occurs in the rest of his account of cinematic devices.

[6] Jacques Aumont, *The Image* (trans. Claire Pajackowska) (London: British Film Institute, 1997), 103-106. In the chapter of "The Role of the Apparatus," Aumont discusses the close-up as example of the power of the apparatus. In the 1920s, Jean Epstein said that the close-up was the "soul of the cinema."

[7] Per Persson, in his article, "Towards a Psychological Theory of Close-ups: Experiencing Intimacy and Threat," *Kinema* (Spring 1998), takes a functionalist perspective to cinema. According to Persson, it is insufficient only to describe textual features without awareness of how these function in co-operation with cultural-psychological-behavioural structures in the spectator; it is the experience of cinema a reception study seeks to elucidate. The article further asserts that threat and intimacy are two putative spectatorial effects of close-ups. The article elucidates that the two functions of personal space in many ways correlate to the two functions of close-ups; the close-up evokes similar socio-psychological processes as would a real interpersonal situation. Perrson concludes that some cinematic conventions (such as the use of close-ups) are not totally arbitrary. They are designed with careful consideration to the socio-psychological makeup of the spectator in order to produce specific effects.

[8] According to Murray Smith (1995), there are (at least) three aspects to the work that the spectator carries out with a screen character. First, we must recognize the character. We must be able to translate the fictional "construct" – which, at one level, we know is the product of the screenwriter, actor, director and others, into a credible person. At another level, our ability to recognize a character will depend in part on our knowledge and experience of the world. At yet another

level it will depend in part on our knowledge and experience of the textual conventions (and mental "schemas") at work generally in fictional film. Second, we become aligned with the characters – in terms of access to what they know and feel. Third, we make allegiance – we make moral or ideological evaluation towards the character. See Smith, *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion and the Cinema,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[9] Sypnotic accounts of the relation of top-down and bottom-up psychological processes to film comprehension can be found in Bordwell, "A Case for Cognitivism," in Branigan, *Narrative Comprehension and Film,* 37-39; and Virginia Brooks, "Film, Perception and Cognitive Psychology," *Millenium Film Journal,* 14/15 (Fall/Winter, 1984-85), 105-256.

[10] Of this point, I am indebted to Hamsan Mohamed's indepth analysis of the musical "montage" sequence in *Dang Anom.* According to Hamsan, the approach for the montage used by Hussain Haniff was the first of its kind in the context of Malay films. The approach totally deviates from the montage practised by the West. For example, Eisenstein favours "the collision-contrast and dissimilarities" as to generate "an emotional intensity," whilst V.I. Pudovkin emphasizes "a continuous flow of emotions in space and time." Neither approaches are deployed by Hussain for this musical sequence. Hamsan adds that the juxtaposition and "superimpose" in the whole musical sequence (montage) are Dang Anom's mental images. Dang Anom is on the horns of dilemma between her love for Malang and her succumbing to Sultan's order. The juxtaposed and superimposed image comprises stories of the past, present and future which are embedded in Dang Anom's mental image. Though Hussain repudiates approaches practised in the West, in this essay I attempt at proving that Hussain's stylistic approach is still, by all means, useful in illustrating what Munsterberg has expounded. For further discussion, see Hamsan Mohamed, *Pengarahan dan Sinematografi P. Ramlee dan Hussein Haniff,* (Universiti Malaya: Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 2004).

[11] In a classic experiment, persons injected with drugs to simulate the physiological characteristics that accompany emotions, interpreted their own emotional states largely according to cues provided by

researchers. Though undergoing strong physiological changes (such as increased respiratory and pulse rate), they did not report themselves as experiencing a *particular* emotion until they were put in a context of euphoria or anger, or in other words, supplied with the appropriate "cognitions." See S. Schachter and J. Singer, "Cognitive, Social and Physiological Determinants of Emotional State," *Psychological Review,* 69 (1962), 395-396.

[12] Jan Uhde, whilst discussing film's illusions in his essay, "Film's Illusions: Kuleshov Revisited," states that "it is common knowledge that already during the first public film projection by the brothers Lumiere in 1895, some front-row viewers panicked at the sight of approaching locomotive in the *Arrival of the Train.* Extreme audience reactions (nausea) have been reported by audiences viewing images of vigorous motion (via aircraft, boat, rollercoaster, etc.), particularly those produced by large-screen and experimental projection systems such as Omnimax and Circorama; most of these systems stress the illusion of three-dimensionality. The extreme psychological effects of projected images provided the inspiration for the writer Anthony Burgess and director Stanley Kubrick who portrayed them through the 'Ludovico Treatment' in their 1971 film *Clockwork Orange.*"

[13] The study of Hussain Haniff's films within the framework of Munsterberg's theory does have its limitation. For instance, I have not been able to illustrate and discuss the deployment of the flashback technique which is equivalent to the mental act of memory since the three films chosen hardly deploy flashback. However, I must stress that among all Malay films of the studio era, Hussain Haniff's works, considering their stylistic finesse, can be construed as the most viable to be discussed in relation to Munsterberg's argument.

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