

ALL NIGHT MARKETS AND OTHER SOUNDSCAPES NOW LOST TO US  
BENEDICT RICHARD O’GORMAN ANDERSON (1936-2015):  
IN MEMORIAM

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Lines from W.H. Auden’s poem “Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone...Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun,” surfaced strangely in fits and starts in Japan on Sunday, December 13 when I heard the news of Ben’s passing. I was with five hundred other people at the inaugural Southeast Asian Studies in Asia (SEASIA) Conference in Kyoto. The conference had assembled scholars from all ten ASEAN countries plus Timor Leste, and fifteen other countries in the Asia-Pacific region and Europe. Among the participants were many friends and colleagues of Om Ben.

The conference immediately became a place of mourning, an impromptu wake, in the words of Jeff Hadler, a place where we grieved individually and together, comforted each other, and celebrated Ben’s life. We are/were, as Ben’s former student Carol Hau described, “mere nodes in a larger network as Ben’s students have found jobs in—and in some cases headed—institutions of area studies and discipline-based fields around the world. That network also includes Ben’s loved ones, colleagues, friends, and acquaintances from all walks of life, and parts of that network have already come together in the many memorials in Surabaya, Bangkok, Manila, [Jakarta], Ithaca, London, [and soon to be Berkeley] and other places that trace the wide arc of Ben’s journeys across time and space.”

We are never prepared for death, especially the loss of someone so vital to our Cornell community, a mentor, colleague, teacher, adversary and friend. I want to thank you all, particularly those of you who have come to speak and to say prayers on Ben’s behalf, and perhaps more dear and meaningful to Ben, those musicians, some who have traveled from as far as Middletown Connecticut, Pak Marsam, who will be playing Ben’s gender, and Bu Maeny, for braving the often unpredictable winter weather, and coming to today’s memorial service at Sage Chapel.

As the Director of the Southeast Asia Program, I cannot claim to being one of Ben’s “chosen,” but I can recall many conversations with him over the years, conversations that always entailed a specific line of questioning in which we covered everything from shadow puppets (like the flatulent, fun-loving Semar on the program) to masks, ghosts to explicit hell scenes, East Javanese candi to *capung* (dragonflies) and especially the savory smells, tastes and the hustle bustle of night markets. Choice paintings by the Balinese artist, Ida Bagus Made, the life and work of Claire Holt, Knut Hamsun’s novel

*Hunger*, and of course the novels and short stories of Indonesian writer, Pramoedya Ananta Toer all entered into the oddly imbalanced mix. Now I realize what tied them all together was a richly embodied relationship to the natural and built world that they inhabited filled with soundscapes, many now lost to us.

I recall especially a conversation about Pramoedya's *Bukan Pasar Malam*, (It's Not an All Night Market). It tells a deeply affecting story of a son returning home to Central Java to confront the dying and ensuing death of his beloved father. Struggling to understand the enigma that is his dad, the son gains illumination and a sense of communion from his father's gambling cronies. Ben appreciated that Pramoedya placed the most insightful words at the Javanese wake in the mouth of the Chinese guest, profound utterances that the others laughed at boisterously, and that the speaker himself did not fully comprehend:

“Then the Chinese with his eyes to the ceiling to which there was no upper story said:

‘Yes, why is it that we have to die alone? And be born alone too? Why do we have to be parted in death? Why wasn't this man born in the midst of the hustle and bustle of life and why didn't he die in the midst of that hustle and bustle? I'd like the world to be an all-night market (p. 77)’” For Ben, Pramoedya's novel reveals an “imagined community” where “both nation and novel are spawned by the simultaneity made possible by clock derived, ‘man-made homogeneous, empty time’” where the “horizontal comradeship” of diverse nationalities and religious persuasions, of young and old alike are all gliding endlessly with hearts beating toward a limitless clock-ticking future.

I still see Om Ben gliding in this way, cutting across the arts quad in his black and white poncho looking all the world like a version of Clint Eastwood -- Ben's irreverence for clocks, for clothing that constrained, and especially for the designated pathways at Cornell, always brought the theme song from the spaghetti western *The Good, The Bad and the Ugly* to mind (I can hear it now!) I told him that once, and he laughed a deep belly laugh, a rich guttural soundscape strangely lost to us. So now in the hustle and bustle of Sage, we come together to remember a remarkable man, and with eyes raised to the ceiling where rivers of stars intersect at nave and apse, I close with “I See You're Here” (*Kulihat Kamu Ada Disini*) by the Indonesian poet, healer, and political activist, Putu Oka Sukanta:

If you are here tonight  
even though we know you are resting in the earth's embrace  
if you are here with us  
even though we know you've gone  
come, sit here with us  
as we plan out the path to dawn  
for we know your spirit is not dead  
we still feel the warmth of your embrace  
we still feel the beating of your heart

Knocking

Ticking tick tock tick tock tick tock tick!

(Jika engkau malam ini ada disini  
Walau kami tahu engkau telah pulas dipelukan pertiwi  
Jika engkau malam ini bersama kami  
Walau kami tahu engkau sudah pergi  
Duduklah bersama kami  
Merancang jalan menuju pagi  
Karena kami tahu jiwamu tidak mati  
Karena kami masih merasakan hangatnya pelukanmu  
Karena kami masih merasakan denyut jantungmu  
Mengetuk  
Berdetak,  
Berdenting  
Denting  
Tiiiiiiing  
tang...ting  
Taaangggggggg  
Tiiiiiiiing  
Taaangggggggg  
Tiiing. (Jakarta 2002))

From "I See You're Here" (Kulihat Kamu Ada Disini), translated by Keith Foulcher in *Surat Bunga Dari Ubud* by Putu Oka Sukanta (edisi dua bahasa), Penerbit Koekoesan, 2008:128-131.